

## Science City Background

The need for an interactive science centre in Windsor was a matter of discussion among community leaders and science educators for many years prior to the matter coming before City Council. A science centre was seen to be a desirable means of ensuring that Windsor children would receive the best possible education in science and technology, as an enjoyable activity for families in the community and also as a tourist destination to draw visitors to the City. Science centres were becoming popular throughout North America. The Ontario Science Centre in Toronto was initiated in the 1960s as a project for Canada's centennial year; Detroit had a prototype science centre in operation since the 1970s; and Science North became an agency of the crown in 1990. A science centre was beginning to be seen as an essential community educational amenity.

Tom Toth, high school teacher and administrator, and then City Councillor, brought proposals before City Council in 1992 and 1995. At that time annual operating costs were estimated at \$150,000. The matter was referred to the community strategic planning process in August 1995 so that the concept could be evaluated in terms of its potential as an educational, recreational, family entertainment facility, tourist destination attraction and an assessment made of the magnitude of its potential economic impact. A printed brochure dated July 31, 1995 lists Tom Toth, David Cassivi, Roy James and Rod Peterson as the Founding Directors of an organization to establish a science and technology centre for Windsor.

In October 1995 Council adopted a resolution requesting the Acting Commissioner of Finance to review the financial estimates of the proposal of a Science and Technology Centre Task Force and include the project in the 1996 Capital Works Budget process. In January 1996 Council approved the creation of a Science & Technology Centre Steering Committee comprised of two members of Council and three citizens. In November 1996 Council voted to retain the firm of Economic Research Associates to complete an "Opportunity Assessment" study of a Science and Technology Centre for Windsor at a fee of \$48,780.

The study was completed in May 1997. The study affirmed that there appears to be a need for additional family-oriented recreational/educational facilities in Windsor and that the need extends beyond that of science to include local cultural and historical subjects. It recommended a centre of 25,000 to 50,000 square feet at a cost of \$11 to 13 million dollars exclusive of land costs. The operating budget would be approximately \$1 million dollars, with between 25 and 50% of its annual operating budget being financed, as is typical for science centres in North America, from governments, charitable foundations, private sector funds and individuals.

*If economic hurdles can be overcome, the Economics Research Associates/ Informal Science, Inc team believes that Windsor should develop a science Centre designed to serve the people of Windsor and Essex County. In addition, as the area has no significant competing museums presenting cultural or historical [information] about Windsor or Essex County . . . the Windsor centre could be a unique institution offering more than science and technology to visitors; it could focus on the many interesting facets of life in the region from scientific, cultural and historical points of view.*

The Opportunity Assessment study proposed concept was adopted in principle, the Science and Technology Task Force enlarged and Council agreed to the “idea” of a Science and Technology Centre/Museum for Windsor in June 1997.

At one point in 1998 the scenario of spending \$4,300,000 over 5 years for a facility and \$292,000 for staffing and operations for a first “set up” year was considered, but by 1999 the Council-appointed Task Force had been disbanded. However, at about the same, the City was considering the fate of the Seville Exhibit that it had acquired from the Province's exhibit at the 1992 World Fair (Expo'92) in Seville, Spain. The exhibit was in storage and was gradually deteriorating. About \$800,000 was the estimated cost of refurbishing and installing it, perhaps at the Windsor Library. Toth undertook to organize volunteers and set it up in about 3,500 square feet of space on the second floor in the Market Square (former Wyeth property). He accomplished the feat at a cost of \$80,000. The exhibit opened with a ribbon cutting in November 1999. There was an annual rental cost to the City of Windsor of \$50,400, for the exhibit as an “information dissemination exhibit” that would demonstrate the ability of the science centre proponents “to develop a science centre at a fraction of the cost predicted by the consultants.” Still looking for a larger, permanent home, the attention of the science centre proponents turned to other potential sites.

The “SciTech Exploratorium of Windsor” applied for and received a three-year grant for \$300,000 from the provincial Ministry of Energy, Science, and Technology in 2001, and in 2002, it won a three-year Trillium grant for \$225,000. It became member of the Canadian Association of Science Centres in 2001.

In March 2003 the City purchased the current DeSantis school property at 930 Marion for \$555,000 and took possession of the building in July. The Seville exhibit was closed in June. The City worked with the science centre proponents to get the building functioning and after an intensive period of exhibit set-up Canada South Science City (CSSC) opened to the public in its present location just in time for March Break 2004. With support of MP Brian Masse, on April 1, 2004, CSSC became registered as independent not-for-profit organization with charitable tax status in Canada, listed as “Interactive Science and Technology Centre of Windsor, Inc.” with the business number: 87399 3398 RR0001.

On November 28, 2005 the Board and supporters of Canada South Science City came to Council for assistance with the high utility costs that they were experiencing in the former school facility. In response Council passed the following resolution:

*CR740/2005 That the City of Windsor DECLARE the facility housing the Canada South Science City located at 930 Marion Avenue as a Municipal Capital Facility, which would exempt it from municipal and education property taxes; and that the lease payments for use of the facility at 930 Marion BE WAIVED; and that a one time grant BE ISSUED to the Canada South Science City in the amount of \$70,000 as bridge financing to address the immediate requirements of the centre; and further, that the Canada South Science City BE GRANTED an exemption to the Exotic Pet By-law, in order to continue to exhibit reptiles currently in its care at the centre.*

In 2005, negotiations for the World Wildlife Foundation's exhibit “Biodiversity 911” exhibit were concluded and with the help of lines of credit the exhibit was purchased at great discount and moved to Windsor. On April 1, 2006, Dianna Moody was hired as

Executive Director, and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of that month, the first Earth Day Dinner, a fund-raising event co-sponsored by Faculty of Science, with guest speaker David Phillips, Canada's chief climatologist, was held at the Caboto Club. An application to YSTOP (Youth Science and Technology Outreach Program, Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation) was made with the UW Faculty of Science, and in June word came that it was successful. The first Science Café was held in December 2006.

A major Climate Change exhibit on loan from Science North opened to the public in December 2006. Another exhibit designed for CSSC by the Canadian Aqueous Invasive Species Network (CAISN) was donated and set up by CAISN and the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research (GLIER) in November 2007. In January 2008, City Council approved a Capital Facility Use Agreement for CSSC at the DeSantis site, and a General Security Agreement was signed in June 2009. In February 2008, Families First Funeral Home sponsored its first free public weekend, an event that brought in record-breaking attendance. At the end of April 2008, CSSC received its second Trillium Grant, this one for \$71,400/year for three years. A large exhibit on loan from the Canadian Space Agency opened in June 2009.

CSSC has been recognized several times for its service to the community, including recognition for outstanding service from the Volunteer Internship Program (VIP) at the University of Windsor. On October 16, 2010 it received an award for *community achievement* from Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women (WWWWIW). In July 2011, the Ministry of Transport of Ontario opened the Windsor-Essex Parkway exhibit at Science City. Since 2011, the Faculty of Science at the University has sponsored our monthly Science Café series featuring well-established scientists or engineers and their research. On April 25, 2013, Dr. David Suzuki presented Canada South Science City with the Canvas Campus Mother Earth Award "for activism in support of peoples' rights, our communities, and our Earth."