

Vehicles chasing hardware ; And the nominees are ...

Byline: Harry Pegg

The Automobile Journalists Association of Canada's Car-of-the-Year committee has just released the list of vehicles eligible for 2010 Car- and Truck-of-the-Year competition.

Automobile writers from all over Canada will gather at Niagara-On-The-Lake late in October to put the 53 vehicles through their paces.

Judging is done on a wide range of parameters and vehicles in each class are driven back-to-back on the same day on the same roads under the same conditions to make the comparison as fair as possible.

The annual search for a Car- and Truck-of-the-Year has been called the most objective award program in the world.

The largest categories are small car over \$21,000 and sport utility/crossover vehicles valued between \$35,000 and \$60,000. There are seven entries in each.

Interestingly, sports performance vehicles under \$50,000 rank third with six entries.

For the first time in ages, there are no Chrysler vehicles in the mix. GM has five vehicles entered and Ford has entered four.

A jury of qualified AJAC members also chooses the best new technology and best new technology from entries that meet the criteria.

In the running for best new technology are: Audi Drive Select, Ford MyKey, Mercedes-Benz Attention Assist, Toyota/Lexus Remote Touch, Toyota/Lexus Touch Tracer and Volvo City Safety.

There are five entries in the green technology class: Ford Next Generation Hybrid system and SmartGauge, Mercedes-Benz S400 hybrid with lithium-ion batteries, Toyota/Lexus beltless Atkinson-cycle engine with cooled exhaust, Toyota/Lexus plant-based ecological plastics and Toyota/Lexus Solar Panel Moonroof and remote air conditioning.

FORD ROLLING

Ford of Canada appears to be on a roll in terms of sales.

In July, the company recorded a 47.4% increase in sales over last year, pushing year-to-date sales up 2.3%.

Ford says market share has increased for the ninth straight month.

Every model in the lineup showed increases with F-Series, Escape, Edge, Flex and Ranger seeing their best July on record.

GM and Chrysler continue their slide.

CHALLENGERS

Vehicle-of-the-Year nominees:

Small car (under \$21,000): Hyundai Elantra Touring, Kia Forte Koup, Mazda3

Small car (over \$21,000): Honda Insight, Kia Forte, Kia Soul, Mazda3 Sport, Mitsubishi Lancer Sportback, Nissan Cube, VW Golf.

Family car (under \$30,000): Ford Fusion, Subaru Legacy sedan, Toyota Prius, VW Golf Wagon.

Family car (over \$30,000): Buick Allure, Ford Fusion Hybrid, Ford Taurus.

Luxury car (over \$50,000): BMW 335d; Cadillac CTS Wagon, Mercedes-Benz E-Class, Lexus HS 250h.

Prestige car (over \$75,000): Audi R8 V10, BMW 7 Series sedan, Mercedes-Benz S400 Hybrid, Porsche Panamera.

Sports/Performance (under \$50,000): Ford Taurus SHO, Chevrolet Camaro, Hyundai Genesis Coupe; Mazdaspeed3, Mitsubishi Lancer Sportback Ralliart, VW Golf GTI.

Sports/Performance (over \$50,000): Audi S4, Jaguar XFR, Mercedes-Benz E-Class Coupe.

Convertibles: Audi A5 Cabriolet, BMW Z4 roadster, Nissan 370Z, Lexus IS.

SUV/CUV (under \$35,000): Chevrolet Equinox, Subaru Outback, Toyota Versa.

SUV/CUV (\$35,000 to \$60,000): Acura ZDX, Audi Q5, GMC Terrain, Mercedes-Benz GLK 350 4MATIC, Lexus RX 350, VW Touareg TDI, Volvo XC60.

SUV/CUV (over \$60,000): Acura MDX, Audi Q7, Lincoln MKT, Cadillac SRX, Lexus RX 450h.