

THIS WEEK >



GM PUTS C7 ON HOLD

THE QUESTION IS, HOW LONG MUST FANS WAIT FOR A NEW CORVETTE?

» CORVETTE RACING'S C6.R won the American Le Mans Series' inaugural Green Challenge competition at Petit Le Mans ("Green Challenge Debuts," Oct. 13), but General Motors' troubles with the type of green that really matters have thrown the Corvette's future into disarray.

Multiple sources confirm that the General's financial crisis has led the company to put whatever plans it had for the next-generation Corvette on indefinite hold, with no official or set timetable.

In this climate—we've even heard tales of janitors removing lightbulbs from corporate headquarters in an effort to save money—not only is an all-new C7 now more than just a few years away, but even a significantly refreshed or upgraded C6 looks unlikely to appear anytime soon.

One version of the story says that when the decision was made to shelve the C7 for the time being, a plan was suggested to upgrade the C6 significantly in 2012 as a '13 model. Today's Corvette would be eight years old at that point and as much as 12 years old by the time the upgraded car was finally phased out in favor of the C7. Had this occurred, the C6 would have gone down as tied with the C4 generation as the second-longest-serving model in Corvette history. As things stand, multiple sources say this idea also is dead.

Perhaps the most disconcerting thing for fans is not that a new car has been delayed but that GM leadership does not appear to

have a clear roadmap for the Corvette's future. On the other hand, no one has suggested that the model is in danger of becoming extinct. While the Corvette is the most visible GM product to enthusiasts and therefore the subject of much speculation, the fact is that GM's entire product portfolio was under review as of press time.

"Whether [you are talking about] the C6

denied that there ever was a specific year targeted for the C7's launch. And he acknowledged that new-in-2007 federal standards pushing corporate average fuel economy to 35 mpg by 2020 are playing a role in determining the layout and hardware of the next-generation Corvette but stressed that the issue "hasn't inhibited Corvettes. No one is saying we're not doing



Corvettes will race through at least 2010, but today's C6 (above) is set to continue in the marketplace for years after that.

or C7, I'm not going to comment on future product [specifics], including engines or any of that," Corvette vehicle-line executive Tom Wallace told *AutoWeek*. "We're still working on future Corvettes, but the scope of change is not yet decided. There are changes, some neat stuff, coming for 2010 that I can't talk about yet."

However, Wallace did not imply that those changes would cause anyone to consider the 2010 C6 to be a new car. He also

Corvettes. We're still bullish on Corvettes."

Asked whether there was any chance that the car could die, Wallace was emphatic. "No way," he said.

But with the next car's characteristics not even decided and GM in financial disarray, we don't anticipate the next incarnation of America's sports car to bow before 2014—and we won't be surprised if that estimate turns out to be optimistic.

—MAC MORRISON