

AGO's Highly Anticipated Weston Family Learning Centre Shines a Spotlight on Arts Enrichment

\$20 million capital campaign for Toronto's newest gathering place completed before public opening on Oct. 1

(TORONTO – Sept. 27, 2011) The Art Gallery of Ontario celebrated a milestone today with the unveiling of the new **Weston Family Learning Centre** at a press conference, signalling a renewal of the Gallery's commitment to lifelong learning and creativity.



The enhanced facility, designed by Toronto firm Hariri Pontarini Architects, dramatically increases programming capacity for students, teachers and community members, positioning the Weston Family Learning Centre as Toronto's newest gathering place.

"The Weston Family Learning Centre is unequivocally a statement about the power of art and ideas," said AGO President Tony Gagliano. "This vibrant new space sets a standard for museums around the world and ensures opportunities for people across our city to engage with and in the creative process for generations to come."

With its direct link to the AGO's extraordinary galleries, the Weston Family Learning Centre offers integrated learning experiences, including studio and gallery courses, workshops, lectures, talks, family and youth events and symposia. Fully Wi-Fi enabled, the Centre features exceptional technological capabilities and spaces for educational and private functions.

The catalyst for the 35,000 sq. ft. light-filled space dedicated to hands-on and online exploration was the generosity of **The W. Garfield Weston Foundation**, which committed \$12 million in 2008 – the largest single gift in support of art education in the Gallery's 111-year history. **The Government of Canada** earmarked its commitment to the project with a \$7.5 million funding contribution from its **Infrastructure Stimulus Fund** in 2010.

"The AGO is profoundly grateful to have a longstanding relationship with the Weston family," said Matthew Teitelbaum, the AGO's Michael and Sonja Koerner Director, and CEO. "It was the lead gift from The W. Garfield Weston Foundation that propelled us forward with the vision to realize this astounding new Centre. The Foundation's support of innovation in education is unparalleled."

The AGO's affiliation with The W. Garfield Weston Foundation spans 30 years through associations with George Weston Ltd. and three generations of the Weston family. Support over the years has included many capital projects, annual programs, exhibitions and events.

"The Art Gallery of Ontario's new Weston Family Learning Centre is a great achievement which will no doubt spark the imagination and creativity of generations of learners," said W. Galen Weston, Chairman and President, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation. "We are

proud to have been a catalyst for this project which will extend the Gallery's cultural reach and provide access to the AGO's outstanding collections.”

As the AGO launches its roster of fall programs in the new facility, the Gallery celebrates the successful completion of its \$20 million capital campaign and announces the launch of a new \$15 million endowment campaign, **Art Opens Minds**.

“The Weston Family Learning Centre opens on time, on budget and fully funded,” said Teitelbaum. “Our ambitious vision for art education now shifts to the endowment campaign, which ensures the building of future audiences, expands access and sustains award-winning educational programs.”

By October 2012 the AGO intends to raise the endowment funds in support of programs offered through the Weston Family Learning Centre. At the core of the **Art Opens Minds** campaign is the belief that art has the power to enrich everyday life, transforming how we understand the world and ourselves.

The launch of the Weston Family Learning Centre represents a new chapter in the Gallery's history. Founded in 1930 by Group of Seven artist and teacher Arthur Lismer, the AGO's education and community programming serves more than 150,000 youth, adults, children and families, students and teachers, and artists annually.

“Through the design and programming of the Weston Family Learning Centre, the AGO extends a new kind of invitation,” said Kelly McKinley, the Richard and Elizabeth Currie Director, Education and Public Programming. “An invitation to gather, to learn, to create; but most importantly to have fun.”

A range of dynamic, innovative programming offered in the Weston Family Learning Centre enables the AGO to augment participation in art education by as much as 50 per cent.

Adult programming in the **Dr. Anne Tanenbaum Gallery School** is significantly increased and includes courses, workshops, lectures, and symposia, as well as online resources such as podcasts with artists, curators and art historians. The addition of the visible vaults in the space opens up art-storage display while showcasing works for inspiration during the creative process.

Outstanding opportunities for youth include a drop-in from Tuesday to Friday every week, **Free After 3**, which features art activities, ping pong tables, musical projects, and free admission to the Gallery for all Ontario high school students.

The Anne Lind Artist-in-Residence Studio houses a workspace for artists to engage visitors through projects and public programs. Recognizing the importance of communal voice and creation, the **Weston Family Community Gallery** provides a free-access space to showcase artwork produced through AGO partnerships and programs.

The Weston Family Learning Centre provides students and teachers with studio and guided gallery visits connected to curriculum and augmented with online activities and resources. A unique collaboration with the Toronto District School Board showcases prized



works of art from the TDSB collection, creating a dialogue that allows specialized programming to remain relevant to students and teachers.

The **Dr. Mariano Elia Hands-On Centre** offers a drop-in creative play space for the Gallery's youngest visitors and their families to participate in art activities, classes, camps, and workshops for participants.

AGO members preview the new facility and programs with two special open houses on Oct. 1 and 2 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



The all-night public launch takes place in conjunction with Nuit Blanche on Oct. 1 from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., featuring a live art competition for emerging artists organized by inaugural AGO artist-in-residence Paul Butler.

Learn. Imagine. Create. Play! The Weston Family Learning Centre. It's brand new and just for you.

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