

Automotive News Canada

AUGUST 2020 | VOL. 4, NO. 8 | AUTOMOTIVENEWS.CA FOR BREAKING NEWS AND DIGITAL EDITION

Virtual CIAS is a go as the in-person event is weighed

By STEPHANIE WALLCRAFT
TORONTO CORRESPONDENT

ORGANIZERS OF THE Canadian International AutoShow (CIAS) have until early fall to decide whether the country's largest consumer trade show will proceed as a live event during the pandemic or move entirely online.

Mazda has pulled out of the live Toronto show; Hyundai is planning alternative product reveals

"We will have an event in 2021," said David McClean, CIAS director of marketing. "The technology exists today to build a virtual platform that allows [the public] to experience the manufacturers' brands in a virtual environment.

This ... could further be connected to a physical experience, either concurrently or later on."

CIAS was developing digital options before COVID-19 and will be ready to host a virtual event on the scheduled dates of Feb. 12-21,

2021, McClean said. The development is taking place while assessing the viability of the show's traditional format, he said.

An in-person Toronto show will hinge on the ability to balance visitor safety, government-imposed gathering limits and distancing requirements with cost reductions

SEE A CIAS PAGE 25



Campbell: Decision based on what is "right." FILE PHOTO

Meet leaders and innovators from all walks of the auto industry

2020 CANADIANS TO WATCH

- INNOVATION
- MOBILITY
- RETAIL
- ALTERNATIVE FUELS
- THE SUPPLY CHAIN
- INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
- ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
- AND MORE

P15-21

PROS AND CONS TO WORKING FROM HOME
P12-13

2020 SALES REBOUND

Retail shrugs off pandemic

Pent-up demand is revising forecasts to be as high as 1.8 million vehicles this year; fleet pain will continue

By GREG LAYSON
DIGITAL AND MOBILE EDITOR

NEW-VEHICLE SALES IN July were so much stronger than expected that analysts have adjusted their 2020 forecast upward, and some think automakers might be able to curb incentive spending in the latter half of the year.

Sales fell an estimated 4.9 per cent in July to about 165,000 vehicles, compared with the same period a year ago, according to estimates by both DesRosiers Automotive Consultants and Scotiabank Economics.

But the losses might have been concentrated in the fleet segment, not retail.

Scotiabank called the fig-

ures "remarkable given preliminary estimates suggest fleet sales remain significantly negative," it said in its Global Auto Economics Auto News Flash on Aug. 4.

Monthly sales are estimates, now that a majority of automakers have turned to quarterly reporting.

"The momentum is forwards," industry analyst Dennis DesRosiers said in a statement.

"After the brutal sales collapse seen in April, the market had leapt back in May and then June," DesRosiers said. "July saw another step forward."

The latest figures rank July 2020 as the seventh-best July in Canadian automotive history, according to




DesRosiers: "Momentum is forwards." FILE PHOTO

SEE SALES PAGE 29

Automotive News Canada
RETAIL FORUM: DEALER DISCUSSIONS
TUESDAYS • 2 PM EDT

NAVIGATING A NEW NORMAL
SEE P. 26
automotivenews.ca/retailforum

EXCLUSIVE LEAD SPONSOR:



Challenging times, you say? These are some of the people paving the path forward.

2020 CANADIANS TO WATCH

IT'S THE THIRD ANNUAL **CANADIANS TO WATCH**, a special feature that recognizes key players, influencers and rising stars across the entire spectrum of the Canadian auto industry.

There are certainly more Canadians to Watch right across the country, but the stories of the individuals selected for the 2020 edition provide a glimpse of the creativity and energy being brought to bear on an industry caught in a whirlwind of extraordinary events.

MEET THEM OVER **THE NEXT SIX PAGES**



Charged about hydrogen's future

ANDREY TOKAREV

Theoretical physicist, Hydrogen In Motion

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Andrey Tokarev, born in Novocheerkassk in southwestern Russia and a Canadian permanent resident since 2013, joined Hydrogen In Motion (H2M) in 2015. Tokarev, a theoretical physicist, works in the research unit optimizing the nanosponge material used in H2M's innovative hydrogen storage tanks for automotive and stationary applications.

H2M's tank allows hydrogen storage at a fraction of the pressure of conventional tanks, increasing safety, decreasing weight and size and eliminating compression and cooling systems.

The Burnaby, B.C., startup expects to launch its product, which has attracted interest from automakers such as Toyota and Ford, in 2021.

Tokarev, 42, said hydrogen has environmental advantages as a large-scale electric vehicle power source when compared with batteries, which contain toxic materials that present a recycling challenge.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"Now it's a very small fraction, so we don't really face the problem. But if you substitute all the cars with batteries, then you have a full-scale problem which would be very difficult to solve. A hydrogen-powered car has a much better perspective in this sense."

Researcher aims to make AI more I

FRANCIS LI

Co-founder and solutions manager, DarwinAI

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Ottawa-born Francis Li, 29, is a co-founder of DarwinAI, which sprang from the University of Waterloo's research hub in Ontario.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is crucial to driver-assistance and autonomous-vehicle systems, detecting objects or people in a vehicle's path. DarwinAI uses its AI to analyze and interpret clients' AI models, including compressing them so they run more efficiently and faster. It can also provide insight into how the technology arrived at its decision. The process gen-

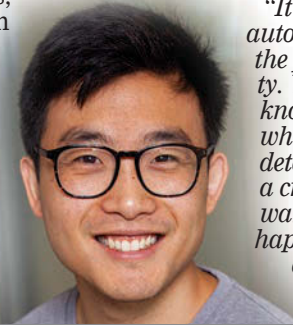
erates savings by reducing needed computational power and expensive hardware.

DarwinAI's work, which improves the safety and reliability of AI, has attracted interest from automakers. The company is working with the Audi Electronics Venture unit of the automaker and other car companies not announced publicly.



IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"It's important for automated vehicles from the perspective of safety. You really want to know, for example, when the car doesn't detect a person; or if a crash happens, you want to know why that happened and how you can prevent it in the future."



Working to put out the welcome mat for China

WARREN ALI

Senior vice-president of innovation, Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

If a China-based automaker ever puts down roots in Canada, Warren Ali's efforts to champion the Canadian automotive supply industry will have had a direct impact.

In his role as senior vice-president of innovation for the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association (APMA), 48-year-old Ali was part of the Canadian delegation that attended the Shanghai auto show in 2017. He spoke on technology-related topics and attended meetings with China-based technology compa-

nies and automakers, efforts that laid the groundwork for lasting relationships.

Ali, who joined the APMA full time in 2016 after spending much of his career in government and the private sector, has also been part of the APMA's Project Arrow, which aims to assemble an entirely Canadian concept vehicle to showcase the capability of the nation's automotive supply sector.



IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"We fully expect Chinese [automakers] to be able to come over here at some point. ... Hopefully, when — and not if — they make their move into North America, they would consider Canada being that one key market."



Switching gears to the industry's new normal

DIANA CONTE

Conference and event coordinator, Trillium Automobile Dealers Association

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Planning for Ontario-based Trillium Automobile Dealers Association's annual conference and expo in April was well under way when COVID-19 hit. Diana Conte, 31, had to switch the in-person event to a virtual one now planned for September. "We could have paused, but as the voice of the industry, we couldn't remain silent. We have to provide dealers with resources."

During lockdown, Conte gathered information for governments to have service departments considered essential and helped create safety guidelines for dealerships reopening their showrooms.

Conte now works with new methods, including webinars and virtual events, to reach the association's more than 1,000 new-car dealers. "We need to stay on top of trends and technologies. If we don't evolve, we won't make it."

IN HER OWN WORDS:

"The more we can provide to our members, the better. There is a new shopper, and the industry is one that is constantly shifting and evolving. We need to evolve along with it and identify new opportunities to our dealer members in order for them to have strong stores."



Retail was in flux, then COVID-19 hit

SARAH HINDLE

General manager of future retail, Pfaff Automotive Partners

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Since November 2019, Sarah Hindle has been in charge of the future-retail operations of Ontario-based Pfaff Automotive Partners. And with the COVID-19 pandemic accelerating change in the industry, that future has arrived sooner.

Hindle, 37, has overseen Pfaff

Automotive's shift to single-point-of-contact sales, meaning a customer would interact with only one person during the sales process.

The group had planned to slowly launch the feature store by store, but Pfaff instead decided to roll out the new sales process at seven of its stores, including BMW, Audi, Mini, Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz dealerships.

"That was supposed to take the entire year," Hindle said, "But I guess the one thing that COVID did affect was that there was an opportunity to make some changes more rap-

idly than we had intended to."

The change, combined with Pfaff's no-haggle pricing policy, is designed to help customers, Hindle said. Of particular interest is convincing younger people, who find traditional automotive retail unappealing, to be more willing to come into the store to buy a new vehicle.

IN HER OWN WORDS:

"For me, the goal is to continue to do things within our industry that change the way people perceive our business."

Protecting Canada's 'critical role'

BRIAN KINGSTON

CEO, Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers Association

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

A new continental trade deal. Warp-speed technical change. An economy-rocking pandemic. Brian Kingston, newly minted head of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers Association, is eager to take on the challenge.

"I frankly can't wait to get started," said Kingston, 36, who in August replaced the retiring Mark Nantais, the longtime face of the trade group representing the Detroit Three in Canada.

Kingston, based in Ottawa, wants regular engagement with the politicians and government officials whose decisions on topics from regulation to investment incentives are key to the health of Canada's auto industry.

An economist, Kingston has been immersed in auto-sector issues, and especially trade, through previous roles as vice-president of the Canadian Business Council and policy analyst with federal government departments.

Among his first priorities: seeing through the implementation of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement and ensuring that Canada "continues to play a critical role



in the overall North American auto-supply chain."

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"Given the overwhelming contribution that auto and auto parts make to our GDP, it seems to me to be a pivotal time for the industry, and this is a pivotal role. ... I'm looking forward to getting into auto issues at a very deep level."

Her vision: Safe and easy transportation for all

ASAL NAHIDI

Vehicle dynamics controls lead engineer, General Motors Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Just one of Asal Nahidi's goals as a vehicle engineer?

"To see that a blind person can travel by himself or herself without any inconvenience or safety concerns, hopefully within the next few years."

Talk about aiming high. But consider that in just two years at the General Motors Canadian Technical Centre in Markham, Ont., Nahidi has filed 15 patents in the ultra-complex field of vehicle controls systems and is working on 14 more.

Nahidi, 32, came to Canada from Iran to earn a Ph.D at the University of Waterloo in Ontario. Her next stop might have been GM's Michigan research centre, but the U.S. travel ban on Iranian citizens meant instead a position with GM Canada.

She's moving toward Canadian citizenship and is "so happy for this opportunity."

The best parts of her job, she says, are working on complex problems — physics and mathematics are her passions — and interacting with GM teams on advances that for the young engineer can never be too far-reaching.



IN HER OWN WORDS:

"Never give up on your dreams no matter who you are or where you are right now. I personally never imagined having a Ph.D from a top-ranked Canadian university and working on world-class engineering for GM Canada. And as a female engineer, I would also say never let that male-dominated industry make you question your capabilities and confidence."

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary people.

Congratulations **Diana** on being named one of Automotive News' "Canadians To Watch".



Diana Alexandra Conte
Marketing Manager, TADA



TADA.ca

Helping lead mobility push

SHERIN ABDELHAMID

Technical adviser, automotive and mobility innovation, Autonomous Vehicle Innovation Network at the Ontario Centres of Excellence

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

The Autonomous Vehicle Innovation Network (AVIN) is an important component of Ontario's leadership push in mobility technology, and Sherin Abdelhamid finds herself at the centre of it.

Abdelhamid, 35, came from Egypt in 2010 to earn her Ph.D at Queen's University's School of Computing in Toronto, joining AVIN in 2018 as a technical adviser for automotive and mobility innovation.

"This basically involves leading and managing all aspects related to the technical consultancy, research and development," said Abdelhamid, who was an adjunct professor at Queen's after graduating.

AVIN publishes quarterly public reports on its website to raise awareness and supplies data and analysis to government and industry. Abdelhamid is especially proud of developing AVIN's data index, which provides a central location for sharing relevant datasets to support the research, development and testing of products and solutions for future mobility technologies, such as connected and autonomous vehicles.



IN HER OWN WORDS:

"These mobility technologies are going to revamp how people and goods move. It's the way toward reaching vision zero, which is basically the target of having zero traffic-related fatalities and serious injury. So, the impact is huge."

Martinrea exec answers the question: Does the plan add up?

EMILY CRAWFORD

Senior manager of financial planning and analysis, Martinrea International Inc.

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

As Martinrea looks to navigate an automotive landscape changed by a pandemic and a new North American trade deal, Emily Crawford makes sure the company's leaders are aware of the financial ramifications of any decisions they make.

"We realized that our operational leaders really needed the visibility to make better decisions," Crawford said of Martinrea, Canada's third-largest auto supplier by annual sales to automakers.

"And without having financial expertise to make those decisions, you're not necessarily going to make the best decisions for the company."

After working in the energy sector, Crawford, 29, joined Martinrea in 2016 as part of its metallics unit before leading its financial planning and analysis team. That unit focuses on strategic planning, forecasting and financial modeling, among a range of responsibilities.

With the supplier looking to secure more business as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement is implemented, Crawford's role figures to grow as the company's leaders look to increase sales in a rapidly changing environment.

IN HER OWN WORDS:

"You can give someone a fish or you can teach them how to fish, right? It's really about developing good, financial tools that you can give to an operational team that they can use to make better decisions... We're still here to help, but at the same time we really want to empower the team."



Be it cricket or cars, he's accomplished on the pitch

DARIUS D'SOUZA

Senior manager, Aftersales, Nissan Canada Inc.

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

At 30 years of age, Darius D'Souza has already accumulated nine years of experience in automotive retail and is the youngest senior manager at Nissan Canada Inc. The accomplishments of this Mississauga, Ont., native with Canada's national cricket team helped him land a scholarship at Loughborough University in England.

While earning his bachelor of arts in computer science and business, D'Souza began to learn the auto industry through a co-op placement in London with Toyota. After returning to Canada in 2013, he joined Nissan and has risen rapidly through the ranks.

D'Souza oversees field operations and business planning across the country as Nissan's senior manager of aftersales, a role he has held since 2018. D'Souza's leadership helped the team win the Global Nissan Aftersales Award in 2017 and 2018.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"There is so much data ... the success is in being able to comb through the data and identify what action to take. You want to avoid paralysis by analysis and say: 'I think this is going to work. We're just going to go with it.'"



A car guy leads Volvo's charge into future

HUGUES BISSONNETTE

Country manager, Polestar Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

In May 2019, Hugues Bissonnette was appointed to launch Polestar, Volvo's electric performance-vehicle brand. A lifelong car aficionado, Bissonnette, 45, could name the makes and models of all the nameplates on the road at age 5. His 23-year career with Volvo included sales and marketing leadership roles in Canada, the United States and Sweden.

Bissonnette's new role comes as the auto industry undergoes seismic changes that are reshaping vehicle technology and the retail landscape. It's no doubt, he said, that shopping behaviour is moving online "at lightning speed."

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"Polestar is, in a way, the new kid on the block, launching a new performance electric-car brand which is supported by 93 years of history in engineering and manufacturing know-how from Volvo. ... The goal to reach 100 per cent zero-emission vehicles by 2040 in Canada is ambitious but achievable, should the rest of Canada follow Quebec and B.C.'s leadership in properly supporting and investing into electrification."



For security expert, safety starts with human networking

IKJOT SAINI

Assistant professor, University of Windsor, cybersecurity in connected vehicles

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Ikjot Saini is all about connections, the kind driven by electronics and computer code that are transforming transportation, and the often-lagging human connections needed to keep this technology safe.

"Everybody is working on their own segment but there is no collaborative approach to security," said the researcher, who at 28 has already built a name as an expert in cybersecurity and privacy related to connected vehicles.

Creating such linkages is a priority for Saini. She's the founder of the Windsor, Ont., chapter of the Automotive Security Research Group, a networking body that crosses corporate lines to identify threats to the auto industry. She is helping open dialogues with regulators on identifying privacy issues and taking steps to protect personal data.

And the newly appointed assistant professor of computer science is also part of efforts to attract more women to science and technology.

One obvious benefit in improving the gender balance in these fields? "Women are more collaborative."

IN HER OWN WORDS:

"I'm a very curious person: 'What would happen if we do it this way? What would happen if we change this?' I wanted to get into a field that was new, and very relevant and tangible."



Automotive passion spurs Genesis manager's career

KRISTINA COVELLO-GARCIA

Senior manager, network development and operational excellence, Genesis Motors Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Few people know the car industry like Kristina Covello-Garcia, the Genesis Motors Canada senior manager overseeing dealer expansion for the Hyundai luxury division.

While she was attending university, she assembled Ford pickups in Oakville, Ont. As a business graduate she worked for General Motors as a district service manager in Saskatchewan and sales supervisor in British Columbia. As a Hyundai corporate manager she helped with the transformation of Canadian dealerships that incorporated a richer bronze-and-copper styling.

And underlying every entry on her robust resume is a passion for vehicles well suited to a brand that emphasizes style and performance along with a "we-come-to-you" online purchasing strategy.

"My father used to turn wrenches, so from a very early age anything with an engine excited me," said Covello-Garcia, 38, who got her motorcycle licence at 16 and today rides a Harley-Davidson.

With two children to see through the COVID-19 disruption, and a network of 25 Genesis "distributors" and growing, "I've never been busier," she said.

"I absolutely love it."

IN HER OWN WORDS:

"Hyundai's like home for me, it's like a family. And Genesis is growing fast and it's amazing to be part of this innovative brand that is truly challenging traditional ways."

In warranty work, the watchword is diplomacy

YUSUF DASSUT

Supervisor, warranty support, Hyundai Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Warranty staff are the diplomatic corps of the automotive world. They seek amicable — or at least acceptable — solutions while always being aware that they carry the corporate flag.

"Anything you say to dealers, to a vendor, to a customer, anybody, you're not using your name, you're using Hyundai Canada. You are the Hyundai brand," said Yusuf Dassut. "It's a big responsibility."

A mechanical engineer by training, Dassut, 49, must rely just as much on people skills in his role as Hyundai Canada's warranty supervisor. He oversees all support of the Global Warranty Management System, claim adjudication, dealership reviews and parts requests, including inspections and parts testing.

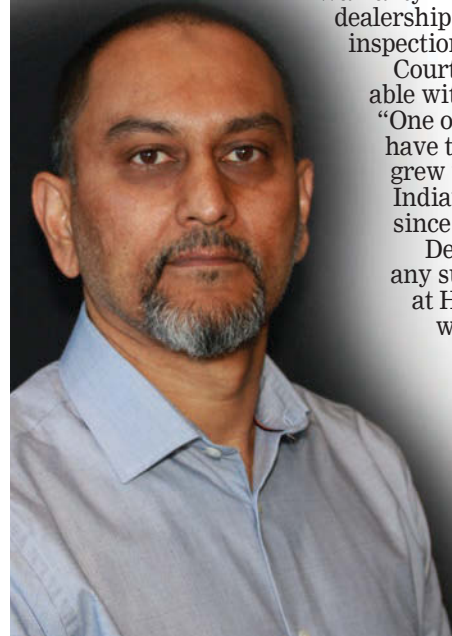
Courteous and even-tempered, he's comfortable with the pressures of the role.

"One of the biggest challenges is when you have to say yes or no," says Dassut, who grew up in Mauritius, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, and has worked for Hyundai since coming to Canada in 2010.

Deferential as any diplomat, he credits any success to the "very supportive people" at Hyundai, which he calls "a great place to work."

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"I like a company that's dynamic, that keeps changing and is very competitive in the market. ...When you get new products, you get technical change, you learn."



Leading Cox's digital drive into Canada

STEPHANIE TURNER

Digital solutions leader, Cox Automotive Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

As digital solutions leader of Cox Automotive Canada, Stephanie Turner, 33, oversees Kelley Blue Book's expansion in the Canadian digital space and is helping bring Cox's Manheim auctions further online.

And those projects are proving to be crucial for Cox as it navigates the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's been a very interesting year," Turner said. "Our auctions had all sorts

of transitions to a digital format very quickly and efficiently, and we've been able to do that quite successfully, and that really speaks to our team's capabilities and how quickly we can pivot."

Turner, a Canadian citizen who was born in Chile, joined Cox Automotive Canada in 2015 and was its director of product and corporate strategy. In that role, she helped develop and launch a host of new technologies and products across the company's various businesses.

IN HER OWN WORDS:

"Once I discovered automotive, I was really impressed with the breadth and depth of the automotive space. As a consumer, it's like an iceberg. You only see what's on the surface. Just below the water, there's such a big industry, and getting to learn about it was very rewarding."

He put Genesis at the genesis of online sales

SEAN COULSON

Director of OEM products, Motoinsight

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

If you bought a Genesis vehicle in Canada without ever leaving your home, you have the team at Motoinsight to thank.

"Seeing every vehicle that Genesis sells in Canada going through that platform and seeing them on the road and knowing that that customer used our technology to buy their car without a doubt — that's pretty cool. I still find that rewarding," said Sean Coulson, Motoinsight's director of OEM products.

And now Coulson, who joined Motoinsight in 2016, is charged with helping automakers in Canada, the United States and elsewhere navigate the digital world as they look to bring more of the shopping process online. Coulson, 33, said the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift to e-commerce, and many automakers that historically have not invested heavily in digital retail are suddenly "getting really interested." Coulson and his team appear poised to be at the forefront as automakers roll out new digital platforms.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"Automotive, with the exception of real estate, is really the last white-space opportunity to bringing out an e-commerce experience to the retail public. So there's just so much opportunity there and so much to try and so many problems to solve."



A passion for environmental progress

TAMMY GIROUX

Manager, government relations, General Motors of Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Studying environmental biology, Tammy Giroux never expected to work for a car company. Then, a university placement with GM Canada's fledgling office of the environment "changed my whole direction." Giroux changed GM's direction, too. A full-time opening came up but required an engineering degree.

"They didn't even know that my program existed," she said. "I had to sell myself. I had to say, 'Look, I had something I could add that's a value.'"

Giroux has delivered plenty of value. The 45-year-old native of Newfoundland has been central to GM's efforts to establish a landfill-gas co-generation plant in St. Catharines, Ont., and secure an innovative environmental permit covering air, storm water and waste management at the CAMI plant in Ingersoll, Ont. She helped navigate medical requirements for producing COVID-19 masks — new territory for the automaker — and is working with local officials to sow butterfly-friendly grasses along the new test track in Oshawa.

A constant in every assignment: unwavering passion.

"GM has had a long history of being landfill-free," she said, "but does that mean we're done? No. We're still looking every year at the next project."

IN HER OWN WORDS:

"I like the fact that my job is always changing. I like the fact there's always a new — I don't want to say problem — but just something out there I can find a way or a solution to make better. Better for the plant, better for the environment, better for the community I'm working with."



Engineer embraces a job for the paint-hearted

TORI ROY

Senior engineering analyst, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Tori Roy developed a new pastime after joining Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada (TMMC) in 2016: eyeballing competitors' cars.

"One of my new favourite things to do in traffic is to evaluate the paint quality in other vehicles," said Roy, who at 27 is senior engineering analyst in the paint department of the TMMC Woodstock West Plant in Ontario.

The University of Waterloo chemical engineering grad, who grew up in nearby Ingersoll, Ont., supports production in the paint shop under Toyota's mantra of *kaizen*, or continuous improvement. Roy troubleshoots quality issues and works on process efficiency and cost improvements.

Roy had a leading role in the introduction of new technology that includes a new paint pre-treatment process, which had to be adapted to Canadian environmental regulations. Woodstock, which builds the RAV4 crossover, was the first North American plant to adopt it.

Roy hopes to stay at Toyota and advance in the company, which she calls a good place for a manufacturing engineer to work.



IN HER OWN WORDS:

"When they teach you problem-solving, they say you find the change point and then you fix it. Unfortunately, in a complex process such as paint, that change point is not always obvious. Quite often, it's not obvious at all."

Beyond pandemic, an outlook of Infiniti possibilities

STEVE RHIND

Managing director, Infiniti Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

Steve Rhind has had his hands full since taking over as head of Infiniti Canada in April.

Nissan has promised to overhaul its luxury brand by sharing platforms as part of a larger turnaround strategy. At the same time, the Infiniti brand has had to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, which sent sales plunging this year.

So Rhind, 48, said he has spent much of his time in his first few months on the job connecting with Infiniti dealers to gauge their feelings on those issues, and looking ahead to important product launches.

"We've got a lot of good things to look forward to, in particular the QX55 and QX60" crossovers.

"Obviously, we're still getting through the COVID situation, and that's a very important part of what we're doing. But we're seeing past that and looking toward the future as much as we can."

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"The good news is that we're not dealing with the same [pandemic-related] issues that we were just 60 days ago. We're talking about how to ramp up and meet the consumer demand that's there. That's an encouraging thing."



Balancing automaker, dealers to better serve customers

WILLIAM HA

Customer experience supervisor, Kia Canada

CHOSEN BECAUSE:

It's not just anyone who sees the pandemic disruption as an opportunity to improve customer experience. During April and May — the height of COVID-19 — William Ha's team not only reviewed customer-service survey scores weekly, they also looked at pandemic-related comments to determine consistent pain points and develop solutions for Kia's dealer network.

As well, efforts such as dealer staff training programs have boosted customer-service-index scores for owners of popular nameplates such as the Telluride utility vehicle and the Stinger sedan, said Ha, 39.

"As Kia continues to diversify our consumer base through innovative product offerings in the Canadian market, it is important that we also continue to evolve our customer-service standards."

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"Social distancing has upended our industry, and dealerships will have to change and adapt quickly. People who want to be valuable in the industry and earn more need to adopt technology in their roles, be able to wear multiple hats and be genuinely customer-centric in our new business environment."

