

Trillium grant allows Donald plant revamp

Angelica Blenich
Staff reporter

A shovel may be in the ground as soon as next month as plans to restore the former Donald chemical plant were given a significant boost with a \$47,700 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant.

Formally announced on May 20 by Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Rick Johnson and Ontario Trillium Foundation member Klara Oyley, the grant is the first step in an extensive renovation project to turn the building into a marketing cooperative for green technology and trades.

Johnson expressed his excitement with the project and its future plans at the building's site in Donald.

"Grants can really make a difference for community projects such as this one," said Johnson.

"It's a wonderful thing to be part of the organization," said Oyley. "If you think of all the little projects that are funded that have a big impact, it's just phenomenal what we can do."

"It's good to have local people on the board fighting for these projects," said Johnson.

Under the direction of Leora Berman, during the next two years the building will be given a new roof and façade, while Berman focuses on putting together a business plan and gathering members for the cooperative.

The building will require extensive work, however, Berman hopes to have it fully up and running in the next two to three years.

In the meantime she will be focusing her energy on the creation of a website portal that will allow members to showcase and market their business.

Once completed, the building will provide members with a place to display their green business in what Berman describes as a "living cottage life show."

"Anyone who wants to build green can get information and come here," said Berman.

For the past 25 years the building was owned by Jim O'Connor, who donated it to the project and will continue to stay involved as project manager.

Built in 1902, the building has historical significance, according to Berman and O'Connor, and once served as the hub of



Jim O'Connor, left, and Leora Berman, second from left, explain to MPP Rick Johnson the plans to transform the historic Donald plant into a marketing cooperative for green technology on May 20 in Donald. Spearheaded by Berman and O'Connor, the project received a \$47,700 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant. The funds will go towards upgrading the facility, repairing the roof and creating a business plan for the project, which is set to begin next month.

“It's good to have local people on the [Trillium] board fighting for these projects.”

—MPP Rick Johnson

Haliburton.

"I had the building structurally assessed and as long as the roof is fixed it will stand another 100 years," said Berman.

The idea behind the cooperative was hatched by Berman and O'Connor, who both saw a need for such an initiative in the community.

"We wanted to green up Haliburton and support economic development and the construction industry," said Berman.

The pair are hoping to work with the sustainable renovation program offered at Fleming College in Haliburton in the future.

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Constructed out of reinforced concrete, plans for the building include creating a living roof, to be completed by the end of this summer.

The non-profit cooperative currently has 37 members, with the hopes of expanding to include close to 100, Berman said.

"The building can hold up to 100 booths," she said.

Those interested in becoming members can contact Berman at 705-457-4838 for more information.

The project's website can be found at www.buildingbetween.ca.