

# Former RIM Employees Get Help With Job Search

David Friend, The Canadian Press

WATERLOO, Ont. - Thousands of Canadians have been left jobless as BlackBerry-maker Research In Motion struggles to overcome a number of hurdles, but the City of Waterloo hopes a jobs center it opened this week will help the unlucky ones.

As word spreads about the Tech Jobs Connex center, which opened its doors at City Hall on Monday, a trickle of former RIM employees have called to meet with organizers in hopes they're be quickly catapulted back into a position at another tech company.

"When it did happen it was not a surprise," said Tunde Obatolu, one of the RIM employees who was handed a pink slip in August.

"But the fact remains that no matter whoever you are, you can never be too prepared for that kind of disruption happening in your life."

Obatolu worked at the company for six and a half years and watched from the inside as RIM began to face some of its biggest challenges, including the delays in the release of its new BlackBerry devices.

A father of two children, Obatolu said he wanted to return to the jobs market as quickly as possible and that's what pushed him to set up a meeting at the RIM-centric jobs center.

Tech Jobs Connex is a partnership between the Ontario and municipal governments as well as other local groups, including tech industry lobbyist Communitech. Together, they're hoping to help funnel an estimated 3,000 laid off workers in the region into new jobs at other companies.

RIM (TSX:RIM) announced in June that it would cut 5,000 employees worldwide as part of an effort to save \$1 billion by the end of its fiscal year in February 2013.

More than half of the company's 16,500 employees — about 9,000 — work in the Waterloo region.

Iain Klugman, the chief executive of Communitech, says the jobs centre is a unique project because jobs programs are typically reserved for massive layoffs at auto plants and mining companies.

He says the former RIM employees all have very specific skill sets, ranging from developers and quality assurance representatives, to sales and marketing people.

"You name it, (and they) are walking in," Klugman said.

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"They are pretty much all very well-educated, global company experience, white collar workers."

But Klugman says he's confident there are many other opportunities for those job seekers at more than 1,000 other technology companies in the region.

Communitech says the region has also seen a burst of startups since RIM began its layoffs, with more than 100 new companies registering with the organization since July.

Klugman said the community has also started to get more attention from international firms who are looking to capitalize on the rush of job seekers.

"As people put a different kind of spotlight on RIM, they're also starting to also look a little deeper into Waterloo region," he said.

"We're seeing a bunch of technology companies outside the country who are saying 'We really would love to have access to some of that great talent that's coming out of RIM. We're thinking of putting a development team up in your area.'"

Meanwhile, RIM is focusing on becoming a leaner operation as it pushes ahead with the launch of its much-delayed new BlackBerry smartphones and operating system, expected early next year.

The company, which posted a quarterly loss of US\$235 million in its second quarter, anticipates a further operating loss in the third quarter as it works through the transition.

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