

P.E.I.'s video game industry doubling

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With the entry of two new players into P.E.I.'s video game industry, the number of people working in the sector is about to double.

The province is also funding more post-secondary education in video game creation in the hopes of helping to attract more of the industry to the Island.

The new companies include Longtail, an independent studio launched by a partner in Ubisoft, which is based in France, and an independent game testing and quality assurance company. The establishment of the companies will double the sector's workforce from 60 to 120.

"They saw the premier's commitment in this area, and they said, 'Hey, you guys are open for business. We're coming,' " said Development Minister Richard Brown.

That commitment includes a new video game art and design program at Holland College starting this January. The University of Prince Edward Island started offering three courses this year, with a full degree in video game programming to be announced soon.

The availability of local training is important because competition for staff is stiff internationally. Local studios get many of their senior staff from the United Kingdom or train in-house.

"If we can do the training for them, then that helps them," said UPEI computer science department chair David LeBlanc.

LeBlanc said the local education programs will make the Island a more attractive place for computer gaming companies to locate.

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