

Job network for new Canadians to open May 30

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A "brain-gain" Immigrant Employment Network is about to open for business in Waterloo Region, financed with \$900,000 that came mostly from the community.

Included in the \$900,000 is \$195,000 from the Trillium Foundation -- one of nine provincial grants worth a total \$941,100 announced this week by Kitchener Centre MPP John Milloy.

Trillium distributes about \$100 million a year in gambling profits from Ontario casinos.

The network, a service to match Waterloo Region employers with skilled new Canadians looking for jobs, will be operated by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.

Birth of the network later this month will be the result of work by hundreds of local immigrants, employers, community agencies, educators and government officials.

On May 30, a ceremony to mark the start of the network will take place at a 4.30 p.m. meeting of the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation at Kitchener's Victoria Park pavilion.

Key objectives of the network will be to break down barriers and make certain employers make better use of immigrant skills and end job discrimination.

Without waiting for support from federal and provincial governments, network backers raised the cash and pushed ahead with the concept, chamber president Todd Letts said yesterday.

In addition to Trillium, the contributors include the regional government, the United Ways of Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge, Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation, the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation and Cambridge's Bridgeway Foundation.

Letts and Rich Janzen, research director of Kitchener's Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, said Toronto is the only other area in Ontario with such a network.

They said Waterloo Region needs highly qualified and educated immigrants and has to do more to link them to specific job positions.

Letts said the chamber is hiring staff for the network.

"It will be a forum, not an employment agency, that will examine policies, look at existing gaps and . . . act as the glue to bring the two groups together," Letts said.

Other Trillium grants include:

\$187,000 for the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA to involve volunteers and youth in community programs.

\$138,000 for Cambridge Mental Health and Justice Committee to link young people who have mental-health issues to community support groups.

\$126,000 for Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest to develop a volunteer and mentoring program.

\$88,200 for Waterloo-Wellington Canadian Red Cross Society to create a volunteer leadership program.

\$80,000 to help Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery complete a marketing and analysis project.

\$55,200 to the Region of Waterloo Swim Club.

\$47,700 to Lutherwood Communities Opportunities Development to renovate Kitchener's Betty Thompson Youth Centre.

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