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2008-May-10, 09:34

#1



AlvinofDiaspar Moderator

Join Date: Apr 2007 Posts: 7,169

Globe: We've Got It Down to a Fine Science (Toronto Biomed/tech Sector)

From the Globe:

BEST-KEPT SECRET: THE CITY OF FINANCE AND ARTS HAS ANOTHER PEDIGREE

We've got it down to a fine science

By any measure - money, brains or institutions - Toronto is a powerhouse of research and innovation

ALISON MOTLUK and ANNA-KAISA WALKER

Special to The Globe and Mail

May 10, 2008

Last year, Gordon Keller relocated to Toronto from New York. He didn't come here for the ethnic restaurants or the great theatre. Rather, the pioneering stem-cell researcher was drawn by the strength of Toronto's research environment. "It's an outstanding scientific community," he says. It's not just all the money and the shiny new buildings going up, although that hasn't escaped his notice (his lab is in one of them), but, importantly, the colleagues. Other top stem-cell scientists are here too: John Dick, Janet Rossant, Freda Miller. "There's a critical mass."

These are some of the names that make Toronto just as much a city of science as a place of finance or the arts. Today, a number of research centres at universities and hospitals are throwing open their doors for Science Rendezvous, in celebration, to show the citizens what makes Toronto science central - and here are our reasons.

Money

Stand at the corner of University and College and look around you. Within a two-kilometre radius, more than a billion dollars in research money is spent every year. Dubbed the "Discovery District," the area boasts the country's biggest university and its two

dozen affiliated research institutes, a half-dozen research hospitals, and about 5,000 top scientists. More than 200,000 square metres of research space has been added since 2005, with 225,000 more in the works.

Better yet, stand at the top of the CN Tower, squint outward to the fringes of the city, and you will be taking in about one-third of all the research and development conducted in the country. Every year, \$3-billion to \$4-billion is spent on R&D in the Greater Toronto Area.

Brains

Despite Canadian fears of a brain drain, Toronto has actually become a brain magnet. The city has been especially successful at luring Canadian bright lights back home. Take Dr. Keller, described by New York magazine as one of the top six stem-cell gurus the Big Apple couldn't bear to lose. Tough luck: Last year, he returned to Canada after 24 years to be director of Toronto's McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine.

Dr. Keller returned to become a Canada Research Chair. This federal program was launched in 2000, to attract and retain top researchers. Toronto now has 296 of them, including chemical geneticist Guri Giaever, snatched from Stanford, mathematician Stephen Kudla from the University of Maryland, infectious disease specialist Leah Cowen pinched back from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and neuroscientist Evelyn Lambe enticed home from Yale.

The city has also been successful at tempting big names from other parts of Canada. Tom Hudson, a renowned genome scientist, moved here two years ago from Montreal to head the newly established Ontario Institute for Cancer Research. Biochemist Aled Edwards, who directs the Clinical Genomics Centre, relocated from McMaster University in Hamilton last year. "We felt we could more easily accomplish our science in Toronto," Dr. Edwards says. "The university and associated hospitals give the impression that anything can be done. The funding and support is incredible." He heads labs in Stockholm and Oxford as well as in Toronto and says T.O. ranks with the best.

Universities

The University of Toronto is an academic powerhouse. It publishes more scientific papers than any other North American academic institution apart from Harvard. From 2002 to 2006, U of T put out 30,935 publications to Harvard's 46,842. U of T publications are highly cited, a testimony to how groundbreaking other researchers consider them to be. Its faculty represent 23 per cent of the most highly cited researchers in the country, even though they constitute just 9 per cent of all Canadian faculty. Same with prestigious awards: U of T profs scoop up almost a quarter of the bounty.

Thirteen thousand people are employed in the sciences at the U of T. The school is peppered with advanced research institutes, from the Fields Institute (for math) to the Terrence Donnelly Centre for Cellular and Biomolecular Research, and it collaborates with 10 research hospitals.

But don't overlook U of T's smaller counterparts. York University is strong in space research and Ryerson University has developed niche specialties, such as medical physics.

Medical Research

Toronto boasts the fourth-largest cluster of medical expertise in North America. With research hospitals such as the Hospital for Sick Children, Princess Margaret, Sunnybrook and Mount Sinai, Toronto is a medical-research mecca. We lead not only with discoveries and treatments, but also with ideas of how medicine ought to be done. Witness the insistence by the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research that all findings be made freely available within six months of publication. Witness, also, the bold redevelopment of the old Queen Street Mental Health Centre from a "lunatic asylum" to the new Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Once a segregated, stigmatized institution, the area is being transformed into a village, complete with new streets and parks, integrated into the neighbourhood.

Meeting of Minds

Every year, tens of thousands of scientists converge in Toronto for their annual meetings. This year, our fair city will host such gatherings as the American Thoracic Society, with 13,000 attendees, the North American Spine Society, with 7,000, and the American Transplant Congress, with 4,000.

Culture

The Ontario Science Centre, with up to 1.2 million visitors a year, ranks pretty consistently as the No. 1 destination among Toronto cultural institutions. "It signifies that people in Toronto are deeply interested in science," says Lesley Lewis, chief executive officer.

When the OSC first opened in 1969, it was widely acknowledged as a world leader in interactive exhibits. Over the past couple of years, having undergone a \$47.6-million overhaul, it is trailblazing again. There is now more emphasis on "experiences," especially ones that foster innovative thinking.

And let's not forget the Royal Ontario Museum. In an era when creationism and "intelligent design" are increasingly the subject of worship by our neighbours to the south, the ROM launched its gorgeous new dinosaur gallery and put on a frank exhibit about Darwin, the father of evolution.

Industry

Toronto's information and communications technology sector ranks third in North America, surpassed only by San Francisco and New York. All the big names in pharmaceuticals are here too - GlaxoSmithKline, Sanofi-Aventis, AstraZeneca, Eli Lilly. Still, worrying that that we weren't getting enough D out of our R, the province established a Ministry of Research and Innovation in 2005. Among its stated missions: Match innovators with investors.

Commercialization of great ideas is the prime purpose of the MaRS Centre - an "innovation centre" putting good science and technology ideas in touch with money and business smarts. Individual and corporate donors kick started the idea with a combined

\$11-million in December, 2000. Since then, the province has anted up \$54-million and the feds have added \$20-million. MaRS sits at the centre of all the action, at College and University, and has invited small startups, established businesses, business support services and venture capitalists to live and work under one roof.

Jason Sharpe, Sonya Amin and Eddy Xuan had all graduated from U of T's biomedical communications program and wanted to create animation that accurately depicted biological processes. "They helped us develop a business plan," Mr. Sharpe says. For free. Their company, axs, produces animation for hospitals - as well as the imagery of parasitic larvae and bacterial infection seen in the TV show ReGenesis.

Science Rendezvous

At today's inaugural all-city event - a kind of Luminato of science - you'll get up to speed about Mars probes, the human genome and more, all for free. The University of Toronto's St. George campus is a "science carnival" with buskers and kids' experiments. There are events outside the city core at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, U of T Mississauga and York University. Scientists in Schools is holding demonstrations at four malls, including Oakville Place and Oshawa Centre.

For info on all events:

sciencere rendezvous.ca.

Toronto is a hub for some undeniably cool, cutting-edge research. INVENTours takes you through the labs of the top scientists.

10:30 a.m. MaRS Centre,

101 College St.

Who doesn't love genetics, the buzzword of the 21st century? Extract DNA from a banana, witness forensics demos and view mutant fruit flies.

11 a.m.-4 p.m. Mount Sinai Hospital and St. Michael's Hospital

The Ontario College of Art & Design offers three interactive art installations - Soap Box, Sound Sculpture and Cycle Erasure.

10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Three locations

Chemist John Polanyi talks about his life in science; astronomer Roberto Abraham discusses the future of monster telescopes.

1 p.m. Convocation Hall,

31 King's College Circle

At the Grown-Up Science Fair, hipsters recreate science class, but better, with an exploding volcano, 1980s science movies and beer!

7:30 p.m. Victory Café,

581 Markham St.

Anna-Kaisa Walker

Special to The Globe and Mail

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Instead of focusing on branding and "world-classness", it's far more interesting to these articles as indicators. Just as another example, the current issue of the science journal *Nature* has a 4 page article on Toronto in the same area. Who cares if we not on the most "stylish" list compiled by gawd-knows-who.

AoD

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2008-May-10, 10:40

#2

allabootmatt 
Senior UT Member

Join Date: May 2007
Posts: 1,231



Awfully refreshing to see a local media outlet actually printing something positive about the city!

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2008-May-10, 12:36

#3

Join Date: Apr 2007

highlife
UT Member



This is further evidence of the strength and diversity of the GTA economy. It is interesting how an industry can drive so much economic activity, i.e. education, arts & culture, convention business, finance.

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2008-May-10, 16:19

#4



Mongo
Senior UT Member

Join Date: Apr 2007
Posts: 1,766



Originally Posted by **AlvinofDiaspar**

Chemist John Polanyi talks about his life in science; astronomer Roberto Abraham discusses the future of monster telescopes.

I wish I were in Toronto today for this. John Polanyi is one of the very greatest living chemists, and the telescope lecture would be right up my alley. Oh, well.

Overall, a great article about the fantastic shape of R&D in Toronto -- this is so important to the future economy of the city. People talk about 'Alpha Cities', whatever that means, and I think that Toronto has the opportunity to move from being a borderline alpha city, as it is now, to a position close to the top of the list of alpha cities, within a decade. If it does so, the primary reason would be its growing dominance in basic science and R&D.

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