



**MORE GX 470**  
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# WHEELS

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**GX 470 INTERIOR**  
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(ABOVE) The rear is accessed by the cargo door that opens to the right to reveal the third row seats; here shown tucked up against the cargo area sides.

(LEFT) Lexus has introduced the GX470 SUV slated midway between the RX 330 and LX 470, but it is anything but mid-size being able to carry eight

## Lexus GX 470 joins Canadian SUV market

By JIM ROBINSON  
Road Worthy

Two years ago, Lexus had a hard time making the business case that it needed the GX 470 luxury SUV in Canada.

How things have changed in just 24 months. Luxury sedan sales have taken off bringing SUVs right along with them.

Suddenly, everybody wants them and every manufacturer is selling seemingly all they can make and this includes all the premium luxury brands from Mercedes-Benz to Cadillac to even Porsche.

On sale in the U.S. since 2002, Lexus Canada sees the GX 470 as a slam-dunk, neatly filling a hole between the RX 330, arguably the gold standard in mid-size luxury SUVs, and the big, highly prized (and highly priced) LX 470.

Lexus sees GX 470 as a perfect fit for those who find the RX 330 too small and the LX 470 which has a kind of dated look that traces its lineage back at last three decades to the Toyota Land Cruiser.

The GX 470 is a full eight-seater, but it is

trimmer in size with the bonus of fitting into any garage, a touch and go thing with the LX 470.

The GX 470 is, in fact, a new body on full frame based on the Prada platform sold in a number of markets worldwide. While body on frame may sound a bit yesteryear, modern CAD/CAM engineering makes the GX 470's response a revelation thanks to its rigidity and an even more supple independent suspension which makes for a very un-truck like ride at highway speeds.

Power is the 4.7-litre DOHC V8 Toyota/Lexus uses in all its big truck applications. In the GX 470 it produces 235 hp and 320 ft./lb. of torque, 80 per cent of which is available at just 1,000 rpm. It also allows for a towing capacity of 6,500 lb. (2,948 kg). The only transmission is a five-speed automatic with shift logic that not only picks the right gear based on load, but also controls engine braking on deceleration.

The heart of the driveline system is a centre TorSen (Torsion Sensing) differential that splits power 40 per cent front, 60

per cent rear under normal conditions. If slippage is detected, the ratio can change up to 52 per cent front. But during steering changes that shifts to 29/71 per cent front/rear to track more smoothly through curves. There is also a switch on the driveline centre console that locks the TorSen 50/50 for deep snow/mud or serious off-roading.

And the GX 470 is equipped for the most primitive conditions with DAC (Downhill Assist Control) and HAC (Hill-Start Assist Control) that ensures the truck does not roll back when climbing.

DAC is real wizard stuff! When you press the DAC button on the driveline tunnel a computer measures the steepness of the decline, vehicle speed and yaw rate to keep the truck going downhill on an even keel between 5-7 km/h. It just seems unnatural to take your foot off the gas and brake and trust all to a computer and a set of sensors on a nothing more than a rocky footpath. But I've tested DAC fitted to a Toyota 4Runner coming down a rock road hacked out the side of a B.C. mountain and,

believe me, it works.

I mentioned the great highway ride earlier on. This is due to what Lexus calls Adaptive Variable Suspension that is controlled by yet another driveline tunnel switch that has 16 settings ranging from "comfort" to "sport". Believe it or not, the system continuously adjusts all four shock absorbers individually based on driving condition, wheel speed, engine revs, steering wheel deflection, brake usage and yaw at adjustment speeds of 2.5 milliseconds.

And the last (I promise) of the driveline tunnel switches is for Adaptive Height Control that is air based and can raise the body 40 mm at speeds below 30 km/h to increase clearance for ramps. It can also be lowered 20 mm for easier cargo loading or attaching a trailer.

The interior leaves nothing out. From the 14-speaker Mark Levinson audiophile sound system, to the rich wood trim, to the leather that has the feeling like linen denoting its high quality, it's all standard.

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