



ANNUAL CALGARY TOY STORE AUDIT

LOOKING FOR NON-VIOLENT TOYS AND GAMES FOR YOUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN?

Project Ploughshares Calgary initiated a new annual project in 2013 – a Toy Audit of Calgary toy stores. Eleven Calgary toy stores and toy departments were visited in late October 2013 by volunteers from Project Ploughshares Calgary, the peace education group. The toy store shelves were examined for violent and non-violent toys and games, books and videos.

We looked for games and toys that encourage the use of weapons (historical and modern) for solving conflicts; we looked for how the message was communicated on packaging; we checked the location of toys and games on shelves and in displays; and we checked to see if video sections were following the Alberta ranking and age appropriate rules.

We noticed that independent stores tend to avoid violent items while larger chain stores, whose stock is often shipped from head office, are more likely to carry the more war-like items. At times, the issue is with manufacturers and we encourage parents and grandparents to contact any major companies (eg: Lego, Playmobil or Nerf) and comment on particular products.

We will be continuing this project during the month of October/early November in time for the busy holiday shopping season, with results of the audit sent to all Calgary media.

Project Ploughshares gave **Certificates of Merit** to all stores ranked **Excellent and Commendable**.

For us **excellent** means that there is less than 1% of violent toys or games for a shopper to buy. **Commendable** stores have a very high percentage of great choices but shoppers need to watch for those toys that in any way promote over-aggressive or violent play. (Take special note of some products by Playmobil and Lego).

1. Excellent: Once Upon a Child, Ten Thousand Villages, and Monkey Shines
2. We also **commended** Castle Toys, Discovery Hut, and Graphic Kidz as very good places to shop.
3. Livingstone and Cavell was rated as a **good** place to find toys. They have a large assortment of military figures, but in general the toys are nonviolent in nature.
4. Toys R'Us, Indigo and Sears were rated as **acceptable**, although the percentage of violent toys was higher than at the stores noted above.
5. Wal Mart(Westbrook) was deemed as **unacceptable**. There was a very high percentage of violent toys geared towards boys. The video game section was predominantly violent, with graphically violent video games placed quite often at the eye level of a toddler.

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