

**WINNIPEG, MANITOBA**

[WWW.POLLOCKSHARDWARECO-OP.CA](http://WWW.POLLOCKSHARDWARECO-OP.CA)

# Pollock's Hardware Co-op Ltd.

The resurrection of Pollock's Hardware is one of Winnipeg's great CED stories. When store owners Wayne and Lois Cash decided to retire, they put the 85-year-old business up for sale. However, after a year there were still no buyers and Pollock's was forced to close in December 2007.

North End residents refused to lose this local landmark, where knowledgeable staff sell unusual and hard-to-find, and are equally willing to sell customers either "one or one thousand nails." Realizing that a single owner for the store could not be found, locals began to consider owning Pollock's together and found the co-operative model when they considered community ownership options. After a focused effort from many local residents, Pollock's Hardware Co-op reopened on June 21, 2008 and remains one of only a handful of small hardware stores still thriving in the fierce company of big box competition.

The community has rallied and continues to support Pollock's through memberships, investment

and volunteerism. The consumer Co-op sells merchandise to anyone, but encourages customers to purchase a \$25 lifetime membership. As a democratic enterprise, every member has one vote for the board of directors at Pollock's AGM and also receives patronage dividends based on their annual purchases. People also have the opportunity to purchase investment shares in Pollock's Hardware Co-op (for which Manitobans receive a 30 percent personal tax credit through the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit) that are predicted to offer an annual five percent return at the end of a minimum initial three-year holding period. →



➔ The 'little hardware store that could' has exceeded their modest membership goals, and in June 2009 reached 1,250 members. Despite the global economic recession, their first year has been a successful one: Pollock's achieved record sales that were 22 percent higher than those projected in the co-op's business plan, while member equity investments were 38 percent higher than originally predicted.

The democratic member ownership model ensures that the Co-op offers services and supplies that are important to them, including tool rental. In an area filled with aging homes, renovations can become expensive, especially when residents are forced to purchase new items because of the difficulty in replacing the older parts in need of repair. Pollock's does what it can to supply older merchandise in various quantities to meet the needs of local residents.

Pollock's has also distinguished itself in the market by finding a nostalgic niche in hardware; they sell Winnipeg-made woodstoves, wooden toboggans, and Radio Flyer wagons to name a few examples. They also cater to the city's diverse cultural communities by offering a wide range of ethnic cooking tools including cabbage cutters and tortilla warmers.

Pollock's environmental policies will also have long-term benefits for the community, as they aim to be the greenest hardware store in Winnipeg. The store encourages mending and recycling when possible, sells composters and clotheslines, and encourages reduced energy use. In the future, they hope to sell natural gardening aids and aerators. Pollock's is also participating in the provincial rebate program to encourage water conservation; they sell

dual-flush toilets and offer installation through their partnership with BUILD, a local CED training initiative that focuses on energy retrofits on public and low-income housing.

Pollock's has taken co-op principles to heart, as evidenced by their support and partnerships with other community initiatives. In addition to supporting BUILD, Pollock's also sells local products whenever possible: wooden drying racks for clothes, lawn furniture and picnic tables produced by a community enterprise in Altona, metal pails and garbage buckets made in Winnipeg, and home insulation made from recycled paper produced by a community enterprise in Morden.

This year community members organized a Swap & Flea Market in the Pollock's parking lot to raise money for a local charity.

This great story of collective action, local economic development, job and service retention, and democratic ownership

has received support from some unexpected sources. Pollock's Hardware was the only Winnipeg stop on Red Green's book tour (because of the Canadian comedian's commitment to support independent businesses) and was featured on Stuart McLean's story exchange. As a result of this coverage, Pollock's received membership cheques from across Canada. It is an appealing story because it proves that Canadians do believe in the value of collective community action, particularly in support of small community businesses. Pollock's Hardware Co-op also attests to the fact that local people can make a difference in their communities by working together for their common good.

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