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1,500+ Science Center and Museum Leaders Convene in Toronto for ASTC 2019

WASHINGTON, D.C.—More than 1,500 leaders of the science center and science museum community will convene in Toronto during the 2019 Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) Annual Conference. The conference will take place September 21–24 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the Ontario Science Centre, which is celebrating its 50th birthday this year.

This year's conference theme is "moonshots." Building on this summer's 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landing, attendees will explore the ambitious, yet achievable goals we are pursuing over the next fifty years to increase the understanding of—and engagement with—science among all people. To advance these goals, this conference will connect science-engagement professionals to share best practices, learn new approaches, and foster deeper collaborations in our shared work to support lifelong science learning, connect science and society, engage diverse audiences, and partner to solve local and global challenges.

"We are thrilled to convene the ASTC Annual Conference in Toronto—a diverse city that provides community connections and powerful examples of science engagement in communities around the world. We are grateful to our hosts at the Ontario Science Centre and excited to celebrate 50 years of their impact in Toronto and their ongoing leadership in our field," said Cristin Dorgelo, President and CEO of the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC).

Maurice Bitran, CEO and Chief Science Officer at the Ontario Science Centre said, "We are delighted to welcome over 1,500 leaders from the international science centre community to Toronto. The conference is a major highlight of our 50th anniversary and it is an opportunity to showcase our incredible city, province and country and profile the innovative work of the Ontario Science Centre."

Some highlights of planned events at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the Ontario Science Centre include:

- **The Opening Plenary, from 8:30–10:30 a.m. on Saturday, September 21, featuring a keynote address by Jenn Gustetic, Program Executive for NASA's Small Business Innovation Research Program.** Gustetic will share powerful examples of "moonshots"—including how people and organizations are pursuing grand challenges and how NASA uses cross-sector collaboration to advance its own bold missions.

- **The Alan J. Friedman Science Center Dialogues Luncheon, from 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 22.** Three scientific luminaries will discuss the role of public engagement in science in addressing global and local challenges, including mitigating the worst impacts of climate change. The featured speakers are Ellen Stofan, John and Adrienne Mars Director, National Air and Space Museum, and former NASA Chief Scientist; John Holdren, Teresa and John Heinz Professor of Environmental Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and former science advisor to President Barack Obama; and Katharine Hayhoe, Professor in the Public Administration program at Texas Tech University and Director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech.
- **The ASTC Exhibit Hall on September 21 and 22.** More than 120 exhibitors will showcase the latest advances in science center and museum architecture, educational programs, exhibition design and fabrication, film and video, interactive displays, multimedia, planetariums, playgrounds, robotics, simulators, traveling exhibitions, virtual reality, and more.
- **The General Plenary, from 10:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. on Monday, September 23, with a keynote presentation by Raj Pandya, director of the American Geophysical Union’s Thriving Earth Exchange, and Stella Bowles, a student activist.** Pandya will discuss the importance of community science and the role that science and technology centers and museums can play in building “community science capital,” using examples from American Geophysical Union’s Thriving Earth Exchange, which connects scientists to communities—especially historically marginalized communities—to meet needs using scientific solutions. Bowles, who recently received the Ontario Science Centre’s Weston Youth Innovation Award, will share the work she’s done with local, provincial, and federal governments to eliminate pipes that dump raw sewage into Nova Scotia waterways.
- **Science in 6ix (Open House Day) on Tuesday, September 24, when the Ontario Science Centre hosts behind-the-scenes tours and workshops for its colleagues from around the world with a closing keynote featuring Director X.** The day includes behind-the-scenes tours of the on-site design and fabrication facilities and interactive workshops on design and enhancing museum’s exhibits and demos. Tuesday is also Big Screen Day at the science center, a festival of three large format films, allowing conference participants to see new educational documentary movies. Director X is a Canadian film and music video director and producer who has collaborated with entertainers ranging from Drake to Justin Bieber. X is the founder of Operation Prefrontal Cortex, and will speak about this project that seeks to stop gun and mass violence through meditation.

For more information about the ASTC Annual Conference, visit www.astc.org/conference.

About ASTC

Founded in 1972, ASTC is a network of nearly 700 science and technology centers and museums, and related organizations, engaging more than 110 million people annually across

North America and in almost 50 countries. ASTC members include not only science centers and museums, but also nature centers, aquariums, planetariums, zoos, botanical gardens, and natural history and children's museums, as well as companies, consultants, and other organizations that share an interest in informal science education. ASTC and its members seek to increase understanding of—and engagement with—science and technology among all people. ASTC champions and supports the valuable contributions its members make to their communities and the field of informal STEM learning. www.astc.org

About the Ontario Science Centre

Guided by our mission to inspire passion for the human adventure of discovery, the Ontario Science Centre strives to be a global leader in lifelong learning; a vital link in Ontario's education and innovation ecosystems; and a convener of public dialogue about technology, science and society. The Centre has welcomed more than 53 million visitors since opening as a Centennial project in 1969, pioneering an interactive approach now adopted by science centres around the world. An agency of the Government of Ontario, the Centre relies on funding from the province, as well as donations from generous individuals, corporations and foundations who share the Centre's vision to contribute to a more curious, creative and resilient world. Learn more at OntarioScienceCentre.ca.

About the Metro Toronto Convention Centre

The Metro Toronto Convention Centre is Canada's number one convention and trade show facility. Over the past 35 years, the Centre has hosted over 21,000 events and has added \$7.8 billion in direct spending economic impact to the community. For further information, please visit www.mtccc.com.