

> STEALTH SHOPPER

# Sporting Life high on fashion, low on big sizes

RITA ZEKAS  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

It is officially winter: flocks of Canada Goose down parkas are proliferating in the city.

I am inspired to check out Sporting Life, allegedly the biggest distributor of Canada Goose, and arrange to meet my insignificant Other's mother, Marcia, there. She arrives before me and is already sporting a Sporting Life bag.

Marcia has purchased a new pair of runners and is steeped in nostalgia. She bought her first pair of serious workout footwear here 30 years ago. (Sporting Life has been in biz for 34 years.)

I am intrigued by the parka with hunter, pheasant and moose pattern on the mannequin immediately inside the front door. I hunt for the price but can't locate it even though there are tags galore. They might want to streamline the tagging system. It is way too much work.

The men's section carries the obligatory sporting goods from hockey wax to skis, but it's not just jock brands in clothing.

They have A to Z: Armani to Zegna.

The kid's wear section includes Ralph Lauren and mini Canada Goose parkas.

We head upstairs to the women's department where it is the land of fleece, tons of North Face and adult onesies in red plaid for \$45 (if you want them with built-in feet, they will set you back \$70).

But what's this? They also carry evening wear. Marcia and I salivate over the long chiffon tutu skirt available in blush, taupe and black for \$98. Sure there are \$475 ski pants but also \$29 bejeweled tank tops and coated jeans in leopard print.

Brands range from Hello Kitty to Missoni. There is clearly a buyer with a good eye at work here.

The fuchsia and tangerine trapper hats in fur and



NICK KOZAK

Sporting Life is stuffed full of designer wear; the men's section has Armani, and in the kid's, Ralph Lauren.

suede combo are yummy. I try on a fabulous hat made from faux feathers by Spirithoods in a "Night Owl" motif but look like a loon in it.

The staff (except for the cranky guy who mocks me for describing a pair of leggings as "cute") is personable and helpful, especially the staffer who gives me a detailed provenance of the Barbour menswear coat with leather patches on the elbows (\$999.99 from \$1,330). Barbour is a Brit brand renowned for waterproof waxed jackets and favoured by Kate Middleton and her mother-in-law.

I fall hard for a pink velvet boho coat with embroidery on the sleeves and studding on the collar. Alas, it is teeny tiny. Does it

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come in adult sizing? Nope; size two is the biggest. I dodge that \$850 bullet.

What is going on with the predominance of small sizes? A plaid, punk shirt with gold bling on the shoulder and back calls out to me. They have it in tons of size small, one size medium but no large — and they just came in. There is size large in their Bikes and Boards store just north of Eglinton. Does that mean people are smaller the further one ventures north of Yonge?

As we take our leave, a male shopper is surveying the main floor pondering, "How much can I spoil my kids?"

Plenty, Dad. Plenty.  
[ritazekas@rogers.com](mailto:ritazekas@rogers.com)

## >SPORTING LIFE, 2665 YONGE ST.

**Intimidation factor:** Moderate. The place is huge: big as all outdoors. It's a whopping 45,000 square feet.

**Number of salespeople on floor:** Dozens.

**Response time:** Immediate. I am hailed by a greeter at the front door.

**Vibe:** Mountain Equipment Co-op meets ski chalet. Bring on the mulled wine.

**Price range:** From \$9 for a baby sock monkey to \$1195 for a men's Canada Goose parka.

**Rating:** Three trapper hats out of four.



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## REICH+PETCH

1867 Yonge Street Toronto, ON Canada M4S 1Y5  
TEL (416) 480 2020 FAX (416) 480 1881  
[www.reich-petch.com](http://www.reich-petch.com)  
[info@reich-petch.com](mailto:info@reich-petch.com)

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