

Facts about the Ontario Science Centre.

Contributors

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Facts about the Ontario Science Centre

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Purpose

It isn't easy to describe something that hasn't existed before. That's the way it is with the Ontario Science Centre. It is one of a kind—an invention, really. It's been called the museum of the 21st century. But a museum it isn't—not, at least, in the way most of us have come to regard museums.

The Science Centre is the Province of Ontario's official project to commemorate the Centennial of Canada's Confederation, celebrated in 1967. Originally it was conceived as a museum of science and technology. However, rather than build another repository for storage and display of artifacts, the Ontario Government, together, with the Centre's Board of Trustees, decided to change the Centre's direction when it was in its genesis. Emphasis was put on interpretative exhibits of scientific principles and technological achievements. Most exhibits were designed to be used by the visitor, creating an environment of interaction and involvement.

For youngsters, a primary aim of the Science Centre is to stimulate interest in science and technology through greater perceptual awareness and to show that learning can become fun. For persons of all ages the Centre's concern is to illustrate how the application of science and technology affects their lives and their environment, for better or for worse.

Site and Buildings

The Centre is a complex of three interconnected buildings, situated in the geographic heart of Metropolitan Toronto. The property to the south and west of the intersection of Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue is a part of the Don Valley, with a branch of the Don River running through it. One of the Centre's three buildings sits on the only knoll in this part of the valley. Another building is 90 feet below on the valley floor. The third faces on the west side of Don Mills Road.

The three concrete structures contain more than 450,000 square feet of floor space. They occupy a 20-acre portion of a park-like setting which takes in 180 acres. This property is administered by the Metro Toronto and Region

Conservation Authority, and the Metro Toronto Parks Department.

Raymond Moriyama of Toronto was the architect commissioned by the Ontario Government to undertake the design of the Science Centre. The construction contract was let in March of 1965 to Pigott Construction Company of Toronto, and site preparation began that Spring. Actual construction was begun in the Spring of 1966 and was concluded in the Summer of 1969. Construction costs totalled about \$23,000,000.

The Science Centre was officially opened September 27, 1969, by the then Premier of Ontario, John P. Robarts.

Facilities

Visitors enter the Science Centre through the Reception Building on Don Mills Road. Its two levels provide separate facilities for school children arriving by bus in class groups (lower level) and the general public (upper level). The Reception Building houses assembly areas, cloak rooms, washrooms, ticket booths, information counters, a licensed restaurant and lounge, a cafeteria, office space, a science shop-book store, and a central services wing for heating and air-conditioning.

An enclosed bridgeway across a part of the valley leads to the Tower Building, set on a knoll. Architecturally, this is the most interesting of the three buildings, featuring a central, triangular Great Hall, with circular towers set at each point of the triangle. Included in the upper storeys of the towers are administrative offices, a 485-seat auditorium, three smaller presentation theatres, and working space for scientists, designers and teachers who are members of the Centre's staff. Three exhibit halls occupy lower levels of the towers.

A three-step series of escalators leads to the Valley Building, which houses nine exhibit halls on two levels totalling 110,000 square feet in exhibit space. It also contains workshops for development of exhibits, most of which are designed and built within the Centre itself, and some teaching laboratory space.

Exhibits

A large proportion of the Science Centre's exhibits demand some action by the visitor. It may be nothing more than pushing a button, or it may be using actual muscle power. Tests of perception and ability often take the form of games or contests that pit man against machine.

The 12 exhibit halls are loosely structured in theme and content to permit the visitor to explore the exhibits according to his own pace and interests. Young hosts are available to answer questions or point the way, but there are no guided tours as such.

A number of demonstrations are scheduled regularly in various exhibit areas and working laboratories are on view in several halls. About 100 of the Science Centre's 500-plus exhibits have some form of audio-visual input. These include 17 mini-theatres, some of them mixed-media, where visitors press a button to start the show themselves. The mini-theatres, which seat anywhere from 4 to 40, have a secondary purpose of offering a place to relax without having to leave the exhibit halls.

Behind the scenes, a Central Electronics Control room feeds and controls audio-visual exhibits throughout the Centre. Regular maintenance patrols check exhibits for malfunctions or breakdowns, and repair work is carried out quickly and often in full view of the visitor. Turnover of exhibits to keep the Science Centre up to date or to introduce new content to the halls is an on-going process.

Special exhibits of a temporary nature are presented by the Science Centre from time to time. For instance, during the summer of 1973 a special theatre presentation in the Great Hall dealt with the Centenary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. From June through Labour Day, 1974, the Science Centre will present the First World Crafts Exhibition, co-sponsored by the World Crafts Council of New York.

Exhibit Halls

Tower Building

Exploring Earth
Exploring Space
Exploring the Molecule

Valley Building

World of the Atom
Hall of Engineering
Hall of Transportation
The Science Arcade
Hall of Communication
Hall of Life
Environment Earth
Canadian Resources
Oil and Gas

Mini-Theatres

Earth Sciences Theatre (Exploring Earth)
Space Theatre (Exploring Space)
Powers of Ten (World of the Atom)
Assembly Line Production (Hall of Engineering)
Rain Cycle Theatre (Hall of Engineering)
The Road Show (Hall of Transportation)
Math Peep Show (Science Arcade)
How The Human Body Works (Science Arcade)
Animal Behaviour (Science Arcade)
Communications Theatre
(Hall of Communication)
Brain Theatre (Hall of Life)
Dentistry, Old and New (Hall of Life)
Downtowns for People (Environment Earth)
Water Cycle Theatre (Environment Earth)
Population Growth (Environment Earth)
Forestry Theatre (Canadian Resources)
Oil and Gas Theatre (Oil and Gas)

Demonstrations and Laboratories

Ham Radio Station (Exploring Space)
Meteorological Station (Exploring Earth)
Laser Demonstration (Exploring the Molecule)
Chemistry Demonstration
(Exploring the Molecule)
Spectrometer Lab (Exploring the Molecule)
Glass-Blowing Lab (Hall of Engineering)
Treadle Lathe Demonstration
(Hall of Engineering)
The Spark Show (Hall of Engineering)
The Model Shop (Hall of Transportation)
Offset Printing Demonstration
(Hall of Communication)
Jacquard Loom Demonstration
(Hall of Communication)
Electron Microscope Lab (Hall of Life)

Banting-Best Lab (above Hall of Life)
Paper-Making Demonstration
(Canadian Resources)
Operating Engine Demonstration (Oil and Gas)

Films

The Science Centre presents a varied film program in its auditorium at no extra charge to the visitor. Feature films are presented by the Ontario Film Theatre each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evening. Science-related films are screened Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Special screenings of film classics for senior citizens only take place each Wednesday afternoon.

From July 1 through Labour Day films are presented on weekday afternoons in the auditorium as well.

Educational Programs

School boards from throughout the Province of Ontario, and from neighbouring states such as New York and Michigan, include the Science Centre on their list of field trips.

Ontario school children whose teachers book in advance with the Centre are admitted free of charge. Applications by telephone or by letter to the School Booking Section should be made at least four weeks ahead of the planned date of visit.

The Centre's teaching staff offers visiting classes three types of programs:

1. The Science Centre Program occupies about half the time of an average two-hour visit with a theatre presentation (choice of 60 topics), an exhibit program (exploration of a pre-determined exhibit area), and demonstrations (about 15 minutes).
2. The Independent Program is conducted entirely by the visiting teacher using the Science Centre's Exhibit Reference Guides for those areas pertinent to the class' curriculum; theatre programs utilizing any of the 17 mini-theatres may form a part of this program.
3. For Teachers or Senior Students Only the Centre offers special mini-courses on the theory and use of sophisticated scientific apparatus. Subjects covered are the electron microscope, spectroscopy and glass-blowing.

Administration

Conceived, executed and financed by the Government of the Province of Ontario, the Science Centre (officially the Centennial Centre of Science and Technology) was incorporated by an Act of the Legislature in 1965. The Act provides that the affairs of the Centre are the responsibility of a Board of Trustees appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council (the Cabinet).

The Minister of Colleges and Universities is responsible to the Legislature for the Science Centre. Its operating funds are voted annually by the Legislature as a part of the estimates of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. The Centre's income is returned to the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Government of Ontario.

Building services are the responsibility of the Ministry of Government Services of Ontario. Restaurants are operated by Versafood Services Limited, and the shops by W. H. Smith and Son.

The Centre has a staff of more than 200, including scientists, engineers, teachers, designers, researchers, technicians, craftsmen and administrative personnel under the direction of Douglas N. Omand, Director-General.

Information

Map-guides are available free of charge on entrance to the Science Centre, along with printed information on times of demonstrations, films and other events.

Colour brochures are available on request by writing to the Information Branch. These may also be obtained from government and municipal tourist offices, auto clubs, travel agents and related outlets both in Canada and the U.S.

A 15-minute, 16-mm. colour film, *Corner of the World*, may be borrowed free of charge by Canadian residents by writing to the Film Library, Audio-Visual Branch, Ministry of Industry and Tourism, Queen's Park, Toronto. In the United States, it may be borrowed from offices of the Canadian Travel Film Library in New York, Chicago and San Francisco. Television stations may borrow special TV prints without charge from Modern Talking Picture Service, 1875 Leslie Street, Toronto, or from Modern offices in major U.S. cities.

Group Visits

A 15 percent commission on the regular admission price is available to travel agents, carriers and tour wholesalers. Adult visitors in groups of 25 or more may enjoy a 15 percent discount by booking in advance with the Science Centre.

Admission

Admission is \$1.50 for adults, 75 cents for students, 25 cents for children 12 and under, and 50 cents for senior citizens. For couples with two or more children there is a family rate of \$3.50. Parking is \$1 during the daytime, free after 5 p.m.

Hours

The Centre is open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday

Access

The Science Centre is approximately seven miles from downtown Toronto and is easily reached by public transportation or by private automobile. The Eglinton East bus serves the Science Centre from the Eglinton Subway Station, and the Don Mills bus from the Pape Station. By automobile, from downtown take the Gardiner Expressway east to the Don Valley Parkway and exit at Don Mills Road north, or from Highway 401 take the Don Valley Parkway south to the Eglinton Avenue west exit, and turn left off Eglinton Avenue onto Don Mills Road.

Food and Beverage

A licensed restaurant and lounge, and a cafeteria, are located in the Reception Building. During the summer months a beer garden operates on the patio adjacent to the cafeteria. Two snack bars are located in the Valley Building.

Handicapped Visitors

Ramps and elevators have been provided throughout the complex for the convenience of visitors in wheel chairs. The Science Centre does not, however, provide wheel chairs or strollers, except in the case of emergency. A nurse is on duty at peak times.

Bookstore and Science Shop

These shops are located in the Reception Building (lower level, north end) and in the Great Hall of the Tower Building.