

## Wal-Mart calls brick campaign a PR 'stunt'

### Store opponents begin fundraiser

CHRIS WILSON-SMITH

Ben Bennett is invoking the space-rock image of Pink Floyd in a revamped campaign against a north-end Wal-Mart. The 'Another Brick Against the Wal-Mart' drive is aimed at boosting fundraising efforts by playing off the British band's hit song from the '70s, said Bennett, a spokesperson for Guelph's Residents for Sustainable Development.

"I just thought it was time to do something quirky to get people's attention," he said.

But the "quirky" campaign is drawing fire from Wal-Mart.

The giant retailer dismissed the group's efforts yesterday as nothing more than a "cheap publicity stunt."

If anything, the idea was lifted directly from a similarly-titled fundraiser the retailer backed in 2001 to honour Canada's veterans, said Andrew Pelletier, a Wal-Mart spokesperson.

"For them to hold that kind of campaign after we've done one for veterans is in poor taste," Pelletier said.

"And if memory serves me correctly, a lot of the veterans we honoured through this campaign were from Guelph," Pelletier said.

"It makes me question why they would apparently lift our idea to do something like this."

Bennett argued the inspiration came to him as "just a fun thing to do."

"But it's true not everyone will get the joke," he said.

Facilities like hospitals use brick campaigning to help pay for new construction work. After purchasing a brick, the buyer can get a family name or message inscribed. Bricks were sold to support the Juno Beach Centre, a memorial and learning centre in France at the site of Canadian landings on D-Day. Wal-Mart has supported fundraising for the project.

But the residents' group will instead be issuing 'paper bricks' -- at \$100 each -- in the form of certificates.

The group is also selling \$1,000 certificates, which it bills as 'Great Walls -- made in China but not sold at Wal-Mart.'

Raising money outside of occasional fundraising efforts is critical with a pivotal court decision looming, Bennett said. Until early this year, Bennett had been spearheading the group's legal challenges. But as the case rose through the judicial ranks, getting a "real lawyer" became a necessity, he said. Bennett said he hopes to raise at least \$20,000 by the end of summer to help pay for legal fees.

"Each ruling can cost up to \$10,000 in legal expenses, and we can expect this to go on for a while," he said.

The group's 10-year battle with Wal-Mart could come to a head late this summer, when a divisional court will hear its appeal opposing the retailer's plans for a store at Woodlawn Road and Woolwich Street, close to the Ignatius Jesuit Centre.

"Whatever way the ruling goes, there will be an appeal. This has been going on for a decade -- I don't expect Wal-Mart to quit any time soon."

Toronto Judge Ellen Macdonald granted a request by the group in late March to appeal the Ontario Municipal Board's January ruling, saying there are still "unresolved issues" over the store's compatibility with the retreat centre.

And it's the exact meaning of compatibility that the court will focus on in August. Wal-Mart has argued the ruling should focus on the physical compatibility of the 135,000-square-foot store. The residents' group and the Jesuit Centre argue social implications also need to be considered.

Lawyers for Wal-Mart developer 6&7 Developments, the City of Guelph and the residents' group will argue the point before the court in August.

(see next page for the editorial and RSD's response)

Guelph Mercury Editorial  
(May 25, 2005)

## No winner in 'brick' spat

After 10 long and divisive years before planners, city council and the Ontario Municipal Board, the machine known as the great Wal-Mart debate continues to chug along in Guelph.

But with the years comes desperation, quirkiness and unrest on both sides.

The main opponent in the case, Residents for Sustainable Development, has now taken to emulating Pink Floyd, selling paper "bricks" as part of its "Another Brick Against the Wal-Mart" campaign to raise \$20,000 to cover continuing legal fees. They are looking towards a court date in August after appealing a previous OMB ruling which found in favour of Wal-Mart.

Ben Bennett, the group's public face, says the campaign needed to be quirky to get the attention of the city's residents, undoubtedly many of whom want to see a Wal-Mart at the corner of Woolwich Street and Woodlawn Road.

But as the residents' group raises funds in a manner normally suited to a hospital or other charity, some in the city must be wondering whether there is a more worthwhile cause to which to commit. Cancer research organizations or the local food bank need money, along with many others.

On the other side of the debate is a Wal-Mart spokesperson claiming the residents' group lifted the brick idea from a Wal-Mart campaign started in 2001 to raise money for Canada's veterans.

This is nothing short of a ridiculous assumption, as the idea has been used by many to raise money, and it is unlikely Bennett used the idea in order to ruffle some feathers at Wal-Mart's corporate offices.

While both sides have a clear right to continue the battle in whatever fashion they see fit, we can only hope the fight does not become further removed from the actual facts of the case. It could soon become hard to discern whether the fight remains one of planning issues or personal agendas. The latest turn of events leaves neither side looking good.

RSD's response:

Guelph Mercury—Letter to the Editor  
(May 31, 2005)

## Fundraising necessary in Wal-Mart fight

Dear Editor - Re: 'No winner in 'brick' spat' (Guelph Mercury, May 25).

Your reference to our 'Another Brick Against the (Wal)Mart' campaign as a "brick spat" is an unusual choice of words for a fundraising effort.

Readers will no doubt make up their own minds by checking our website ([www.not-there.ca](http://www.not-there.ca)), but I can assure you that there is no argument about bricks, just compatibility. We are merely trying to finance a very important court battle that many see as vitally important to this community's future.

If we don't fight to protect our sacred spaces and respect those former citizens -- many of them veterans -- who now rest in the cemeteries adjoining the 6&7 property where Wal-Mart wants to build, who will?

We have no choice. Thus we have to fundraise. Wal-Mart does have a choice.

For several months now, while the legal process has taken its course, we have been trying to get the key players to sit down and look at the big picture.

There is a win-win solution to this issue, but it will take a little work. There are better sites in Guelph for a Wal-Mart and better uses for the 6&7 property.

To date, no one has responded to our efforts. This is unfortunate, but we will continue to try.

Ben Bennett  
Residents for Sustainable Development in Guelph

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(NOTE; THE BRICK CAMPAIGN HAS RAISED MORE THAN \$5,000 TO DATE)