

Old Donald plant receives grant for a green revival



Left to right: Dysart et al Reeve Murray Fearrey, Ontario Trillium Foundation representative Klara Oyler, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Rick Johnson, project lead Leora Berman and property donor Jim O'Connor.

Photo by Mark Arike

By Mark Arike

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An innovative plan that will turn a dilapidated building into a marketing outlet for businesses that use green technology has received \$47,700 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The grant announcement for the former chemical plant in Donald was made on Friday, May 20 with Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Rick Johnson and Trillium Foundation representative Klara Oyler.

"It will be like an ongoing cottage life show," said Leora Berman, the project developer for what will be known as The Donald Eco-Heritage and Innovation Centre. "There will be educational materials available and anyone who wants to green up their property, practices or get the newest in green technology and construction can stop here."

The grant is the first step in moving forward on a renovation project that will fix up the building and give it a new green roof sometime this summer. Berman estimates that it will take between two and three years to complete and will carry a \$250,000 price

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Black Nip Rick Johnson and Trillium Foundation representative
Klara Oyler.

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Berman will be working on a business plan and a website, which will include an online directory of businesses and tradespeople.

"The Donald Innovation Centre will provide key innovation services and expertise to support conservation," commented Johnson. "I'm pleased the Ontario Trillium Foundation is able to support the good work of the centre."

"It's wonderful to see money come back into your community," added Oyler. "It's just phenomenal what we can do in our area with a little bit of money."

"It's going to be historic," said Dysart et al Reeve Murray Fearrey.

Jim O'Connor, owner of Highland Glass and Windows, owned the property for 25 years before deciding to recently donate it to the project.

"I was going to give up on it but Leora said she could get some funding to restore it," said O'Connor, who has agreed to work with Berman as the construction project manager.

Once restored, businesses will be able to purchase booth space inside to showcase the green products and services they offer. Memberships will be offered through the cooperative.

To further alleviate some of the costs associated with the project, Berman hopes to acquire the help of students in Fleming College's sustainable renovations programs. She's also working on obtaining additional funding through other sources.

According to Berman and O'Connor, the building was once "the hub of Haliburton."

"They [the Standard Chemical Company] made chemicals out of wood harvested in the area and they shipped it all the way to the United States," said Berman, adding that the building was erected in 1902.

For more information about the cooperative visit www.buildingbetween.ca or call Leora at 705-457-4838.