

Prius c keeps it all in the Toyota family

By **JIM ROBINSON**

*Carguide Magazine
Metroland Media Group*

SEATTLE, Wa.: There's a new family in town — the Toyota Prius Family.

Toyota/Lexus is planning to launch 18 new or refreshed vehicles in the next 18 months and creating a selection or 'family' of Prius Hybrids is among the first of these initiatives.

Prius currently represents 25 per cent of all hybrids sold in Canada. One in five Lexus models is a hybrid and in February hybrids made up 37 per cent of all mid-size Toyota car sales.

But, and it's a big but, Toyota and Lexus have pretty well had the hybrid market to themselves. They starting selling the original Prius 15 years ago in Japan and it was launched here in Canada in 2000 giving them a huge lead in building and selling hybrids.

With competition starting to flow from GM, Ford, Hyundai/Kia and Honda, Toyota is countering but offering no less than four Prius models all aimed at a different group of buyers, in other words, a Prius for everyone.

The Prius Liftback is the mainstream model along with the Prius v, a larger version with 50 per cent more cargo space. The Prius PHV (Plug-in Hybrid Vehicle) is expected to join the family later this year.

And then there is the 2012 Prius c starting at \$20,950 making it the lowest priced hybrid on the market.

With a combined fuel consumption rating of 3.7L/100 km (3.5/4.0L/100 km city/highway), Toyota claims the Prius c is the most fuel-efficient car on the road that doesn't need to be plugged in.



The 2012 Toyota Prius c is the smallest of the four-member Prius Hybrid family. Toyota claims it is the most fuel-efficient car on the road that does not need to be plugged in.

While it is officially classified as a subcompact, Prius c is one of those new cars that blurs the line between compact and sub-compact— especially on the inside.

For example, passenger volume is 87.4 cu ft but there is still 17.1 cu ft behind the standard 60/40 split/fold rear seat. One way of doing this was placing the hybrid and auxiliary batteries under the rear seat freeing up cargo space in the trunk.

The Prius c uses the lightest, most compact version of Toyota's Hybrid Synergy Drive yet starting with a transversely-mounted 1.5-litre, four-cylinder engine producing 73 hp and 82 lb/ft of torque. Attached to it is an oil-cooled transaxle containing an electric motor with 60 hp and 125 lb/ft of torque.

Together they produce a net 99 hp and 125 lb/ft of torque driving the front wheels through a CVT transmission.

The battery is a 144-volt nickel-metal hydride unit that is 100 per cent recyclable at the end of its life cycle. The battery has an eight-year/160,000 km warranty.

On the transmission tunnel are two buttons, one marked ECO Mode and the other EV Mode and both are designed to increase fuel efficiency.

ECO smoothes out throttle response but it also has the bonus of actually improving acceleration in wet or snow as the reduced throttle response decreases wheel slip.

EV allows the Prius c to operate on electric only for short distances. Toyota says, that under certain conditions, 40 km/h for up to one kilometre is possible.

There is a full suite of safety features. Besides nine airbags, the Prius c has stability control, traction control, anti-lock brakes, brake assist, electronic brake force distribution and Smart Stop Technology where the brake overrides the engine in an emergency situation.

Standard is a Vehicle Proximity Notification system. In EV mode because it moves with virtually no noise, an audible tone is emitted at speeds below 24 km/h to alert pedestrians the Prius is approaching.

From the very first Prius one

of the big selling points, in my opinion, has been the digital monitor showing the power being routed back and forth from battery to engine to motor.

And while this is retained, the Combination Metre/Energy Monitor as it is now called does much more, including driver information, ECO score, five-minute fuel consumption, ECO savings, ECO saving record, past record and summary when the Prius is turned off.

Located at the top and centre of the instrument panel, I rarely looked at it and concentrated on the road ahead. But I was interested to note that my co-driver was able to operate in EV mode 37 per cent during the morning of driving in and around Seattle where the press launch of the Prius c was held.

Climate control is standard which I wasn't expecting along with twin, click-wheel style controls on the steering wheel spokes for audio, climate, trip, Bluetooth and the multi information display.

Available as part of the top-trim Premium Package are seats made of SofTex that is as durable as leather but weighs half as much while giving off just one per cent of the emissions as artificial leather during the manufacturing process.

The Prius c is 26 per cent lighter than the Prius Liftback which helps when it comes to ride and handling.

Suspension is MacStruts at the front and a twist-beam at the rear. Braking is discs front and drums at the rear.

On the road, the Prius c felt like a normal sub-compact, five-door hatchbacks being nimble in urban settings with largish windows which always help with gobs of traffic and pedestrians coming from all directions.



Part of the Premium Package option are seats trimmed with SofTex that is half the weight of leather and gives off just one per cent of emissions during manufacturing.

At highway speeds, the harder low-rolling resistance tires were louder than normal but this is to be expected.

I wouldn't call acceleration punchy but it was pretty quick off the line. However with the ECO gauge shaming you to go easy on the gas, hot-rodding seems counter productive.

At the press launch Toyota took great pains to portray the Prius c as aimed at Gen Yers who are city dwellers who want a car for primarily city driving.

But I'm not so sure about that.

With fuel continuing to rise even a gas sipper like a Toyota Yaris makes the Prius c a consideration for commuters. If we start seeing prices approach \$2/litre the crossover point where the extra cost of a hybrid makes it cheaper overall to operate, commuters may be fighting over them in the Toyota lots.

That's why this idea of a Prius family of hybrids makes such good sense and at a good time, too.

WHERE THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS #1

SALE PRICE

\$15,998⁺ HST

Stk# R15222D

2007 NITRO SLT
AUTO, LEATHER, MOON ROOF, ONE OWNER,
ONLY 44258 KMS
VERY CLEAN

SALE PRICE

\$6,998⁺ HST

Stk# U25624D

2005 FOCUS Z6
5 SPD, LOADED, ALLOY, KEYLESS, ONE OWNER
165258 KMS
A MUST SEE

SALE PRICE

\$7,998⁺ HST

Stk# 25692D

2006 MAZDA3 GS
5SPD, LOADED
100752 KMS

SALE PRICE

\$17,998⁺ HST

2007 EDGE SEL
AWD, LEATHER, ONE OWNER
96587 KMS
VERY CLEAN



361 Guelph St. (Hwy. #7), Georgetown

More vehicles online at: www.conceptford.com

905-873-1626