

# Local Christmas sales up over last year: merchants

*But downtown merchants upset over the lack of accessibility on Main Street*

By **CARRIE BRUNET**  
*The Champion*

'Tis the season for spending, and Milton merchants are reaping the benefits.

So far this year, Milton Mall has seen a modest increase in sales of 3 per cent, with electronics, jewelry and ladies' apparel leading the way, according to mall manager Megan Richardson.

"We're hoping that will continue through Christmas," said Ms Richardson, adding that it was too soon to tell.

"Ladies fashion is up substantially," she said, pointing to an increase of 11 per cent.

Jewelry sales have increased 13 per cent while electronics have soared by 18 per cent.

The month of December typically represents a quarter of the mall's annual sales, according to Ms Richardson.

Traditionally, Milton Mall sees an influx of customers the week

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**LINDA THOMAS**

prior to Christmas. Ms Richardson attributed that to residents shopping in larger centres such as Square One or Erin Mills Town Centre in Mississauga.

"When they've exhausted all other venues they come to us," she said.

Also, the bad weather tends to favour local shopping.

"Snow keeps people in Milton," she said.

However, small shop owners on Main Street say the snowy weather isn't conducive to shopping at all.

"People can't even walk out there, never mind park," said Linda Thomas, owner of Lindon's gift and collectibles store.

Because of the winter weather, Ms Thomas has found December sales to be down from November.

"Who would want to come out if they don't have to?" she said.

Zellers has also been hit by the snowy weather, according to manager Scott Weir.

"Sales are slightly down because of a couple snow days," Mr. Weir

said.

However, Mr. Weir said he's confident the store will benefit from an extra weekend before Christmas this year.

The mall sees 19,000 customers (nearly two thirds the population of Milton) over the course of a week, each spending on average \$100.

So what are people spending money on?

Last year's hot ticket items such as Furby ceded popularity to Playstation 2 and scooters, according to Canadian Tire manager David Shuvera.

Demand for those items has been hard to keep up with, he added.

Fiona Kennedy of Nature's Fire, a toy store on Main Street, said she's glad to see a shift in toy purchasing back to basics.

"Parents want hands on stuff for their kids," she said. "And there is so much out there now."

Some of the more popular items range from finger puppets to science kits.

"All the things we used to play with as kids are making a come back," Ms Kennedy said.

For more adult options, remote car starters, DVDs and seasonal wear such as mitts and gloves appear to be popular items this year, according to Mr. Shuvera and Mr. Weir.



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