



Greetings from the Executive Director – the first and so far, only, full-time employee of the Science Media Centre of Canada. I'm typing the first issue of an irregular newsletter from the Centre's new digs, office space graciously donated by the Canada Science and Technology Museum. Here's how to reach us:

Postal address: PO Box 9724, Station T, Ottawa K1G 5A3

Park direct phone: 613-249-8209 Other lines : 613-249-8270 613-249-9456

mobile: 613-882-8209 email: penny.park@sciencemediacentre.ca

website : [www.sciencemediacentre.ca](http://www.sciencemediacentre.ca)

**ASSISTANT HIRED:** André Sponder, a civil engineering grad from the University of Ottawa is here on contract. André was president of U of O's Engineering Student Society and led a team of 10 executives to create and organize events, conferences, and programs that catered to over 2000 engineering students. Her organizational skills will be invaluable as will her experience in event planning. As just one of her many responsibilities, André will be assisting with the inaugural events we are scheduling across the country.

And on Thursdays and Fridays you might find yourself speaking with Ami Kingdon, the first of what's intended to be a regular progression of interns. Ami has a BSc in biology and is currently a graduate student in journalism at Montreal's Concordia University. Ami has been working on a science communications project with Professor David Secko, a member of the Centre's Editorial Advisory Panel. Ami has already started to organize the foundation for our database.

**OTHER EXPANSION:** The SMCC is also growing in its Charter Membership, after deciding (with the okay of existing Charter Members) to extend the deadline for joining to July 1 and also to add a category of Scientific Society Charter Member. Membership continues to mount as word spreads about the Centre and its mission. The website has the most up-to-date tally but as of this writing, we are closing in on 70 members.

**OUTREACH:** Recently I explained the goals and mission of the SMCC to members of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), a group of research-intensive community colleges. I've also had information sessions with the Royal Ontario Museum, the organizers for the annual conference of the Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society, and the UOIT.

Over the new few months, our focus will be on:

**AT THE TOP:** We hope to constitute some of the SMCC board of directors by the end of March. The board will consist of up to 15 members drawn equally from the public

sector, media, research community and private sector. Please submit nominations, for yourself or others, to the chair of the steering committee – [suzanne.corbeil@sciencemediacentre.ca](mailto:suzanne.corbeil@sciencemediacentre.ca)

**FUNDRAISING:** Our feasibility study forecast a need for \$2 million to \$2.5 million in the Centre’s initial start-up year and subsequent first full operating year. A fund-raising strategy has been developed and we are currently advertising for a fund-raiser to enact the plan. Please see the job description on our website and forward to any potential candidates. But readers need not wait for the knock on the door. Donations can be sent to the address above, payable to the Science Media Centre of Canada (yes, we also have a bank account and the branch is just up the road from the science museum.)

**INAUGURAL EVENTS:** Our boffo Oct. 2 “coming out party” was limited to the Ottawa area, because we took advantage of a generous supporter and the presence in Ottawa of Fiona Fox, director of the U.K. Science Media Centre. Now the time is coming to strut our stuff across the country, with introductory sessions being planned in Halifax and around the Atlantic region, Toronto (April 20 at MaRS), Winnipeg, Edmonton/Calgary and Victoria (Apr 7). Still under discussion are events in Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver and a second session in Toronto at Ryerson University.

**SERVICES:** The current big push is to begin soliciting the names of experts in various scientific fields for our database. This is being done in close collaboration with the Research Advisory Panel, which is in the process of being expanded from the initial six members to 18. Panel members have already helped draft the selection criteria for experts, working with steering committee member Peter Calamai. We are aiming to put out a general call for names by May and specifically tap our Charter Members and the university community (but please hold off for now, pleads Calamai).

Once scientific expertise has been established, all proposed experts will be interviewed by Centre staff to determine their willingness to participate and their skills at communicating science to non-specialist reporters. The target is to have a minimum of 300 names in the database before the SMCC becomes operational.

**MORE SERVICES:** The Canadian Science Writers’ Association has a half-dozen members already busy drafting the first batch of the Centre’s topical briefing notes (called “In a Nutshell”). These will provide concise factual background on medical, science and health topics that are likely to become newsy in the next six months to a year. L’Association des communicateurs scientifiques du Québec will collaborate as well with their 20 briefing notes.

**D-DAY:** There isn’t one yet, which is why we keep saying “Summer” 2010 for the SMCC to begin operating. The realists say “late” Summer 2010. Both optimists and realists agree, however, that the current office space at the science museum is too small to house a full-time operation. The museum says it is peering into corners for extra room. But if any readers of this newsletter know of some free space, please get in touch.

**BONUS:** Attached as a PDF is a bookmark for the SMCC which was distributed to a Canadian Association of Journalists meeting in Toronto and will be handed out mid-February to reporters at the American Association for the Advancement of Science

annual meeting in San Diego. Linda Quattrin of MaRS generously arranged the design and printing.

**SCIENCE MEDIA CENTRE OF CANADA (Photograph)**



From left Andre, Penny, Ami in the SMCC offices