



Agent 2830, reporting for duty

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[Toronto Timeline](#)



The Ontario Science Centre tomorrow unveils a new exhibit, **The Science of Spying**, where visitors can learn about the world of espionage. The centre invited the Post's Melissa Leong to tour the exhibit, to see if she has what it takes to be a double agent:

10:11 I arrive, and am given an Agent ID card identifying me as a Trainee. Agent Number: 2830. That is not cool. Not when compared to Agent 99 or Agent 007.

10:12 "I'm on a mission to get breakfast," I tell the Post's photographer as I head for the refreshments. Apparently, spies-in-training get cookies and muffins.

10:31 Lesley Lewis, CEO of the Ontario Science Centre, welcomes reporters and elementary school students: "What is exciting about this exhibition is that you become the star of your own spy story. You are recruited, trained, given a mission and try to escape."

10:38 There is some jostling to get into the recruitment and training centre. Hey, spies are supposed to be smooth.

10:40 Ms. Lewis tells me that she successfully decoded hidden messages at one station, but she failed a test to detect a liar. "I always thought I was really intuitive."

10:45 We agree that we never wanted to be Pussy Galore or any other Bond girl for that matter. "I think I wanted to be Bond," Ms. Lewis says.

11:00 Under a sign that reads: "Do you have the nerve to be a spy?" I try to carefully pull up dynamite sticks without setting them off. I blow myself up five times.

11:05 Antonia Spanos, of the exhibit's England-based developer, tries her steady hand. She blows us both up. "I don't feel pain," she tells me.

11:07 Ms. Spanos on the scientific and investigative aspects of spying: "Espionage, yes, it is exciting when you see it on TV or James Bond; but in real life, it takes on a different form. It's more about surveillance, data gathering and how it impacts us today."

11:09 Ms. Spanos invites me to help her pick through someone's garbage. She wasn't joking about the real life aspects — I never saw Bond do this.

11:10 "But it's super important," she says. "Your fellow journalists might have gone through this to find out information about people who live in the house." I don't think that is allowed, I tell her. "Have you met British tabloid journalists?"

11:11 We go through "Mr. Grant's" garbage and retrieve a half-eaten apple, some mail and a ripped scarf for analysis. The scarf reveals traces of nuclear DNA in the dandruff. Either Mr. Grant is into some shady business or he needs a new shampoo.

11:18 One station invites you to make a fake ID. (It's like I'm in high school again.) I get a biometric scan of my face. A science centre spokeswoman assures me that they do not keep any of the information.

11:25 Greg Stokes, a OSC host, helps me hack into "Mr. Grant's" SIM card. "This feels wrong," I say. "Mr. Grant is your not-so-trustworthy boyfriend," he says. "I nat changes tnings, right?"

11:30 I try to gain access to a secret door. A voice tells me: "Access denied. Your clothes do not match, this season's style. Please adjust your look and reapply." Damn you, CSIS.

11:42 Mr. Stokes says I have to escape past an "intelligent" security system to officially become an agent. "No exits for humans. Sensors detect the upright walk of a person. Guard dogs and trained security monkeys patrol undetected." He volunteers to be the dog. That's fine: I make a better monkey than a spy anyway.

Photo by J.P. Moczulski for National Post