NEWS RELEASE

#BCTECH Strategy cultivates talent, creates investment opportunities

VANCOUVER – Premier Christy Clark today unveiled a multi-year #BCTECH Strategy that will support growth of B.C.'s vibrant technology sector – and strengthen British Columbia's diverse knowledge-based economy.

The Premier unveiled the #BCTECH Strategy at the sold out #BCTECH Summit, which is bringing together more than 2,800 business leaders, tech companies, entrepreneurs, investors, academics and students.

"The #BCTECH Strategy is a key component of the BC Jobs Plan and contains a mix of new, enhanced and existing initiatives – all of which are aimed at creating an environment for further growth and investment in the tech industry," said Premier Clark.

As a result of extensive consultation with the tech sector, the new #BCTECH Strategy focuses on three key areas: access to capital for promising companies, talent development and market access.

In addition to the recently announced $100-million BC Tech Fund, which will create an avenue for capital funding for promising start-up companies – the plan highlights K-12 curriculum which will provide the opportunity for more than 600,000 B.C. students to gain basic skills needed for careers in technology. Targeted programs include coding academies, greater access to work experience electives for high school students, and dual credit partnerships between secondary and post-secondary institutions.

"We all want a diverse, knowledge-based economy that supports innovation. That's why government is working with colleges, universities, institutes and the tech industry to adjust training and education to meet current and future demand for talent – as one-quarter of government funding for the post-education sector is earmarked for jobs in demand," said Premier Clark.

The #BCTECH Strategy also includes activities that continue to streamline, simplify and automate government procurement processes, facilitate exports, invest in connectivity infrastructure, and improve collaboration and commercialization.

Quick Facts:

- The technology sector directly employs more than 86,000 people, and wages for those jobs are 60% higher than B.C.'s industrial average.
- B.C.'s technology sector is growing faster than the overall economy. In 2013, it grew at a rate of 4.7%, a higher rate than the 3.2% growth observed in the provincial economy.
- In 2013, the technology sector added $13.9 billion to B.C.'s GDP.

- B.C.'s 9,000 technology companies combined generated $23.3 billion in revenue in 2013.
- New technology companies are emerging at increasing rates throughout the province. In 2013, there was an addition of more than 700 new technology companies in B.C., an increase of 8% over the prior year.

Learn More:

#BCTECH Strategy: www.bctechstrategy.ca

For live web casts, photos/videos and more info on the #BCTECH Strategy, visit https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/bctech-strategy

Premier's Technology Council: www.gov.bc.ca/premier/technology_council

BC Technology Industry Association: www.bctia.org/

BC Innovation Council: www.bcic.ca

BC Business Council: http://www.bcbc.com/

Two backgrounders follow with participant quotes and highlights from the strategy.

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#BCTECH Summit participant quotes

Amrik Virk, Minister of Technology, Innovation and Citizens' Services –

"Technology is everywhere and the impact it has on our daily lives is immense. B.C.'s tech strategy represents the steps government is taking to encourage growth of the sector and build the tech leaders of tomorrow to ensure that B.C. has the talent and investment needed so that companies can develop innovative products and ideas to fuel our economy."

Mike Bernier, Minister of Education–

"Building our talent pool is a significant piece of the strategy. We need to ensure that B.C. companies have the talent they need to build their business and develop their ideas. The K-12 curricular changes focusing on math, sciences, coding and creativity will develop the fundamental skills needed for careers in technology."

Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Responsible for Labour–

"The technology sector has a principal role in the BC Jobs Plan and the BC Tech Strategy is a renewal of our commitment to the sector. Through investments and actions related to capital, talent and markets, we are providing support so that technology can continue to be a crucial job creator, and drive innovation and productivity across all industries."

Terry Lake, Minister of Health–

"Investments in organizations including Genome BC and the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research are instrumental in helping British Columbians live healthier lives. Developing top research talent and building new knowledge results in leading health practices, new advancements and ultimately translates into leading health practices."

Teresa Wat, Minister of International Trade–

"B.C.'s tech strategy builds on the $100 million BC Tech Fund that we announced last month that will help promising tech companies get the capital funding they need to start their businesses. When combined with the additional investments related to the talent and markets pillars, B.C. now has a comprehensive strategy designed to strengthen the technology sector, stimulate economic growth and create jobs."

Andrew Wilkinson, Minister of Advanced Education –

"Our government is deepening the talent pool with strategic investments and targeted funding to ensure that tech companies can access the best people for technical, business or senior management roles. The BC Tech Strategy outlines a comprehensive plan that will place greater

emphasis on technology in post-secondary education and include grants, coding academies and funding to connect graduate students with industry and business."

Mary Polak, Minister of Environment –

"B.C. is on the leading edge of clean technology solutions, with over 200 clean technology firms, many of which are gaining global recognition for their leadership. A key aspect of the tech strategy is improving access to capital and this is invaluable to cleantech early-stage companies so they can realize their growth potential."

Bill Tam, president and CEO of the BC Technology Innovation Association–

"We're pleased to see that the government is focused on the priority areas that the tech community has identified. The strategy is an important step and the venture capital announcement will have significant impact. Talent remains a critical priority and we are pleased to see that the government is committed to a data-led process that will see additional future investments in addressing the talent needs of the industry."

Greg Peet, co-chair, Premier's Technology Council –

"This strategy sends a strong message to companies within and outside of B.C. It will provide companies with the right talent, capital and access that's required for industry to grow and succeed. It also highlights how government continues to work closely with the tech sector and its leaders."

Don Mattrick, industry chair of #BCTECH Summit –

"The summit and the release of the B.C. Tech Strategy are taking place at a time when we are seeing great things happen in B.C.'s tech sector. It will be good to have industry experts, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists at one forum, building business opportunities that will leverage that growth."

Greg Caws, president and CEO, BC Innovation Council –

"The #BCTECH Strategy will have significant implications throughout B.C. Greater access to capital funding will complement the work of the 13 regional partners in our BC Acceleration Network, which already support entrepreneurs and startups across the province. The strategy will help build B.C.'s competitive advantage, because tech supports all businesses, new and traditional."

Greg D'Avignon, BC Business Council –

"There is not an organization or enterprise in British Columbia that is not in the technology business, and their ability and need to adopt new technologies is only going to increase. This strategy, and the various investments which will flow from it, will strengthen not only B.C.'s technology cluster, but will create a myriad of opportunities, services and new businesses that improve firm competitiveness and productivity across the economy in an increasingly fast paced global world."

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BACKGROUNDER

#BCTECH Strategy highlights from the talent pillar

Industry-focused programs in the post-secondary system

- Target funding to programming that supports occupations in demand in the technology sector as part of government's initiative to re-engineer 25% of operating grants to support high-demand occupations.
- Align student financial aid funding to expand eligibility for the B.C. Completion Grant for graduates to include students completing programs related to the technology sector.
- Continue to promote the use of the B.C. Tech Co-op grants as part of the BCIC Tech Works program.
- Recognize the importance of hands-on experience for students – proposals for new technology-related degree programs will need to include co-operative education or work integrated learning components.

Timely and relevant labour-market information

- Provide better information to career educators and their students about a wider range of careers in B.C. tech.
- Support the technology sector to customize labour market information, strategies, and tools that address labour market priorities as part of the Labour Market Partnerships Program.
- Include an annual provincial 10-year forecast of job openings by occupation, including technology sector occupations, in the B.C. Labour Market Outlook.

Applied learning and entrepreneur development

- Support technology sector employers to train/up-skill new and existing employees with supporting funding from the Canada Job Grant.
- Build on the first round of coding academies hosted at five public post-secondary institutions.
- Build on the Mechatronics Technology Entrepreneurship Incubator at SFU.
- Encourage use of the BC Innovator Skills Initiative as part of the BCIC Tech Works program.
- Over the course of two years, support Mitacs programs that enable graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to undertake applied research projects relating to their expertise within industry.
- Ideas from Campus to Industry program – in partnership with the Okanagan campus of UBC, government has funded industry/post-secondary institutions (PSI) consultations targeted on identifying actions to increase partnerships between industry and PSIs in the Interior.

Streamlined in-migration pathways after B.C. has maximized our local talent

- Help technology companies that need to recruit and access workers from outside Canada through the B.C. Provincial Nominee Program and work with the federal government to improve their permanent immigration pathways.
- Work with other provinces and the federal government to improve labour mobility and increase our ability to attract workers to B.C.
- Provide funding for a foreign qualifications recognition project that will help new immigrants fit their skills into alternative, in-demand careers in B.C.'s technology sector.
- Promote the federal government's Express Entry program for workers with in-demand technology skills.

Dedicated programs in the K-12 education system

- Phase in new K-12 curriculum over three years beginning this school year, allowing the opportunity for over 600,000 students across the province to experience new learning standards in mathematics, sciences, and other curricula. These standards develop the foundational knowledge and skills for success in the B.C. technology sector and other technology-enabled sectors.
- Once the new curriculum is implemented in 2016-17, students will have the opportunity to learn coding by the end of Grade 9.
- New Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies education: an experiential, hands-on learning through design and creation that includes skills and concepts from Information Technology and Technology Education.

Grades K-5

- Students will be given opportunities to develop foundational skills in Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies through exploratory and purposeful play.
- As students get older, they will have opportunities to develop foundational skills in activities that have a practical and real-life focus.

Grades 6-9

- Curriculum specific to Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies will be developed and available in 2016.
- Students will have opportunities to explore specific areas of Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies, including coding.

Grades 10-12

- Students will have the opportunities to specialize in Information Technology, Technology Education or emerging disciplines.
- Promote creative thinking as a core competency across the entire curriculum, including technical and business education.
- Increase the number of high school students earning elective graduation credit for participating in Work Experience Electives in the technology sector.
- Give students increased access to work-integrated learning programs in the technology sector enabling them to earn credits toward high school graduation while also earning credits towards a post-secondary certificate or diploma.

- Support student opportunities to learn coding in school and outside school through courses and special activities such as the Hour of Code.

#BCTECH Strategy highlights from the markets pillar

Making it easier to sell to government

- Centralize a procurement program of green technologies to accelerate their adoption by local government and other public sector organizations (for example the LED Street Lights Across B.C. procurement program).
- Increase the demand for clean tech solutions through the Carbon Neutral Capital Program for ministries, K-12 schools, health authorities, public post-secondary institutions, provincial Crown corporations and agencies.
- Continue to streamline procurement processes analogous to the process used to create the short-form request for proposals. A streamlined General Services Agreement is currently being piloted.
- Continue to update plain language, online procurement resources for tech companies looking to do business with government, including guidance, videos and templates.
- Introduce modern technology and tools to automate and streamline the entire procurement process.
- Continue to explore the use of the Open Procurement Hub – a leading edge planning approach allowing us to collaborate with the vendor community in an open/live moderated forum to answer questions about the contractual needs of government.
- Providing an opportunity for B.C. technology companies to participate in face-to-face networking discussions with key government decision makers as part of the B2B meetings at the #BCTECH Summit 2016 in order to discuss opportunities for innovation and future partnership. This opportunity signals the initial kick-off for ongoing discussions.
- Continue collaboration and work on the BC Developers' Exchange to understand how new approaches to open data, open source code, open Application Program Interfaces (APIs) and open innovation can bring about both new business ideas and streamlined ways for the public sector to buy software innovations: http://bcdevexchange.org
- Establish a working group involving the Ministry of Health, industry and health sector partners to develop policy, strategies and tools that will enable uptake of innovations that improve outcomes, productivity and sustainability of the healthcare system.

Making it easier to share ideas

- Start work to identify specific examples of where access to data across and within public sectors can be united in ways to improve public policy and programs, and inform next steps for increasing data available to B.C. companies to boost economic growth.
- Okanagan Centre for Innovation – with provincial funding of up to $6 million, it will provide low-cost, flexible space for startups that have graduated from the Accelerate Okanagan Venture Acceleration Program and are still at a venture stage. Construction is underway and is scheduled for completion in early 2017.
- BC Agrifood Venture Acceleration Program – technology and agrifood entrepreneurs can now benefit from the program.

Making B.C. the most connected province

- Committed to providing high-speed Internet access to 100% of the province by 2021.
- Improve the reliability of high-speed Internet access for northern and coastal communities.

Facilitating business growth through exports

- Make it easier to find and use services offered by government that equip businesses to expand and sell to new markets.
- Improve our competitiveness by developing Sector Investment and Export Plans, one each for life sciences, cleantech, ICT, and digital media.
- Realize a 10% increase in the number of tech companies connecting with buyers outside of B.C. by delivering targeted activities in our key markets, including international trade shows, government-led trade missions, and through international marketing.
- BritishColumbia.ca – new features on the province's digital hub for promoting B.C.'s sectors, communities and opportunities to the world.

Encouraging commercialization

- Increase adoption of cleantech through government's LNG technology fund, as well as legislation stating that the entire B.C. public sector be carbon neutral by reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero each year.

#BCTECH Strategy highlights from the capital pillar

Investing in a new BC Tech Fund

- $100-million investment to expand the availability of venture capital in B.C. and address the early stage (A-round) funding gap (although we also recognize the need for access to capital at later stages for continued company growth).

Continue our competitive tax rates and credits

- Increase the number of B.C. technology companies claiming the Digital Animation or Visual Effects (DAVE) credit or the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit (IDMTC).
- Continue B.C.'s Small Business Venture Capital Act which provides $33M of tax credits annually.

Continue to build a strong research environment in B.C.

- Genome BC will continue to facilitate turning important insights from genomics into new diagnostic and treatment services.
- Attract and keep top research talent in B.C. to generate the development and application of new ideas in areas of key importance to the health system through funding to The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR).
- Revised the B.C. Knowledge Development Fund criteria to focus on provincial government priorities.
- Provide funding to post-secondary institutions to increase commercialization potential.

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