



Toronto Declaration specifies Science Centres' Goals and Future Role as 'Agents of Change'

Declaration sets Inspirational Agenda for Science Centres around the world

Toronto, Ontario - (June 19, 2008) At the conclusion of the 5th Science Centre World Congress hosted by the Ontario Science Centre, the international science centre community issued the *Toronto Declaration*, committing to the field's first-ever shared global statement of beliefs and goals. Establishing a new benchmark for Congresses, the document set out six key commitments designed to guide the regional networks and their members until the 6th Science Centre World Congress to be held in South Africa in 2011.

On the final day of the Congress, delegates attended the thought-provoking two-part Frontiers of Science plenary session followed by the closing ceremony, where the *Toronto Declaration* was issued.

Frontiers of Science

The final morning presentation featured Dr. Suzanne Fortier, President, NSERC introducing some of Canada's leading researchers and scientists, selected by NSERC and the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, who spoke to delegates about their cutting edge research and what the future holds. In the second session, Dr. Per-Edvin Persson of Heureka (Finland) convened a panel of science centre CEOs to speak to the challenges faced by science centres and museums in responding to current research and bringing it to the public.

"Science is key to understanding the world around us, and science centres play an essential role in engaging citizens with science," said Dr. Persson, the former President of the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC). "Science centres are places where science and society intersect; we help people understand the world and take action."

Closing Ceremony / Toronto Declaration

The 5th Science Centre World Congress was a special gathering that allowed members of the science centre community to step outside their regular regional networks and engage with colleagues from around the world. A pivotal outcome of the Congress was the *Toronto Declaration*, which was read and endorsed by delegates at the closing ceremony.

"This is a landmark event for our field," said Lesley Lewis, CEO of the Ontario Science Centre, Chair of the Congress and current President of ASTC. "For the first time, science centres around the world have worked together to issue a collective statement that identifies the issues facing our field globally. Today we have committed to a series of actions that will guide us for the next three years."

"The ideas that emerged through consultation with science centre networks around the world will be powerful motivators for action," she added. "In 2008, science literacy is as important as other forms of literacy and numeracy. Science centres have relevance to all sectors of the population and have become important meeting places for science and society. They operate across geographical,

economic, political, religious and cultural boundaries. They impact the well-being, education, achievement and skills of current and future generations. They are safe places for difficult conversations.”

The Toronto Declaration:

1. We, the participants in the 5th Science Centre World Congress, believe that science is an important tool for a better life on our planet.
2. We advocate that all citizens should have access to a science centre or its services in their own region. We will use our collective expertise and experience in helping to expand the activities of our sector to places and communities where science centres are needed and wanted but not yet established.
3. We commit to work together to overcome cultural, physical, social, economic and geographic barriers to engage and connect people through science.
4. We will actively seek out issues related to science and society where the voices of citizens should be heard and ensure that dialogue occurs.
5. We will work together to identify how science centres can contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Goals.
6. We will search for funding and mechanisms to create a better future for all through global engagement with issues of local, national and global relevance, including environmental awareness, science education and innovation.

“Each year, 290 million citizens actively participate in the exhibitions, programs, events and outreach initiatives organized by 2,400 science centres worldwide,” said Tengku Nasariah Ibrahim, CEO of Petrosans and President of the Asia-Pacific Network of Science Centres.” The *Toronto Declaration* will inspire science centres to enhance their offerings and engage the public with science in a way that can help them understand global issues and create a better future. This is a major milestone for the science centre community.”

The Declaration was drafted by a six member committee of leaders from the global science centre community led by Lesley Lewis. The Declaration was reviewed and approved by the leaders of regional science centre networks on every continent including the Asia Pacific Network of Science and Technology Centres, the Association of Science-Technology Centers, Chinese Association of Natural Science Museums, the European Network of Science Centers and Museums, National Council of Science Museums India, Network for the Popularization of Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Southern African Association of Science and Technology Centres. In addition, delegates signed a copy of the declaration as they departed the Congress. Members of the science centre community who were unable to attend the Congress are able to signal their support through the website.

For more information on the “Toronto Declaration,” summaries of the keynotes and plenary sessions and more information on the Congress visit

<http://www.5scwc.org/TheTorontoDeclaration/tabid/133/Default.aspx>

A Green Congress

The Ontario Science Centre made a commitment to environmental sustainability by delivering a green congress. Registration fees included a “green levy” to be applied to the cost of carbon offsetting. Congress organizers chose Offsetters Climate Neutral Society, a Canadian non-profit organization that invests in projects using the next generation energy sources. Examples of projects include the replacement of charcoal burning cook stoves with solar powered ones in West Africa; building geothermal heat pumps to produce energy at a school in the Secwepemc territory of British Columbia; and using waste wood to fuel an energy efficient boiler to heat a greenhouse—the amount of CO₂ emitted into the air is equal to what would be released by natural decomposition.

Sponsors

The government of Ontario was the lead sponsor of this congress. Other partners came from an impressive range of leaders in innovation, including Presenting Sponsors Nortel and Siemens; Plenary Sponsor Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada; and IMAX Corporation as Sponsor of the Keynote speech *Creating the Future*.

5th Science Centre World Congress

From June 15 to 19, 2008, more than 400 delegates from 51 countries joined together in Toronto for the triennial 5th Science Centre World Congress, hosted by the Ontario Science Centre at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Over four days, the world's top science centre leaders along with colleagues from academic institutions, corporations and government, joined to discuss the central role science centres play in increasing the public's engagement with science. 2008 marked the first time the international congress has been held in North America. Further information and details about the 5th Science Centre World Congress can be found by visiting www.5scwc.org.

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