

NEWS

College ratifies deal with Jamaica

BY ADRIAN NIEOCZYM

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Jamaican workers will soon be coming to the Okanagan to get Red Seal certified, allowing them to practice their trade in any Canadian province or territory.

That's the aim of an agreement between Okanagan College and the Jamaican government.

Jamaicans with training and experience in a trade that is in high demand in Canada will have the opportunity to come to OC and upgrade their skills before challenging the Red Seal interprovincial standards exam.

"These workers could stay and work in Canada for a period of time, helping us out, or go back to the Caribbean, and with a higher skill level and an internationally recognized credential, they could work on major projects down there," said OC's vice-president international, Steve Koehle.

The agreement is part of the Okanagan-Jamaica initiative involving the college, the Central Okanagan Regional District and the Jamaican government.

Its aim is to address the Okanagan's skilled labour shortage with Jamaican workers.

The college will offer programs for groups of up to 20 Jamaican tradespeople in a wide range of trades including welding, carpentry, plumbing and culinary arts.

The Jamaican government will prescreen candidates, who will be subject to medical exams and criminal background checks.

The training and work experience of Jamaicans will be assessed by B.C.'s Industry Training Authority before they are accepted at the college, Koehle said.

The ITA will conduct the Red Seal exam once the upgrade training is complete.

The OC program for each trade will be slightly different, depending on what the training for that trade is like in Jamaica.

The college will collect fees for the programs on a cost recovery basis.

Payment will be worked out between the Jamaican government and the workers who take the training, Koehle said.