

2025 CIAS CORPORATE RECEPTION SPEECH
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TOYOTA IN CANADA – Relentless Focus on Customer Experience

By Cyril Dimitris – President and CEO, Toyota Canada Inc.

Good evening, everyone.

It's genuinely an honour and a privilege to be publicly kicking off our new mandate this evening, with me serving in this new capacity.

Coincidentally, this week officially marks 37 years in the industry for me, all with this great organization I work for. If nothing else, it means I've met a lot of people over this time. What I'm learning, though, is that – as I spend more time in this business – it's more often than not others who recognize me and remember my name than the other way around.

Having said that, it's especially comforting to be before an audience of so many familiar faces.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Cyril Dimitris.

Over the three plus decades I've been with Toyota, I've held more positions than you can imagine.

I've seen the business from virtually every angle.

And its with that context that I'd like to share with you our blueprint for Toyota's next chapter in the Canadian market.

Now... spoiler alert here... You might find it very similar to our past formula for success.

I mean, why mess with something good, right?

Now, before I talk about the future, I'd like to take a moment to recognize our two recently retired executives, Larry Hutchinson and Stephen Beatty, for their many years of leadership and commitment to our organization.

A key Toyota principle is to pass on quality to the next person on the line.

They've certainly done that, setting us up for success in this next chapter. And, for that, I'm truly grateful.

On a more personal note, I'd like to thank Larry for his mentorship and support over the many years we worked together.

He's prepared me well.

No doubt, I have big shoes to fill but, as he would say to me 'you have big feet'.

Needless to say, I'm ready to go!

And so is the rest of our senior leadership team. Many of whom are with us tonight. We've worked together for quite some time, so we've formed, normed and are ready to put our vision into action.

Our focus and our formula will continue to be what we've done for so long, so successfully. Staying laser focused on the wants and needs of Canadians.

Providing them with sustainable mobility solutions. And delivering them meaningful value at every touchpoint in their ownership journey.

All in an effort to make their lives better and the communities they live in that much stronger.

We want every interaction with the Toyota or Lexus brand to be a remarkable one, one that upholds the expectations our customers and guests have of us.

And one that matches the quality and experience they have with the product itself.

In doing this, we hope Canadians will continue to demonstrate the trust they've always shown in us by rewarding us with their business.

In short: We plan to continue to be Canada's mobility company of choice.

Nothing demonstrates this philosophy more than our latest Toyota brand campaign.

You may have seen it debut during the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games, or being aired since then.

We've labelled it: "*For what matters most.*" We know that everyone has a Toyota story - whether it's their own experience, or whether it's the experience of a friend or family member. And we wanted to tap into this emotional connection Canadians have had with our brand over the decades.

The campaign was built around the pillars of what makes a Toyota vehicle uniquely Toyota: durability, safety, and of course, excitement. Ultimately, it's about keeping Canadians connected to the people, places and things that matter most to them. It also resonated with us internally because the experience of our customers is at the heart of everything we do.

Canadians have confidence in us and, in return for their trust, we continue to focus on providing an excellent customer experience for them.

It matters to them. It matters to us.

It all starts with Toyota's belief in building where we sell.

Because we know Canadians want to buy from brands that support a strong Canadian economy.

To date, Toyota has invested more than 11-billion dollars in our Canadian manufacturing operations. Last year alone, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada assembled more than 533-thousand vehicles here in Ontario.

That means TMMC continues to be the number one automotive manufacturer in Canada – by a long shot. Today, they directly employ more than eighty-five hundred Canadians. And they create tens of thousands more jobs through their network of Canadian suppliers, logistics companies, and other partners.

The TMMC team in southwestern Ontario has built a winning formula based on production quality. Last year, TMMC took home yet another Gold JD Power Plant Quality award.

This adds to the almost two-dozen other accolades they've received since 1991. The impressive medal haul includes three JD Power platinum awards given to the top automotive plant in the world.

This globally recognized commitment to quality matters because we make our best-selling Toyota and Lexus models right here in Canada.

So, it's our customers who benefit directly from this quality throughout the lives of their vehicles. For that, we'd like to thank Frank, Derek and their team for all the hard work they do every day at TMMC.

We know it also matters to Canadians that companies operating in Canada are strong social contributors. Our customers expect us to invest in our communities and to contribute to the betterment of Canadian society.

That matters to us, as well.

Making lives better and communities stronger.

That's why, last year alone, Toyota's Canadian operations contributed more than four million dollars to not-for-profit organizations doing important work in communities across the country.

And we're proud that those contributions are having an impact.

Here's a few recent examples of our support:

- With the goal of providing more than a million meals for Canadians in need, our Million Meals goal is helping address the food security issues so many people are facing right now.

With participation from our Dealers and Employees, we've been supporting food security since it became an even more serious issue early in the pandemic.

Recently, we announced national agreements with Food Banks Canada and Breakfast Club of Canada to support food banks and school breakfast programs in communities across the country.

- Here in Canada and around the world, Toyota has long been a champion for sustainability.

With that goal in mind, in 2024, we became a national partner of the Trans Canada Trail.

- Through our Toyota Canada Foundation, we support STEM education, with funding for groups doing important STEM outreach, like Actua and Let's Talk Science.
- We also support organizations making Canada more inclusive through physical accessibility.

This includes a half million-dollar donation last year to Providence Healthcare's Toyota Canada Motor Skills Clinic.

Strong communities matter to Canadians.

Strong communities matter to us.

Finally, Canadians also expect us to continue to offer them a full range of vehicles, all with a combination of performance, style, comfort, safety, and technology.

As Canada's only full-line automaker, we're the last ones offering customers at least one model in every segment. That's important to us because our customers know they can count on us for options to meet their needs, lifestyles, and budgets.

Today, we offer Canadians 23 different Toyotas and 16 different Lexus models.

Most of these are available with a choice of packages and body styles. And many are available with a choice of powertrains.

But we're not just maintaining the breadth our line-up. We're expanding the choices we offer Canadian drivers, and we're relentlessly refreshing our existing models.

Over the next year, Toyota has an aggressive schedule to introduce several new and next-generation models.

So, for the media in the room, we'll have lots for you to cover.

Toyota expects that every vehicle we sell be built to our industry-leading quality standards. That it's durable, reliable and provides great long-term value – throughout ownership and when the time comes to trade in that Toyota or Lexus vehicle for the next one.

For us, that's non-negotiable.

We also ensure that every new vehicle we sell delivers the connectivity that Canadians desire.

Our systems – Toyota Multimedia and Lexus Interface – are already among the industry's top solutions, and we'll continue to enhance them in the coming years.

Our customers have also come to expect that every vehicle we sell has industry-leading safety built into it.

Look at any Lexus or Toyota spec sheet, and you'll see a long list of advanced safety features - all standard. Today, we equip every new vehicle with a remarkable active safety system. This bundle of advanced automated safety features makes the journey safer for the driver, for passengers, and for all other users of the road.

Lastly, we know our customers still love to drive. So, we want to make sure we still offer vehicles that are really fun to get behind the wheel of.

Actually, we have a perfect example of that right here in the room with us tonight. The GR Corolla embodies everything it means to be fun to drive, and our customers have been loving it since we launched it. We wanted to make it accessible to even more of our customers, so we now offer it with an automatic transmission. Now, even more customers will be able to experience the fun-to-drive GR Corolla.

Add up these strengths - industry-leading quality, choice, connectivity, safety, all in a great looking, fun-to-drive package - and our vehicles always represent excellent overall value for our customer's money because we know that's more important than ever to Canadians right now.

And, to us, value isn't just about what you pay when you buy your vehicle. We believe value is delivered throughout the life of your vehicle. The quality, dependability, reliability and performance that's enjoyed every day... It's also about retained value and protecting the significant investments Canadians make when purchasing a vehicle.

So, we're proud that our vehicles regularly receive awards for their retained value from organizations like JD Power, Canadian Black Book and Vincentric.

Recognition like this assures our customers they're getting great long-term value every time they buy a vehicle from us.

And all of this - our relentless focus on what matters most to our customers - was reflected in our 2024 sales results.

Canadians rewarded us with their trust by purchasing or leasing almost 239-thousand Toyota and Lexus vehicles last year. That's up almost five percent over 2023, and it's an overall corporate sales record for us.

We're even more proud that we sold a record 117-thousand vehicles with electrified powertrains last year. That's up more than 17 percent over 2023 – with electrified vehicles representing nearly 50 percent of our total sales in 2024.

That number includes more than 26-thousand Zero Emission Vehicles – an increase of almost 60 percent from 2023.

And our goal is to go even further in 2025.

We've always been the industry's electrification leader.

And our electrification strategy is clear and well established.

To reduce overall carbon emissions as much as possible and as quickly as possible, we've embraced a multi-pathway approach to electrification.

We offer Canadian drivers a range of electrified powertrains, including battery electric, plug-in hybrid electric, hybrid electric, and hydrogen fuel cell electric.

Providing this choice of powertrains and models makes it easier for drivers to choose the carbon-reducing electrified vehicle that best fits their lifestyles and budgets.

And this approach has had a huge impact.

By connecting more Canadians to sustainable mobility solutions, we're putting more electrified vehicles into more driveways – and reducing more carbon emissions – every year.

It's the right thing to do for Canadian drivers – and it's the right thing to do for the planet.

What's more, our strategy allows Toyota and Lexus to stay flexible – and to adapt to changing market conditions. It lets us address the needs of different regions in Canada where the markets for electrified vehicles are in different stages of development. And it allows us to quickly respond to changing consumer demands even as we build on past successes.

The Canadian roll-out of our first battery electric vehicle is a great example of this.

When we launched the bZ4X, we first introduced it in Quebec and British Columbia, the two Canadian markets that were most ready for an all-electric crossover at the time.

Today, the bZ4X is the number one of the bestselling electric SUV in BC by market share.

It's also a market leader in Quebec.

Now, with what we've learned in those two markets, along with what we're hearing from our customers across the country, we have the information we need to gradually roll it out to the rest of Canada. And I'm happy to announce that we'll start doing that later this year. With sales in only two provinces, Canada is already achieving the third largest sales volume in the world for the bZ4X.

That bodes well for our future success, as we start selling it across the country soon.

As Scott mentioned earlier, this year is another milestone year for us – this time for our luxury brand.

It feels like it was just yesterday that I was leading Lexus Canada, and we were celebrating our 25th anniversary.

In 1990, we entered the luxury automotive race with one objective in mind: To craft the finest automobiles ever built.

There were many in the industry who doubted we would succeed and hardly anybody thought Lexus would be a big player in the luxury market.

Now, as we enter our 35th year, our broad product line-up and relentless focus on Guest experience has made Lexus the country's third-largest luxury automotive brand in 2024.

In fact, Canada is now the fourth-largest market for Lexus in the world.

What's more, Lexus is the Canadian leader for electrified luxury vehicle sales. We sold almost 16,000 of them in 2024 – representing 54 percent of our total Lexus sales.

So, it's quite the story of growth for Lexus – much of it fuelled by Canadian manufacturing expertise.

In 2003, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada made international news when they became the first plant outside Japan to build a Lexus.

You might have already noticed that the first ever Canadian-built Lexus – the 2004 RX 330 – is in the room with us tonight. And, to show you how far the RX has evolved over the past 20 years, we've parked it right beside the 2025 RX plug-in hybrid.

Lexus has had 35 successful years in Canada by putting the experience of our Guests first, in everything we do. Today, Lexus is the industry leader when it comes to customer experience. And what we've learned from Lexus provides a great source of knowledge for how we approach all aspects of our business.

Last but certainly not least, we can't forget the impact of our Dealers.

Our customer-focused business model means our Toyota and Lexus Dealers play a hugely important role in our success. Our business strategy starts with industry-leading products and services – but it's driven by customer experience excellence. And it's our dealers who are the nexus point for this customer experience.

As Toyota continues to be the leader in electrification, our Dealers will play an even more important role in the experience of our customers.

Our Dealers have been a trusted source for the past 60 years. And experts at Toyota and Lexus dealerships across the country have been helping Canadians understand hybrids for a quarter century.

Their knowledge and experience allows them to be in an enviable position as the trusted source of expertise when it comes to guiding customers and guests continue along their electrification journey. As we continue to launch new electrified vehicles, our Dealers are ready help Canadians make confident, informed choices.

Now, before I turn the presentation over to Andrew, I'll address what I know many in this room are wondering about. The future outlook in the context of our current business and political landscape.

Impending elections here at home as well as the recent dilution and pausing of government incentive programs and, of course, a new administration South of the border, have caused some uncertainty within our industry over the past few months.

Auto industry trade between Canada and the U.S. is very balanced and working well, and the current tariff discussion appears to be a broader negotiation between our two governments.

At this point, no tariff policy has been formally announced, so we're not going to speculate. If we do see a new tariff policy, we'll need to take some time to properly review it and assess any potential impact on our industry and consumers before we're able to respond to it.

What I can say for sure is this: Toyota has been in Canada for 60 years, and we've built an incredible, cross-country ecosystem of talent and infrastructure.

We're woven into the fabric of Canadian society – and we're here for the long haul. And, as we face the future, we'll do so with the same passion, focus and agility that Toyota has always demonstrated in the past.

No matter what challenges we face over the next few months, Toyota Canada plans to be Canada's mobility company of choice... connecting Canadians to sustainable mobility solutions... making peoples' lives better... and making our communities stronger.

We plan to do this with a relentless focus on customer experience excellence, industry-leading products and services and continued electrification leadership.

And we'll continue to offer choice, so Canadians can find the Toyota or Lexus that suits their lifestyle, fits their budget, reduces emissions, keeps them safe, makes them smile, and provides unmatched, long-term value.

It matters to Canadians.... It matters to us.

Thanks, again, for joining us tonight and thank you all for being such a big part of Toyota Canada's success.

I'm looking forward to a great auto show week.