



\_PHOTOS: KIM HUGHES/THE GRID



MON NOV 5, 2012

PLACES

# Do the Dollarama

Just because the discount-store chain has become the norm for many Torontonians doesn’t mean it’s still not a strange place to shop.

BY: KIM HUGHES

No matter where you live in the GTA, you are likely near a Dollarama. From Scarborough and East York to Parkdale and Etobicoke, the can’t-miss yellow-and-green signs burn like beacons, offering unbeatable deals on party favours, children’s games, dish scrubbers, ziplock bags, tea towels, spiral notebooks, and sweet/savoury snacks.

Increasingly—and doubtless in sync with the condo boom—Dollaramas are emerging in the city centre. Witness brand-new or recent openings at the Galleria Mall at Dupont and Dufferin, plus Bathurst and Bloor (in the former Sonic Boom location), Woodbine and Danforth, and Front and Sherbourne, among others.

This is good news. Unfailingly crappy candles notwithstanding, Dollaramas offer excellent value on the sorts of things no one should spend a fortune on (i.e.,: St. Patrick’s Day or Halloween decorations) while offering low- or fixed-income shoppers access to essential items (like kitchen wares, pet supplies, toys, and toiletries) that can quickly add up at conventional retailers.

Still, there are some distinctly comic aspects to visiting these stores: Viewing items that flirt with copyright infringement, for instance, or food products by manufacturers you’ve never, ever heard of. And then there are those head-scratcher items that don’t seem to speak to any rational need or desire... and yet there they sit in proud abundance in store after store.

With tongue firmly planted in cheek, we surveyed a mix of new and established Dollaramas citywide in search of weirdness. And boy, did we find it.

**Location:** Front at Sherbourne (#SLM)

**Overall tidiness:** Spotless (including the public washroom).

**Consistency check:** What’s stocked 10 paces down the third aisle to the left of the entrance on the right? Women’s clothing and accessories, including scarves, tights and sports tops.



**Weirdest meat product:** Elite brand canned Vienna Sausage in Chicken Broth.

**It looks like...:** Febreze fabric refresher, but instead it's... *Jazzee Fabric Refresher.*



**Who would actually buy...:** Plastic Solar Driveway Stakes? Are there a lot of under-illuminated residential driveways at Front and Sherbourne?







**Location:** Bathurst and Bloor (#ANX)

**Overall tidiness:** Commendable.

**Consistency check:** What's stocked 10 paces down the third aisle to the left of the entrance on the right? Aluminum cooking pans and electric stove burner liners.

**Weirdest meat product:** Beaver brand Whole Smoked Scallops in Oil.

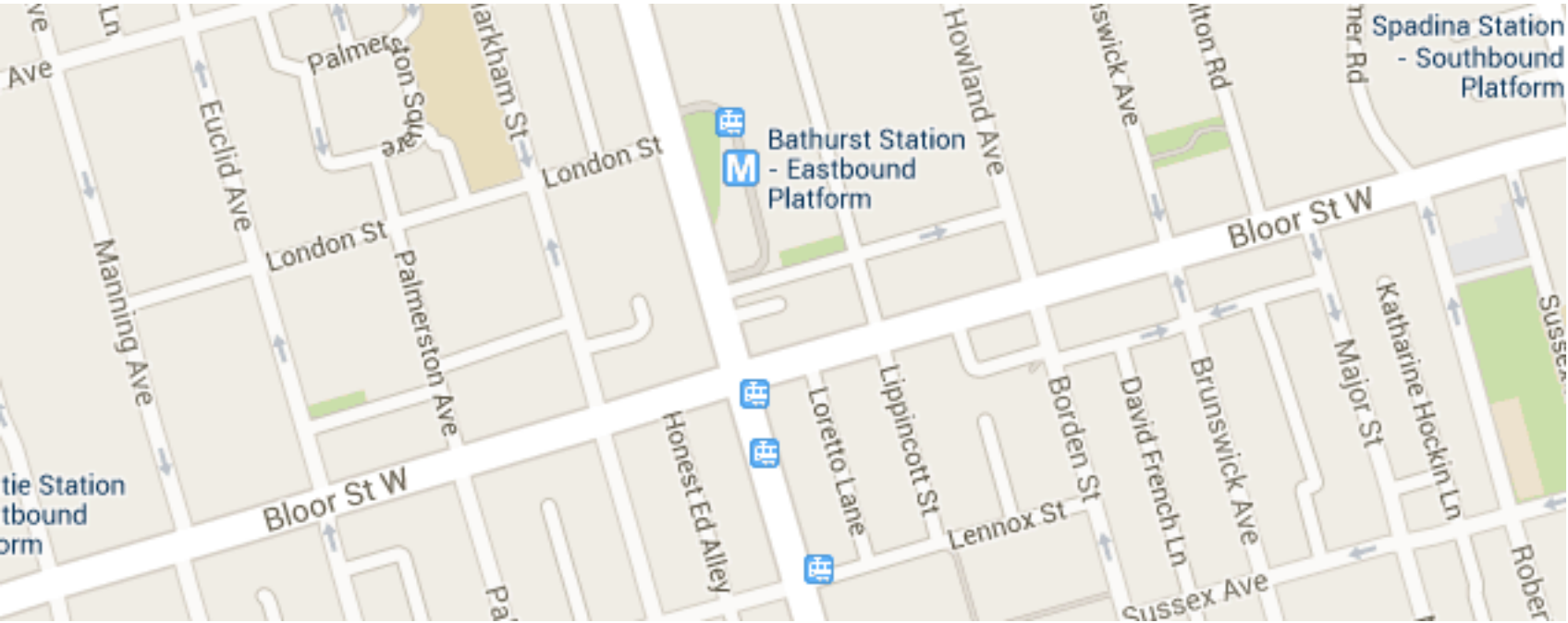
**It looks like...:** *Skippy Peanut Butter* but instead it's... *Dippy Peanut Butter*.



**Who would actually buy...:** A hollow ceramic bootie with fluff around the ankle? It's too narrow to



be a candy dish, too shallow to be a vase... so you're just supposed to look at it? With what, continued astonishment that a tchotchke could be this ugly?



**Location:** Coxwell and Gerrard (#LT1)

**Overall tidiness:** Not too bad.

**Consistency check:** What's stocked 10 paces down the third aisle to the left of the entrance on the right? Halloween costumes and paraphernalia.

**Weirdest meat product:** Gourmet brand snails/escargots in a can.

**It looks like...:** *Garnier Fructis Conditioner*, but instead it's... *Fabulous Fruit Conditioner*.





**Who would actually buy...:** A Solar Powered Dancing Flower? Because nobody wants to be the reckless environmental hog buying electric-powered plastic dancing flowers.



**Location:** Queen West and Dunn (#PRK)

**Overall tidiness:** Surprisingly nice.

**Consistency check:** What’s stocked 10 paces down the third aisle to the left of the entrance on the right? Small storage bins.

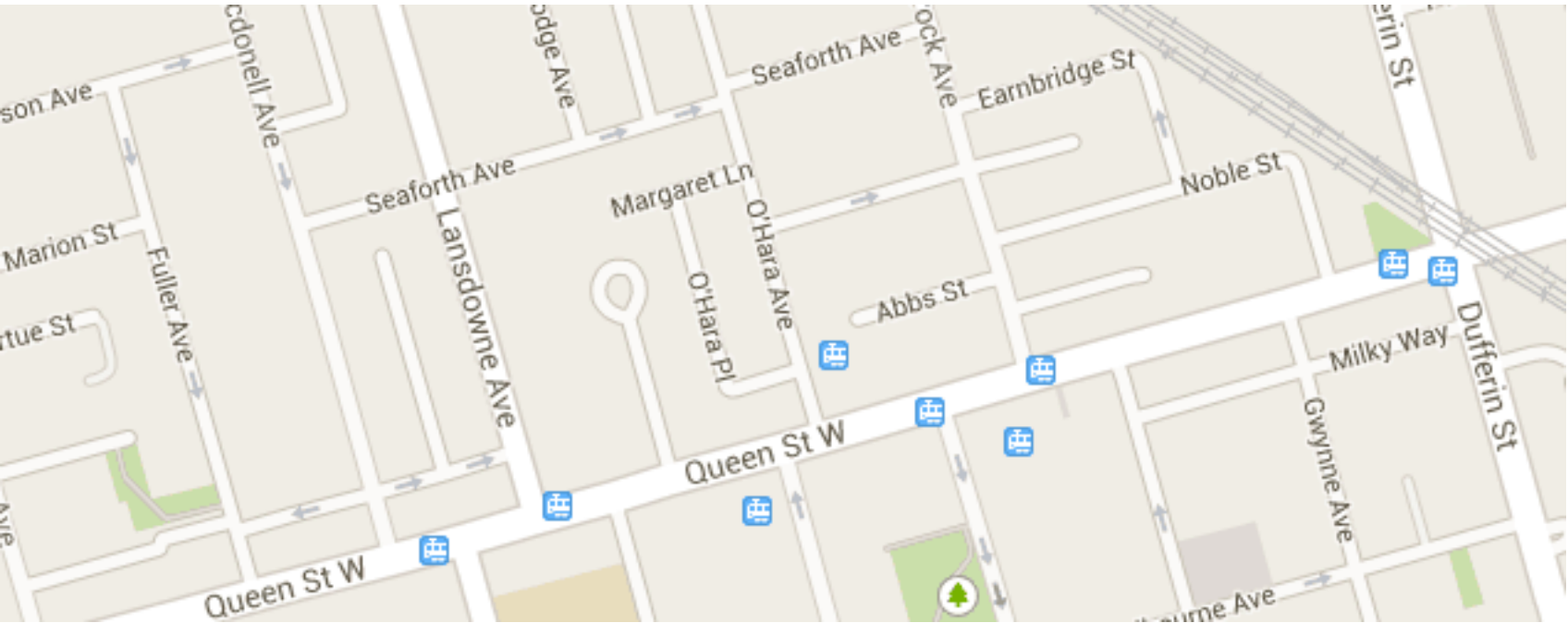
**Weirdest meat product:** Sea Chef Calamari Pieces in American Sauce. (We have no idea what “American Sauce” is, either.)

**It looks like...:** Softsoap *Liquid Hand Soap*, but instead it’s... *Spa Soap Liquid Hand Soap*.





**Who would actually buy...:** The Cadbury Crunchie Twin Fondue Gift Set? For when a Single Cadbury Crunchie Fondue Gift Set just won't cut it?







**Location:** Woodbine and Danforth (#DAN)

**Overall tidiness:** Not so much—the floors could use mopping.

**Consistency check:** What’s stocked 10 paces down the third aisle to the left of the entrance on the right? Kit Kat Bites and other snack-sized sweet treats.

**Weirdest meat product:** A tie between Paris Pate Liver and Sea Chef Squid Pieces in Vegetable Oil.

**It looks like...:** *Aveeno Daily Moisturizing Body Wash* but instead it’s... *Natural Concepts Oatmeal Body Wash*.





**Who would actually buy...:** The Happy Birthday Balloon Weight? Evidently, hockey pucks occasionally need to attend parties deep undercover as hideous “balloon weights.”





post a comment

Latest

Rick

Hey, leave those little solar powered flowers alone. My daughters love them as they swing back and forth on their windows sill. They think the flower is waving to them. LOL.

17

3

11:52 pm on November 14, 2012

Reply

Report

sam

I think the comment on the stakes was because they were being sold at front and sherbourne.... not that they're not useful...

4

3

10:25 pm on November 14, 2012

Report

Denise

This article is FUNNY. Lighten up! And relevant.

Unfortunately most of the stuff is made in sweat shops and has to be the biggest pollutant around, such cheap junk for party favours etc.

11

4

7:50 pm on November 14, 2012

Reply

Report

Coldplayrules

It is fun to point at things and say they are stupid. Wait does these comment make me a hypocrite?

3

1

6:21 pm on November 14, 2012

Reply

Report



Lindy

And just what is wrong with the escargot in cans. Our friends who run an expensive restaurant on the water in Michigan asked me to pick them up all the cans I could for them to serve in their escargot stuffed mushrooms as they are very expensive in the US for the canned...when you can even find them.

 10  6

5:51 pm on November 14, 2012

 Reply  Report

Eggbert

What's so weird about Vienna Sausage in Chicken Broth? Kim Hughes has hit rock botttom.

 8  3

5:19 pm on November 14, 2012

 Reply  Report

Dave

Ever hear of Plants vs Zombies? \$ store version probably cheaper than anything from the official company.

 2  2

3:58 pm on November 14, 2012

 Reply  Report

Mike Mikelson

How did you pass up the condoms, home ovulation test kit and home pregnancy test kits; all available at the Front and Sherbourn store.

 33  0

1:25 pm on November 14, 2012

 Reply  Report

smug

who actually names their kids Kyler? Were they indecisive between Keith and Tyler for some reason?

 12  5

1:22 pm on November 14, 2012

 Reply  Report

you forgot

to rate the number of aisles in each store with the overpowering off-gassing odours, a classic part of the dollarama experience.

 17  1

11:34 am on November 6, 2012

 Reply  Report



Olbert

Or the aisles of off-gassing customers.

 6  0

10:06 pm on November 14, 2012

 Report



Luke

The article about the gross pay phones called and said it wants its lack of relevance back.

 13  0

9:35 am on November 6, 2012

 Reply  Report

Kyler

R.I.P. The Grid

 20  8

5:57 pm on November 5, 2012

 Reply  Report

Allison

I like those solar-powered daisy things. They’re actually really funny once they start jiggling.

 19  3

3:31 pm on November 5, 2012

 Reply  Report

W. K. Lis

Unlike the old 5-n’-10 cent stores (AKA Woolworths and Kresges), most of the products are NOT made in North America, but in sweat shops of China or India. Hence the low prices of the “cheap” goods, because they are cheap in the quality way.

 22  12

1:39 pm on November 5, 2012

 Reply  Report



miло

because people coming to the Dollarstore are looking for high quality goods?

I’ll stick to my \$1 slave made items – thanks

 17  9

2:46 pm on November 5, 2012

 Report



anon

wow shocking – nooooooooooot.

 7  1

5:24 pm on November 5, 2012

 Report



Chiefbrody

Ya think?

 2  1

2:38 pm on November 14, 2012

 Report