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Thursday, September 21, 2017

First Canadensys Got a Lunar Rover Contract: Then They Scooped 3 Ontario Drive & Gear Engineers

By [Chuck Black](#)

Back in July, Caledon, ON based [Canadensys Aerospace](#) picked up a contract from the Waimea, HI based [International Lunar Observatory Association](#) (ILOA) to build instrumentation for the first ILO Lunar Observatory rover.



Almost immediately, and in a stunning human resources coupe, Canadensys scooped-up New Hamburg, ON based [Ontario Drive and Gear](#) (ODG) ARGO VP of engineering [Peter Visscher](#), project manager [Perry Edmundson](#), and senior mechanical designer [Peter Woolfrey](#).

And yesterday, as if to celebrate those acquisitions, Canadensys announced the creation of a Waterloo, ON based "[new facility for space mechanical design and advanced manufacturing](#)."

As outlined in the September 21st, 2017 Canadensys press release, "[Canadensys announces advanced manufacturing capability in the Waterloo region](#)," the new facility will support the company's "[expanding space and exploration initiatives](#)." Of course, the expectation is that the new facility will also support ILOC efforts to build a lunar observatory rover.

And, as outlined in the July 20th, 2017 ILOA post on "[The ILO Mission](#)," contract work is advancing through Silicon Valley, CA based Moon Express Inc for "[ILO-1 Landing Technology Advanced R&D, with actual ILO-1 spacecraft development by Moon Express to begin in 2018](#)."

According to the post, the Canadensys contribution was a "[a flight-ready low-cost optical payload for the ILO-1 mission, ruggedized for the Moon South Pole environment](#)," called the "[Lunar Optics Program](#)."

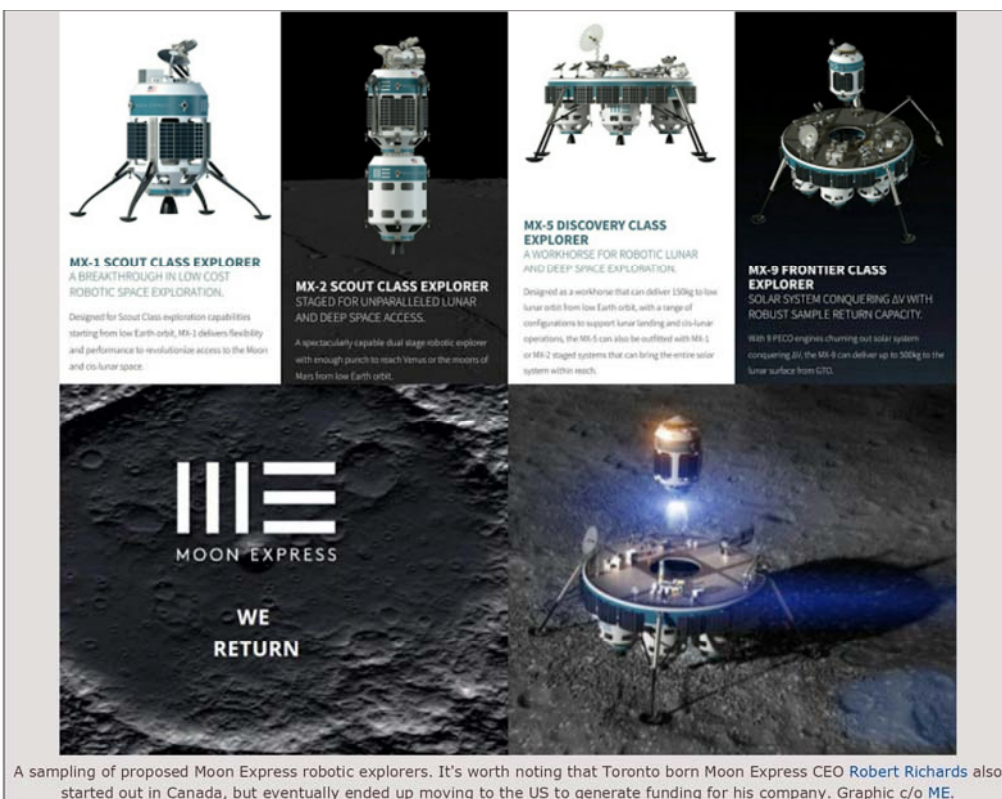
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ODG was evidently sanguine about the manpower losses. The September 21st, 2017 SpaceQ post, "[Canadensys is Expanding its Operations Opening an Advanced Manufacturing Facility in Waterloo,](#)" quoted Joerg Stieber, the chairman of the board at ODG, as stating that his company "*had decided to refocus on their terrestrial extreme terrain robots.*"

Of course, there was also the possibility that the [Canadian Space Agency](#) (CSA) had run out of money for ODG to research lunar rovers.

As outlined most recently in the April 10th, 2017 post, "[General Fusion, exactEarth's Missing \(But Insured\) Satellite, More CSA Rovers & ULA Drops Launch Costs,](#)" those funds were substantial, but depended in the final analysis on acquiring a deal with another international partner, a situation which never materialized.

It's also worth noting that the senior team at Canadensys, including president and CEO [Christian Sallaberger](#), VP of space exploration [Nadeem Ghafoor](#), chief engineer of space exploration [Howard Jones](#) and director of strategic development [Jim Middleton](#) each started off in far duller and more traditional jobs in either Richmond, BC based [MacDonald Dettwiler](#) (MDA) or at the CSA.

We all gotta start somewhere.

Here's hoping that the Canadensys people and their previous employers are able to manage the intellectual property derived from their earlier positions so they can still be utilized by Moon Express, the ILOA and anyone else who wants to use it.

Editors Note: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that "*Canadensys Aerospace picked up a contract from the Waimea, HI based International Lunar Observatory Association (ILOA) and Silicon Valley CA based Moon Express to build the first lunar observatory rover.*"

That statement was in error. Although both Moon Express and Canadensys do have a customer in common (the ILOA), there is no contractual relationship or formal partnership between Moon Express and Canadensys.

Chuck Black is the editor of the Commercial Space blog.



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