

The Canadian Champion

WHEELS

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Chrysler Canada celebrates 25 years of the minivan with a Canada-only 25th Anniversary Dodge Grand Caravan

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Metroland Media Group

WINDSOR: Chrysler Canada is celebrating the silver birthday of the minivan with a special Canadian 25th Anniversary Dodge Grand Caravan.

The for-Canadians-only model was unveiled Nov. 3 at a ceremony to mark the 25th year of minivan production at the its Windsor Assembly Plant.

Available in red or silver, the anniversary model is based on the Grand Caravan SE and includes Chrysler's exclusive Stow N Go seating feature.

A 3.3-litre, V6 engine produces 175 hp and 205 lb/ft of torque driving the front wheels through a four-speed automatic transmission. Fuel consumption is listed as 12.6L/100 km (22 mpg) city and 8.4L/100 km (34 mpg) highway.

Chrysler describes the 25th Anniversary model as the best-equipped minivan for the price in Canada.

The current Grand Caravan has 40 new or improved features over the previous generation and chief of these is Stow N Go. It has a 60/40 split/fold third row seat and second row bucket seats that fold into bins below the floor, making for a flat and unobstructed cargo area of 4,430 litres.

The seating is in slate grey cloth and incorporates a stain repellent fabric.

The driver gets a leather wrapped steering wheel with integrated audio controls. The windows in both second row door panels are powered with express down and the third row window



ABOVE: To mark 25 years of the Chrysler minivan production in Windsor, there will be a Canada-only 25th Anniversary Dodge Grand Caravan SE with a list price of \$29,945. It includes the unique Stow N Go feature that allows the second row captain's chairs and third row 60/40 split seats to fold flush beneath the floor.

LEFT: The interior is done in a slate grey specific to the 25th Anniversary Edition with heated/power outside mirrors, air conditioning and ABS with Electronic Stability Control.

vents are also powered.

Unique 25th Anniversary 17-inch alloy wheels with AS Touring tires are fitted, while the power/heated outside mirrors and lower body side panels are body coloured.

Air conditioning is standard while three-zone climate control is an option. Also standard are four-wheel disc brakes with ABS and Electronic Stability Control (ESP).

And to cap things off, there is a dealer-installed 25th Anniversary

Edition badge.

What Chrysler Canada does is take the normal Dodge Grand Caravan SE and adds more than \$1,400 in content and then discounts \$700 of that for an asking price of \$29,945 not counting the \$1,350 shipping charge.

At the announcement of the new model, there were only two available, but I took one out for a spin anyway to try it on for size.

I had travelled to and from the Windsor minivan event in a

Chrysler Town & Country, which, basically, is the same van.

One of the big selling points of the minivan from the first Windsor-built model back in 1983 is the seating position that is slightly higher than in a car, giving a better forward view and thus inspiring confidence.

The Stow N Go seating is as simple as one arm movement, but the beauty is you don't have to yank out the seats when there is a need for hauling cargo. On my

own, older, minivan, I dread the thought of hoofing out the seats because they are just about as heavy a load as I can lift. And it's harder because you have to reach in, pull up and lift out with all the strain on the back.

The interior of the 25th Anniversary is done in a slate grey to match the seats. It's okay but the trend is to dual tone interiors these days.

Ride is great. If you know Windsor, Riverside Dr., that runs along the Detroit River, has been one of the main access routes for more than a century. It seems to be constantly under repair with a myriad of potholes, cold patches and bumps.

Along this stretch, the 25th Anniversary soaked up these irregularities with aplomb that is testimony to a quarter century of refining the same basic design. Part of this is definitely the ride quality.

There was an original 1983 Dodge Caravan at the anniversary event. Take a ride in that and the difference in handling as well as noise and vibration shows how far Chrysler has come.

These are tough times for all the automakers, not just the domestics. The Chrysler minivan has been one of the great Canadian success stories. In fact, Chrysler currently enjoys 45 per cent of all minivan sales in Canada.

People love a winner and that's still Chrysler's "family room on wheels" that is now even more attractive with the 2009 Dodge Grand Caravan 25th Anniversary Edition.

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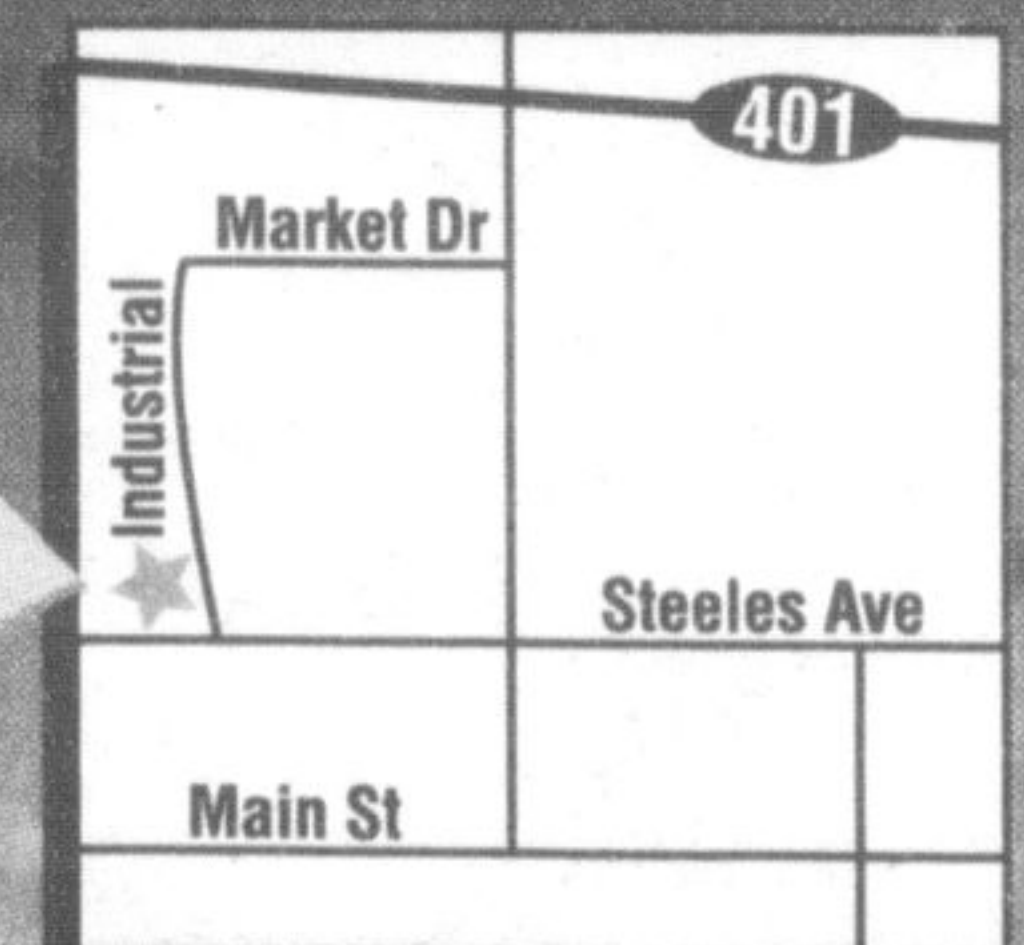
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