Canadian Auto Sales Near Record Highs For The Year

Sunny Freeman, The Canadian Press

Canadiann auto sales on road to near record year, with 1.6M sold in first 11 months

TORONTO - Canadian auto sales are on the road to besting their 2011 performance, with sales for the first 11 months of the year up 6.5 per cent to nearly 1.6 million vehicles, according to an industry watcher.

DesRosiers Automotive Consultants said Monday year-to-date vehicle sales in Canada rose to 1.57 million with one month left in the year.

"A solid December is widely expected, and Canada has a chance at breaching the 1.7 million unit mark, potentially making 2012 one of the best-ever years for new vehicle sales in this country," Dennis DesRosiers said in a report.

"We suspect that the market will come in just shy of record levels, but second best on record is very likely. And there should be more to come over the next few years as the market is expected to continue to grow."

Sales have only broken the 1.7 million mark in one year, 2002, when about 25,000 of those vehicles were sold to Americans buying because of favourable exchange rates.

Gas prices have been a key concern for cost-conscious buyers and that's helped push growth in the smaller, more fuel-efficient car category higher than in the truck segment. November car sales rose 7.6 per cent, while truck sales were up just one per cent.

For the year, car sales were up 10 per cent, compared to four per cent for trucks. Still, more trucks have been sold than cars so far this year and truck sales comprise 54.6 per cent of the market.

Ford Canada is on the road to taking the title of Canada's best-selling automaker of 2012, after reporting strong November sales that put it in first place for another month.

The big three Detroit automaker said Monday that November sales rose to 19,447, up 7.4 per cent from a year ago, marking its best November since 2001. Car sales at the automaker rose 14 per cent, while truck sales were up six per cent.

"November was a record-breaking month for Ford of Canada," said Dianne Craig, president and CEO at Ford of Canada.

"The Canadian auto industry has seen incredible growth in 2012, and we are pleased that Ford of Canada has outpaced it in November."

For the first 11 months of 2012, sales rose one per cent to 259,194 vehicles from 256,597 in 2011.

Meanwhile, rival Chrysler Canada said it sold 17,013 vehicles in Canada last month, up five per cent from November 2011, when the company sold 16,244, falling behind GM sales for the month.

The U.S. automaker said the increase helped it post its longest growth streak in its history at 36 consecutive months of year-over-year sales growth.

Chrysler also called it the best start to a year through 11 months since 2000.

Passenger car sales improved to 2,802 cars sold for the month, up from 1,909 sold in the same month, one year ago.Total truck sales dipped to 14,211 compared with 14,335 in November 2011.

At GM Canada, November sales slipped 3.2 per cent to 17,372, besting Chrysler for the month. Year-to-date sales, however, are behind Chrysler, down 5.5 per cent to 212,202.

Meanwhile, foreign nameplates continue to gain traction against the Detroit players and now hold about 55 per cent of market share.

Japanese automaker Toyota Canada said November sales of 14,512 Toyota, Lexus and Scion vehicles fell just slightly from 14,563 sold last November. However, year-to-date Toyota sales are up 21.1 per cent from last year, when the company was struggling to pump out supply after Japan's devastating tsunami in March.

The company said sales of its trucks, of Lexus vehicles and hybrids all had record months.

Hyundai Auto Canada Corp. said year-over-year sales grew 20 per cent to 10,101 units for the best November in its history. The South Korean automaker has sold 128,420 vehicles in Canada year-to-date, a gain of 4.6 per cent over the first 11 months of last year.

At Suburu Canada, sales climbed to 2,727 units, up 35.5 per cent over the same period last year.

Mazda Canada said November sales totalled 5,220, which represents an increase of 1 per cent compared to November 2011.

Honda Canada's Honda and Acura divisions combined saw sales fall two per cent over last year to 12,435 units, but a year-to-date increase of 21 per cent.

Kia reported its best November ever with Canadian sales up to 5,719 vehicles, a 17.8 per cent year-over-year increase. For the first 11 months of the year, sales are up 19.7 per cent.

Most luxury automakers did well last month, with Porsche sales up 164 per cent and Audi sales up 30 per cent.

In the U.S., carmakers from Chrysler to Volkswagen reported brisk demand in November, and said sales rose on everything from small SUVs to sedans.

November U.S. sales, when calculated on an annual basis, are likely to be 15 million or more, the highest rate since March of 2008, according to LMC Automotive, a Detroit-area industry consulting firm.

That's higher than the 14.3 million annual rate so far this year, even though November is normally a lacklustre month due to cold weather and holiday anticipation.

Note to readers: This is a corrected story. An earlier version stated that Hyundai was a Japanese automaker.

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