

Astronomy Night in Canada **By Katrina Ince-Lum**

The 2008 General Assembly of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada will be held in Toronto at York University, Keele Campus, from June 27 to July 1, 2008.

This year's General Assembly (GA) will be co-hosted by the Hamilton, Mississauga and Toronto Centres along with the Department of Physics and Astronomy at York University. These Centres would like to invite members from across the country to join them for the GA, and to help them celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hamilton Centre, the 140th anniversary of the Toronto Centre and the 2nd anniversary of the Mississauga Centre. The GA will also serve as a launch pad and forum for the exciting events and programs that will highlight astronomy in Canada and around the world in 2009 during the **International Year of Astronomy**. The theme of this year's GA is "Astronomy Night in Canada" and the schedule will feature many entertaining mash-ups between hockey and astronomy!"

We are very fortunate to have an excellent line up for the GA. Speakers so far include:

-Dr. Phil Plait an internationally renowned astronomer, author, and lecturer. His numerous appearances on radio, television, podcasts, and in front of audiences have made him a celebrity in science circles, and put him in demand as an expert on astronomical matters. Dr. Plait will be giving the Helen Sawyer Hogg lecture this year, as well as talking to the Society about dealing with the public about the International Year of Astronomy.

-Dr. James Hesser Director of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Victoria, BC. His research applies ground and space-based facilities, like the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope and the Hubble Space Telescope, to questions concerning the history of how the Milky Way and other galaxies formed and have evolved, with particular emphasis on the oldest stars and on clusters of stars. He joins us at the 2008 General Assembly in his role as Canada's national representative for the International Year of Astronomy.

-Terence Dickinson editor of SkyNews since the magazine's first issue in 1995. He has been involved in astronomy full-time since 1967 as a writer, an editor, a teacher and a broadcaster and will celebrate his 50th anniversary as a member of the Society at the 2008 General Assembly.

-Scott Young the Society's National President. An accomplished science educator, Director of the Planetarium at the Manitoba Museum and speaker. Scott will be speaking at the closing banquet of the 2008 General Assembly setting forth his vision for the Society as we enter the International Year of Astronomy.

Friday is tour day at the GA. In the afternoon, we plan to visit MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates Ltd. (**MDA**) Plan to arrive early for the General Assembly and get a firsthand look at Canada's role in space exploration. The creators of Canadarm I and II, components for the Mars Phoenix Lander and other space hardware, along with the Dextre Manipulator System launched aboard STS-123 and transferred to the International Space Station in March 2008. The Space Missions division of MDA hosts a special tour of their facilities for RASC delegates.

Later that day, will be the **Toronto Telescope Tour**. Transportation will be provided to dinner at a deli situated between two of Toronto's telescope stores, Efston Science and Kahnscope Centre. There will be time to eat (members from Montreal can critique Toronto smoked meat sandwiches!), and shop.

These tours have limited capacity, so book early.

There will be two banquets during the GA. On Sunday June 29, the Hamilton Centre will be celebrating its centenary at the Ontario Science Centre, with an early arrival planned to view the exciting new exhibit "Facing Mars". On Monday, the Toronto Centre hosts the closing banquet following the Helen Sawyer Hogg lecture.

GA's are not usually renowned for the observing, especially in an urban environment. However, the Department of Physics and Astronomy's observatory will be accessible during the evenings at the GA, weather permitting. If on vacation, there is much to do in Toronto during the summer months for members and their families. There is a TTC (Toronto Transit Commission) bus stop within short walking distance of the Vanier residence building, which provides public transportation to Downsview subway station, and to downtown Toronto and all its attractions.

There will be many opportunities to talk about how to best celebrate the International Year of Astronomy in 2009, including a panel session on Saturday morning, lead by Dr. Hesser.

After the official ceremonies have ended, plan to stay in Toronto for an extra day or two and spend Canada Day at the Toronto Centre's E.C. Carr Astronomical Observatory (CAO), one of the best amateur observatories in Canada, located on the beautiful Niagara Escarpment overlooking Georgian Bay. Come and see it for yourself.

Mark your calendars and make your plans to attend, to renew friendships, and meet members from all Centres across the country.

Registration is now open and early bird registration ends April 30. Please visit www.rasc.ca/ga2008 for more information, to register and to apply to present a paper session. Check back regularly for updates as more information becomes available.

Come and join us for the opening face-off on 2008 June 28!