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A Lotus in the "Garden of Canada"
Canadensis – shared vision for environmental sustainability



By Brian McCullough

Mohan Vijay, president of VLN Advanced Technologies Inc., the visionary behind the VLN Lotus Vision Project, is using the symbol of his philanthropy – the national flower of his native India – to rally support for his humanitarian efforts, while working with the Canadensis Botanical Garden Society (CBGS) executive to integrate a pavilion within *Canadensis – Garden of Canada* project at the Central Experimental Farm (CEF).

Vijay's idea would see the construction of a unique pavilion as a gateway structure to the international gardens within Canadensis. It would provide aspects of the programming components associated with the Canadensis vision that have become integral to the project. The Lotus building design lies at the heart of his own mission to create "an innovative and self-sustaining funding model to raise funds for eradicating global poverty and supporting other worthy causes."

Vijay's charitable vision goes well beyond any dreamy ideals for world harmony. In 2011 this inventor-humanitarian garnered millions of dollars in seed money for his philanthropic work through the sale of his early "waterjet technology" patents. His underlying strategic goal is to use the money to construct Lotus buildings around the world that will attract globally minded business investors who are willing to turn over a set portion of their profits to the fight against world poverty and hunger. A prototype Lotus building at Canadensis would serve more as a symbolic gesture to raise awareness.

The Canadensis project (the name means of *Canada*) is the brainchild of the Canadensis Botanical Garden Society, a not-for-profit group that is determined to see a proper Canadian national botanical garden project brought to fruition. Such a garden has been part of development plans for the CEF in one form or another since the Experimental Farm was established in 1886.

"As long as the Experimental Farm has been here," says Gérald Lajeunesse, a consulting landscape architect and board member of the Canadensis Botanical Garden Society, "numerous iterations of plans and concepts have been developed for a botanic garden on the site now allotted to us by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. We're just pursuing that initial idea."

The area earmarked for Canadensis is a beautiful 34-acre parcel of land at the southeast boundary of the Central Experimental Farm, between Prince of Wales Drive and the Rideau Canal and adjacent to the National Arboretum and Fletcher Wildlife Garden. The site affords easy access to visitors.

The national sesquicentennial in 2017 is the society's target year to launch the first phase of a planned garden that will focus on environmental sustainability as it relates to Canada's nordic reality and its impact on our day-to-day lives. Lajeunesse adds that the Canadensis research department of the botanical garden would have access to the comprehensive scientific research activity undertaken throughout Canada by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

"A botanic garden today has to be extremely well programmed," says Lajeunesse. "What will be key for Canadensis is the need to provide programs and activities that are centred on children and youth visitors, in recognition of the future role they will assume in our society."

The process of integrating Mohan Vijay's Lotus Vision project within a future Canadensis botanical garden came about through a series of meetings after each realized that the goals of their two visions could

Canadensis Garden 2017 National Legacy



Canadensis Garden



Lotus project was looking for a location to build a prototype building in Ottawa," Lajeunesse says. "We felt that CBGS could incorporate an appropriate Lotus-type building in an aquatic setting as the gateway element to our international garden area because, as Mohan says, horticulture and agriculture feed the world."

The Canadensis plans for an interactive horticultural showcase to teach visitors about the diverseness and sustainability of plant life throughout Canada could incorporate an exciting pavilion in a wetland setting that includes a floral image such as the aquatic lotus flower. "A lotus building would make Canadensis unique," Vijay says.

"It is momentum that is needed at this stage," says Lajeunesse. "Money doesn't drop from the sky, we know that. When you are trying to build something as elaborate as a botanic garden with all of the components that

money. We costed it out at \$83 million (2010 dollars) for capital costs, to be phased over five years, assuming funds are available. We were always looking to open the first phase for 2017, to have something on the site, but that window is closing quickly."

"We remain optimistic," says Lajeunesse. "If we can have an event on the site for 2017, with a legacy component to follow, the rest will fall into place. People will realize that it is something to be proud of and something they will want to go back and visit again. We feel it is time that Canada has a botanic garden in the nation's capital."

Go online to www.canadensiscanada.ca to learn more about the Canadensis Botanical Garden Society project, and visit www.vln-tech.com, or email lotusbuiding@vln-tech.com for more information about Mohan Vijay's Lotus Vision project and other work.