

Bricks may bring fresh air to stuffy sealed-up buildings

By Trish Dyer
Special to The Star

OTTAWA — Tired of being in that stuffy office building? Longing for a breath of fresh air?

Chris Brown may have the answer — a Fresh Air brick. He's selling them to remind people what life is like for those who are made ill by chemical fumes in poorly ventilated buildings.

The freelance film producer says he is one of thousands of Canadians who suffer from environmental hypersensitivity — in his case to petrochemical fumes, including those given off by newsprint and duplicating machine inks, some laundry products and vehicle exhaust.

This means the former Canadian Broadcasting Corp. reporter cannot work in most conventional offices without some type of built-in window fan.

Brown, 36, is hoping his bricks will build a bridge to better understanding of the difficulties he and fellow sufferers face.

He has spent most of the past year lobbying federal cabinet ministers in a one-man campaign aimed at improving environmental standards in federally owned office buildings such as Hull's Terrace de la Chaudiere, known locally as Terrace de la Shoddy-Air.

His bricks, emblazoned with the words Fresh Air, are intended to symbolize a safer working environment to those who spend their days behind sealed windows.

Brown says he does not view the bricks "as a hot Christmas item," and will wait until January to follow up 60 to 70 information sheets he has mailed out across the province.

However, he says, he has already sold about 100 bricks "at \$9.95 each, shipping included,"



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Heave-ho: Chris Brown has been lobbying federal officials for cleaner air in buildings such as Terrace de la Chaudiere, in Hull, Que. The building is known locally as Terrace de la Shoddy-Air.

and says he is prepared to continue for some time.

"I'm not selling the bricks to make money. The idea is to create a self-perpetuating

consciousness-raising campaign," he said.

"The \$2 or so I get back on each brick will go to advertising more, and so on."