

Six Filipinos, co-workers win Canadian lotto

Written by Administrator
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SMART Technologies assembly plant workers pose with their lottery win check on Aug. 12, 2011 in Toronto. The workers are losing their jobs after their employer announced it was shutting its plant in Ottawa. (The Canadian Press/Will Campbell)

TORONTO — Six Filipinos were among a group of 18 workers at a Canadian software manufacturing plant who won a \$7.1 million lottery jackpot a day after 10 of them learned that they had lost their jobs.

The winners were employees at SMART Technologies in Kanata, which announced massive layoffs of approximately 200 workers on the same day as their big win.

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Each of the lucky winners will receive about \$400,000 (tax-free) — about 15 years worth of their gross pay, they estimate.

On Aug. 12, the workers claimed their prize of \$7.1 million, the winning jackpot from the Aug. 10 Lotto 6/49 draw, according to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG).

The winners range in age from 30 to 50.

The Filipinos were identified as Dario Elvina of Nepean, Dionisio “Jun” Belisario of Kanata; Nestor Rivada of Nepean, Ralston Mabololo of Ottawa, Ricardo Kalugdan of Nepean, and Seviniano “Ben” Calingasan of Nepean.

The winning ticket was purchased at Mac’s Convenience on Moodie Drive in Nepean, just outside of Ottawa.

Each of the winner gave \$4 for the draw.

Tim Shanks, the leader of the group, has diligently been collecting the lottery pool money and buying lottery tickets for the past five years in hopes they would win a big jackpot, says the OLG press release.

One of the winners, Collin Willard, was the first to discover their win, 24 hours after the company they work for announced layoffs affecting almost all of the group members, some of whom have been working together for almost 10 years.

“I picked up a winning numbers print out on my way to work, and I was in the parking lot in my truck when I checked our numbers and saw that we had won the big jackpot,” said Willard.

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“I started to see a few people going into work that were in the group so I went to tell them, but nobody believed me. They thought it was a joke ticket, especially after the news from the day before!”

Shanks and Willard began to share the news immediately with the rest of their co-workers, and then went to the nearest retailer to validate their ticket as a winner.

“Word spread around the plant like wildfire. Most of the people that heard the news were happy for us. We just can’t believe our luck,” said Willard.

The group members say that this money will give them some breathing room and allow them to pay off their debts and enjoy life.

“This has removed the stress from so many people’s lives, particularly after the announcement we had at work the day before!” said Willard.

He told CTV News he’s feeling great after seeing a specialist for his back and receiving some injections that finally took away the pain running down his legs.

Now that he can walk again pain-free, his wife is hoping they can do some travelling.

“My wife wants to go to New York. She wants to see Central Park,” he said.

“And I think we will.”

Willard said he’s even looking forward to being able to walk around in New York.

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“Maybe even rollerblade,” he quipped.

“We all know that \$400,000 doesn’t make you rich,” said winner Tony Mather, in an interview with CBC.

“That comfort zone for the rest of your life is the nice story.”

SMART Technologies confirmed to CBC that it was laying off 200 of its 300 assembly plant employees in Ottawa.

Manufacturing will move to Mexico.