

Toronto's MaRS Discovery District wins national Creative City Award

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Toronto, Ontario – Toronto's MaRS Discovery District has combined the creative genius of science and technology with the drive of entrepreneurs and capital to create a marriage that will see more Canadian ideas commercialized in this country and for those efforts it has won the Canadian Urban Institute's 2009 Creative City Award to be granted to MaRS on June 5 at the Urban Leadership Awards in Toronto.

"MaRS has found a creative way for science and business to collaborate rather than compete and to help Canada become a knowledge-based economy. This award recognizes them as a leader in stimulating the creative capacity of the city and advancing entrepreneurship, not only in science and technology but also in social ventures. They have made Toronto a more technologically savvy city, have developed talent and facilitated the exploration of ideas and the application of new knowledge," said CUI President and CEO Glen Murray.

About 500 elite members of Canada's who's who of city building will gather in Toronto on June 5 to honour MaRS (<http://www.marsdd.com/MaRS-Home.html>) and 17 other groups and individuals (www.canurb.com/awards/ula/leadershipawards2009.php) across the country who are making Canadian cities exciting and dynamic places to live and work.

Located in the Discovery District of Toronto, where billions of dollars of creative capital are created every year, the MaRS Centre first opened in 2005 in two new towers that bookend a heritage building that once housed the Toronto General Hospital. The three buildings, that total 700,000 sq. ft, house labs, companies of all sizes, business advisors and investors. Its professional services include hands-on advisory services, entrepreneurial programming and both structured and electronic networking. A second building phase of the MaRS Centre will add 750,000 sq ft and is planned to open in the next few years.

"The underlining reason for creating MaRS is to capture the value of Canadian discoveries and to better commercialize these innovations at home in Canada," said MaRS CEO Ilse Treurnicht.

"Hub cities like Toronto are key drivers in shaping Canada's innovation economy. MaRS works to strengthen the pull of that hub, acting as an accelerator and building the best ideas into companies that can compete on the world stage but are anchored here," said Treurnicht.

The Urban Leadership Awards (ULA) Program honours Canadian individuals, groups and organizations that have made significant contributions to improving the quality of life in Canada's cities and urban regions. The 2009 ULA's have been made possible by the generous support of a variety of corporate sponsors including Gold Sponsors Loblaw Properties Ltd., Scotiabank, TD Bank Financial Group, the Ontario Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, Environics, the City of Toronto, GE Canada and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Community Builder Sponsors include Toronto Hydro, Local 27 of the Union of Carpenters and Allied Workers, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Great West Life, London Life and Canada Life Assurance Companies.

The judges for this year's awards included Canadians who have dedicated their lives to public service and who have detailed knowledge of the local stories and triumphs of Canadians in their home communities. Under the chairmanship of the Hon. David Crombie, the committee included; Al Duerr, former Mayor of Calgary; Newfoundland's Dr. Linda Inkpen; Dr. Antonia Maioni, Director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada; John Kim Bell, founder of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation; Ms. Mitzie Hunter, a Vice President at Goodwill Industries; and, Dr. Nola Kate Seymoar, President and CEO, International Centre for Sustainable Cities, based in British Columbia.

The Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in urban areas across Canada and throughout the world.

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Some facts about The MaRS Centre

- MaRS was created in 2000 by a group of 13 visionary individuals, organizations and companies concerned about Canada's performance in the global innovation economy.
- MaRS was officially incorporated as a not-for-profit organization on May 31, 2000.
- By fortunate coincidence, the site of the old Toronto General Hospital was for sale by the University Health Network at the same time. With the support of MaRS College of Founders, a small group took the initiative and secured the land to build a convergence centre. This became the physical anchor for the MaRS vision.
- It took two more years of galvanizing key stakeholders and raising capital from generous public and private sector donors— including the federal and provincial governments, the University of Toronto, the Ontario Innovation Trust and the City of Toronto—before the development of the site could commence.
- MaRS raised almost \$100 million from all three levels of government and both institutional and individual private sector donors. An additional \$130 million of debt and credit lease instruments were secured to support the development of the MaRS Centre.
- The Phase I facility of the MaRS Centre was designed and MaRS oversaw the construction of two new buildings and the renovation of a heritage building.
- Phase II of the MaRS Centre is currently in development. When it opens MaRS will more than double its footprint in the heart of Toronto's Discovery District.
- The Centre also offers complimentary advisory services to start-up entrepreneurs, including experienced entrepreneurs, tech-savvy strategists and market analysts to provide business strategy, investor readiness, education, access to market research and access to competitive funding for projects of up to \$500,000 in seed capital.