

—First Drive—

Lexus NX proves smaller is better

By **JIM ROBINSON**
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WHISTLER, BC: The NX marks what Lexus says is the brand's "first entry into the luxury compact crossover segment".

Which may confuse some (it did me) because the RX was one of the first small luxury CUVs and arguably remains the benchmark for the segment.

Lexus sees the NX as being positioned below the RX as an "exciting entry point to the Lexus crossover and luxury utility vehicle family".

Presumably the RX will grow in size with the NX being the first line of defense as the Germans, in particular, are coming down market in search of greater sales volume with offerings such as the Mercedes-Benz GLA and BMW X1.

Underscoring this was the fact the press launch was held at the end of June even though the NX does not arrive in Canadian showrooms until fall at the earliest.

Optional package and overall pricing weren't announced

because Toyota Canada and Japan are still negotiating on that.

Same thing for fuel numbers which were, when this introduction was held, nearing completion but not finalized.

But one thing for certain is that Lexus sees the NX as a volume breakthrough leader globally, with China and Europe as important as North America.

There will be two engines for the Canadian market starting with the first twin-scroll turbo in the NX 200t. This 2.0-litre inline four-cylinder with 235 hp and 258 lb/ft of torque with a six-speed automatic tuned to the torque curve of the engine.

The other engine is found in the NX 300h which features a 2.5-litre Atkinson-cycle gasoline engine with a combined power rating of 194 hp (torque NA) in concert with hybrid generator/motor/battery and a CVT transmission with manual shift mode.

Both models are offered with all-wheel-drive.

In addition, there is the NX 200t F Sport with styling extras including a mesh grille in-



The 2015 NX 200t and NX 300h (shown) are the first entries by Lexus into the red-hot small luxury crossover segment.

sert, machined-finish wheels, black exterior mirrors, interior ornamentation, paddle shifters, and sport seats.

The body/platform was designed to be highly rigid, but is bolstered by a package of underbody reinforcements such as additional bulkheads and spot welding, suspension braces, and the use of Lexus body adhesive, laser-screw welding and high-rigidity

glass adhesive.

The F Sport is further enhanced by performance shocks and spring rates to match its more sporting nature.

A design priority was making the NX as handy as possible in tight, urban environments. With a wheelbase of 104.7, it is a tidy 182.3 inches long and 72.6 inches wide.

Visually, you know this is a Lexus starting with the "spin-

dle grille" and ending with L-shaped taillights.

Something new is a door handle with hidden key slot and integrated lighting.

On the inside, soft-touch materials are countered by metallic trim. The driver and front seat passenger will find kneepads on the bottom of the centre stack for extra support when cornering.

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