

Dodge takes their minivan and makes it look like a SUV

• from DODGE on page B18

Both front seats have storage bins located beneath the flip-up seat cushion big enough for an umbrella or purse.

The spare is a compact, but is located just under the cargo floor at the rear and would be easy to use if ever needed.

The SXT has larger 17-inch aluminum wheels (16-inch steel wheels on the SE), touring suspension and seats in premium cloth including the YES Essentials anti stain/static/odour material, which, if you have kids or dogs, is worth buying the SXT alone. The SXT also has a host of trim extras like 115V power outlet; fold-forward front passenger seat and a removable, rechargeable flashlight.

The R/T is the style leader of the bunch with 19-inch alloy wheels, performance tuned steering and suspension, leather seating with heated fronts, Sirius satellite radio and even more trim enhancements.

I did not get a chance to drive the four-cylinder version so I don't know how the 2.4-litre copes with a curb weight of 5,250 kg (2,380 lbs) let alone with five to seven people on board.

I spent my time in both a FWD and AWD R/T as a back seat passenger and driver.

With 'stadium seating' in the second row, you do get a good look ahead if partially blocked by the quite substantial headrest on the front seat. The back doors open 90 degrees making it easier to get in



The 2009 Dodge Journey crossover fills a big whole in the Chrysler lineup that meets the demand for a short wheelbase minivan along with SUV looks, available all-wheel-drive and up to seven passenger seating all for a base vehicle price starting at \$19,995.

and out.

The second row seat is fully foldable and has 120 mm (4.7 in) of travel to let others access the third row seat. The seat cushion is firm to the point that a long drive it would lead to butt numbness.

The second row has two interesting functions. It has what Dodge calls a child presenter feature that lets the seat move forward two inches. With the front passenger seat folded flat, the driver can reach

back more easily to attend a small child. The other feature is child booster seats that can be raised four inches (102 mm) so kids are placed up in the adult seat belt zone.

The ride in the R/T with its more sporty suspension felt almost too firm for what I suspect are the majority of owners. On part of my drive through the Valley of Fire Park north of Las Vegas, the 'whopdedoos' in the road put the suspension to the test.

Rebound was swift with tire contact not lost, which would have been the case in a boulevard cruiser.

The 3.5-litre engine was responsive with the six-speed transmission showing how far technology has come. There was no sensation of gear shifting, unless you floored the pedal to pass. There was no 'kick-down' feel, but it could have dropped down an extra gear for my tastes.

On cruise control heading back to Vegas past Nellis Air Force Base, the engine and wind noise were so slight my co-driver and I could actually hear the famed U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds coming up from behind before passing over the left and splitting up in an overhead loop.

As noted at the top, Chrysler Canada officials see the Journey as the right product at the right time. This confidence is buoyed by the fact Chrysler closed out 2007 in second place in sales behind GM, and better, had 17 straight months of sales increases with January 2008 on track (at this writing) to make it 18 in a row.

With sales increases in the double digits last year, the company is counting on the 2009 Dodge Journey to lead its journey into 2008.

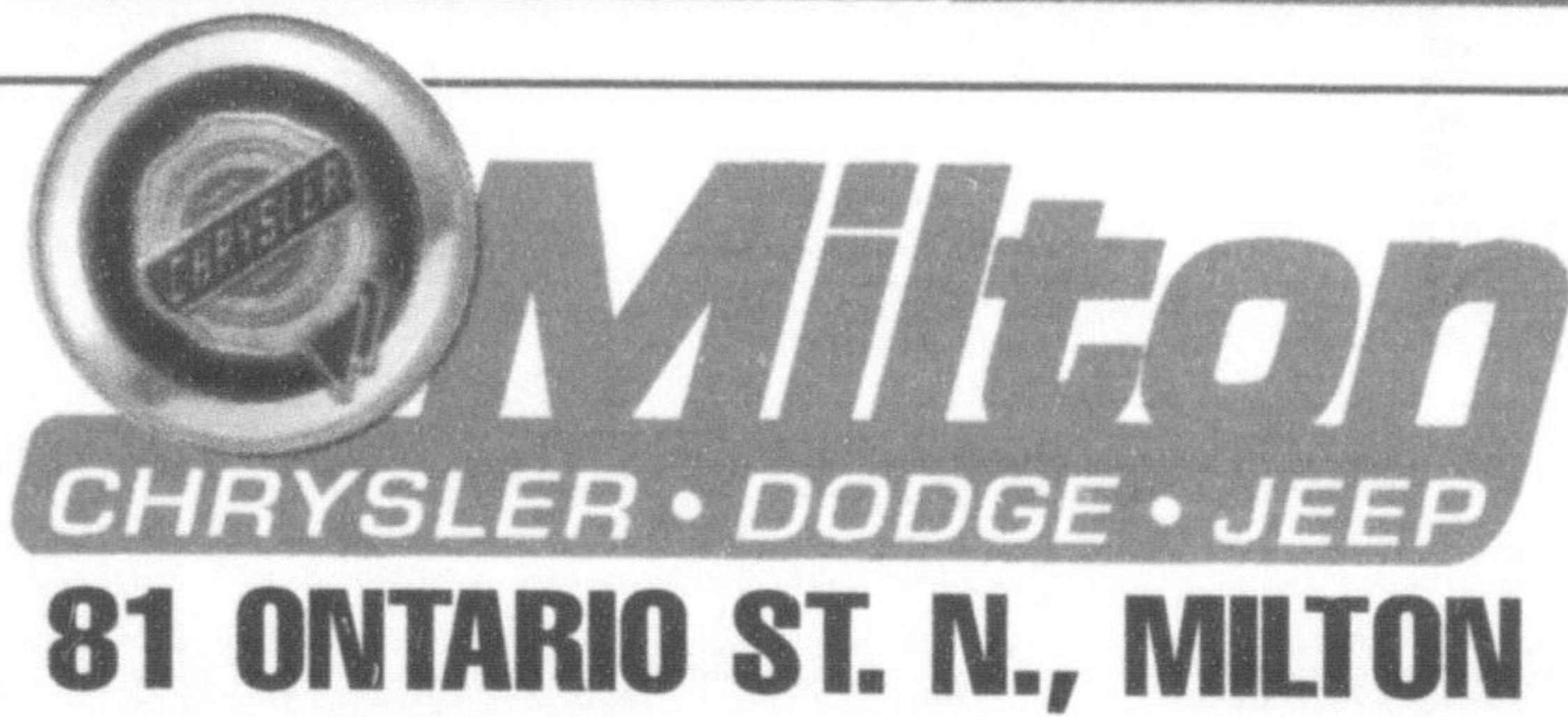
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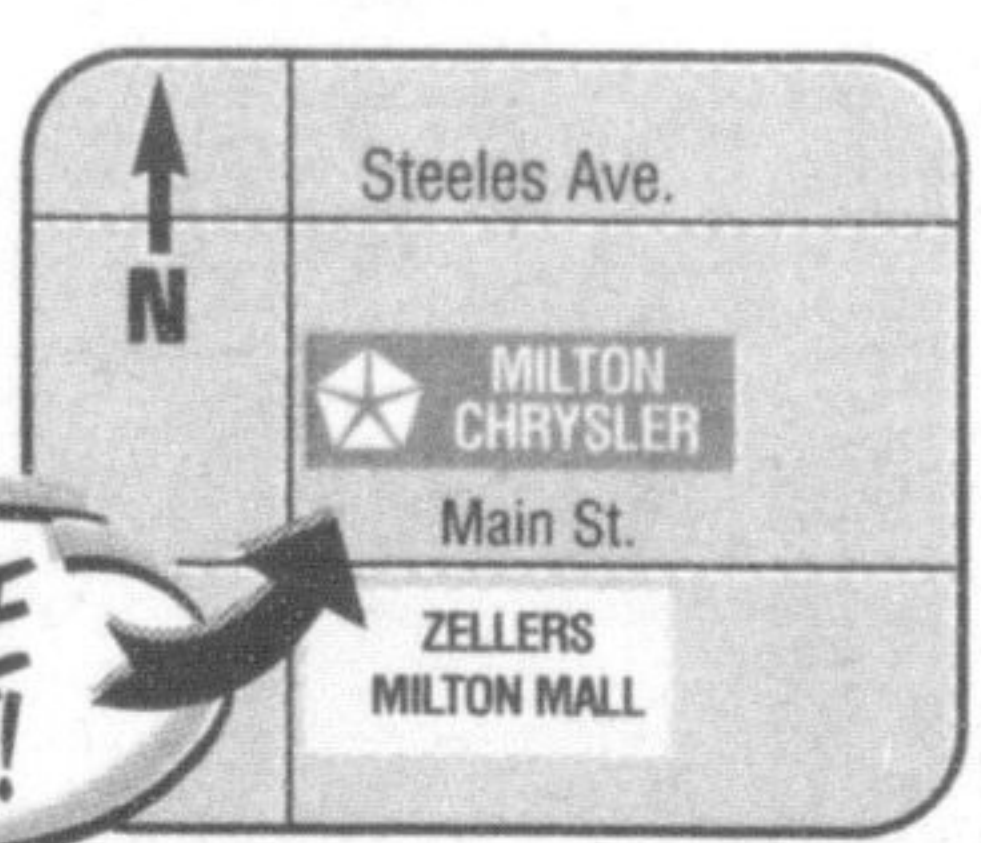
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