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### **More funding at work to help immigrants land jobs**

By KENNETH JACKSON, SUN MEDIA

Juan Sarmiento first came to Ottawa from Colombia looking to find himself, and like many educated immigrants he learned the True North strong and free isn't always what it's made out to be.

Finding a job wasn't easy for Sarmiento, even though he had a master's degree in finance and several years of international work experience.

Struggling but determined to make it in his field, he printed out 25 resumes and went to a local job fair. It was there that he approached someone from the University of Ottawa, who immediately took notice of Sarmiento's experience, education and multilingualism (he speaks French, Spanish and English).

"You should be a really good candidate for us," Sarmiento was told during that fateful meeting on Feb. 6, 2008.

Today, Sarmiento, 25, is a research office administrator and financial analyst for uOttawa's faculty of medicine.

Yesterday, he was the success story trumpeted at a press conference to announce the provincial government's plan to spend \$6.2 million in Ottawa to help immigrants find work in their chosen fields.

The money was part of the 2009 budget that earmarked \$50 million over two years to expand what's known as bridge training programs across Ontario.

The programs help highly skilled newcomers get licensed and find work faster.

For instance, Algonquin College will receive more than \$1.2 million to help immigrants get licensed as certified financial planners, and to provide occupation-specific language training.

The University of Ottawa is part of a network of employers who have teamed up with Hire Immigrants Ottawa, which brings employers, immigrant agencies and stakeholders together to address the barriers immigrants face.

"They showed me if you really show who you are, what your skills are ... they really give you a chance," Sarmiento said of the University of Ottawa.

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