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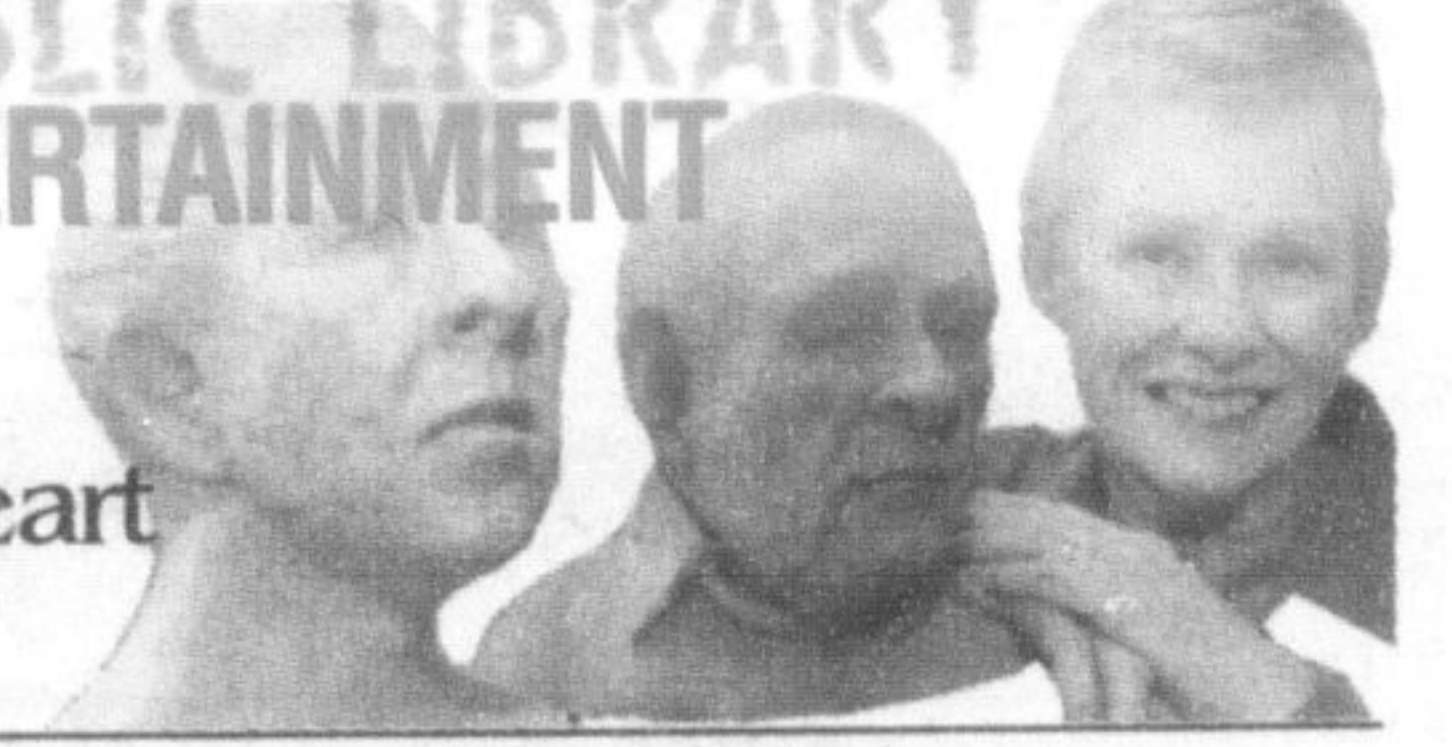
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Mayor Gord Krantz cuts the ribbon to officially open Wal-Mart's Milton store along with district manager Sarah Strachan (centre) and store manager Daria Raymond yesterday morning. Below, Ms Raymond is pictured out front of the store, located at James Snow Parkway and Steeles Avenue. See another photo from the event on page 3.

Photos by GRAHAM PAINE



## Wal-Mart grand opening celebrated

By MELANIE HENNESSEY  
*The Champion*

Retail giant Wal-Mart officially opened its doors at the new Milton store yesterday morning.

Dozens of Milton residents lined up outside the store at the corner of Steeles Avenue and James Snow Parkway to be the first customers to see the facility that's noted to be unique to the chain in Canada.

"Today is an important milestone in the history of Wal-Mart Canada," manager Daria Raymond said to the large crowd that gathered for the pre-opening ceremonies.

"I knew that this store would be very special. As a team, we brought life to this empty box."

Ms Raymond was joined by many other Wal-Mart officials to celebrate the grand opening of the

store that features a pharmacy, one-hour photo centre, portrait studio, auto parts area, Tire/Lube Express car service centre, Vision Centre, refrigerated grocery section, SmartStyle hair salon and McDonald's restaurant, in addition to the usual goods Wal-Mart carries.

"Six weeks ago, we walked in here and it was an empty store. You've made this store what it is," Tom Dowling, store planning set-up supervisor, told the store's employees.

Wal-Mart Senior Vice President of Operations Roland Boudreau said the 133,000-square-foot Milton store is unique in that it has a different floor and décor than other Wal-Marts, a gift registry and subtle changes in the floor plan.

"We basically never build the same store — we're always trying to improve," he said.

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz, who was also at the opening, said Wal-Mart has created employment

opportunities for Milton residents and given them another shopping choice as well.

"I pushed relatively hard on making sure that they (Wal-Mart) got here," he said.

He went on to joke that Wal-Mart is now a "conflict of interest" for him because his granddaughter is an employee there.

The store employs more than 250 local residents, all of which demonstrated exuberance for their new positions during the Milton Wal-Mart "store cheer" just before the doors opened yesterday.

Ms Raymond said her associates have been busy holding fundraising events for the past few weeks, such as a barbecue, pot luck and dress-down day, and managed to raise thousands of dollars for local groups and a school. "We're proud to be part of the community."

Melanie Hennessey can be reached at [mhennessy@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:mhennessy@miltoncanadianchampion.com).

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