

Communitech Hub grows to meet digital media demand



The Communitech Hub, a digital media innovation centre that officially opened for business in October 2010, is already expanding to accommodate demand for commercialization support in the digital media sector. The Hub, which currently occupies 30,000 square feet at Kitchener's downtown Tannery building, will be expanding to occupy another 12,000 square feet of space on the first floor of the Tannery by early 2012.

"The success of The Communitech Hub has exceeded our expectations and demonstrates the potential of the digital media sector in Ontario which holds great promise for job creation and opportunities going forward," said Glen Murray, Ontario Minister of Research and Innovation.

The expansion will accommodate more Peer2Peer program space, expanded strategic partner space, and more room for established companies.

"It's rewarding for everyone involved to see how quickly The Hub has become a venue for nurturing digital media entrepreneurship," said Kevin Tuer, VP Digital Media at Communitech, Waterloo Region's technology organization. "We've learned a great deal about the support needs in the digital media 'ecosystem', and are filling more gaps and expanding our programs to meet those needs."

The Hub currently houses a mix of tenants that include:

- 28 start-up companies – and growing
- 5 leading tech multi-nationals
- 14 innovation partners, including legal, advertising and accounting firms
- 3 post-secondary institutions: Conestoga College, Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo
- provincial and federal government partners.

The attraction for digital media entrepreneurs is a supportive venue where the infrastructure which companies need to succeed is already in place, Tuer said. That includes everything from the 'bricks and mortar' office space enabling entrepreneurs to move from their basements and garages to a suitable office location; to mentoring from executives who have 'been there, done that'; to collaborating with established partner companies that include RIM, OpenText, Desire2Learn and Christie Digital Systems Canada Inc.

Strategic partner platforms at the Hub enable research, commercialization, and job creation in mobile computing, digital asset management and healthcare IT. Federal and provincial contributions and the City of Kitchener also made the creation of The Hub possible, Tuer said.

"The appeal of The Hub is that companies can focus more on development of their projects, market development and revenue generation than on operational logistics," said Tuer. "An integral part of our success has been dialogue with those companies; tailoring the space and our services to provide the greatest impact for them. With the new space will come new programs and services as we continue that dialogue."

The concept and venue for The Hub were announced in October, 2009; renovations to The Tannery, occupancy and the grand opening took place less than a year later; and the expansion comes less than five months after the official opening. The Hub recently celebrated its first 'graduation' of a resident startup company – ClevrU — through the Accelerator Program in partnership with the Waterloo Accelerator Centre.