

Hit by visa limits, Microsoft looks to Canada

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Microsoft Corp. said Thursday that it would open a software development center in Vancouver, Canada, giving it a place to employ skilled workers barred by U.S. immigration quotas.

It may signal the start of a new hiring trend, with other U.S. high-tech firms following in Microsoft's footsteps to Canada, where lawyers say it is easier for foreign nationals to obtain work credentials.

U.S. businesses want Congress to lift quotas on the number of visas the government issues to skilled professionals such as the software engineers that Redmond, Wash.-based Microsoft employs. But as recently as last week lawmakers rejected legislation that would have addressed their concerns. Canada doesn't impose quotas on the number of visas it issues each year.

Microsoft said it planned to open the Vancouver facility by the end of the year. It initially will have about 200 employees, with the total rising to about 900 within a couple of years.

Shares of Microsoft fell 3 cents to \$29.99.