

Company Case Study: Cleantech



About Ballard Power Systems

Ballard Power Systems has been a cornerstone of the local clean energy sector since the 1980s. Initially opening operations in North Vancouver before moving to Burnaby in 1995, Ballard has grown to become a global leader in hydrogen fuel cell technology. The company has both shaped and been shaped by the region's evolving clean energy ecosystem and with a strong workforce Ballard continues to innovate while contributing to the region's burgeoning hydrogen economy.

Why the Metro Vancouver Region?

Ballard's decision to establish and grow in the Metro Vancouver region has been driven by a strong innovation culture, access to top-tier talent, and a supportive regulatory environment. The company's presence has, in turn, helped catalyze the growth of a robust hydrogen cluster. Often described as the anchor for clean energy innovation, Ballard's contributions have facilitated the establishment of "baby Ballards"—companies who employ a large proportion of former Ballard employees, such as AVL and Cellcentric that have further strengthened the local hydrogen ecosystem. This cluster effect reinforces the region's leadership in hydrogen innovation and attracts investment from around the world. "Being part of this hydrogen cluster means we have opportunities to leverage the collective advancements in the sector," said Dr. Kevin Colbow, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at Ballard Power Systems.



Ballard's long-standing reputation in the region has helped build the foundation for other hydrogen companies to thrive. Ballard helped to streamline permitting processes in Burnaby, where regulators are now well-versed in hydrogen-related projects, creating a welcoming environment for clean energy solutions. The Metro Vancouver region now boasts three hydrogen stations and an expanding network of companies specializing in fuel cell technology.

"Permitting for hydrogen has become easier because people are accustomed to Ballard's work and understand the fundamentals of supporting companies like ours," said Colbow. This mutually reinforcing ecosystem has positioned the Metro Vancouver region as a hub for hydrogen innovation, attracting global interest, and investment.

Ballard benefits from the presence of complementary industries within the region. From software development to machine shops, electronics, and testing services, these industries attract and nurture the skills and experience that Ballard needs to continue to thrive and innovate in the changing economic landscape. With an expanding hydrogen infrastructure and growing network of cleantech companies, the region provides an ideal base for continued growth.

“Our partnerships with UBC, SFU, and BCIT not only drives innovation but also helps us build a world-class team.”

– Dr. Kevin Colbow, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at Ballard Power Systems



Talent Development and Workforce Diversity

Ballard's success is deeply intertwined with the Metro Vancouver region's talent pool and post-secondary institutions. Collaborations with the University of British Columbia (UBC), Simon Fraser University (SFU), and the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) have been instrumental in providing Ballard with highly skilled graduates. While UBC and SFU excel in software and technical skills, BCIT focuses on manufacturing expertise, ensuring a steady pipeline of talent across disciplines. The company's co-op program further strengthens these ties, fostering real-world learning opportunities for students and providing the company with motivated and diverse employees.

Ballard employs a diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of the region itself. With employees representing 42 nationalities, the company benefits from the global perspective of its team members. This diversity is bolstered by the region's inclusivity and desirability as a place to live and work, attracting professionals motivated by cleantech and Ballard's strong brand recognition.

Looking Ahead

Ballard remains committed to advancing hydrogen technology while navigating global opportunities and challenges. Although other jurisdictions are actively courting the company to relocate their operations, the Metro Vancouver region's supportive ecosystem and talent pool remain critical to Ballard's innovation and growth.

As the company continues to contribute to the global energy transition, its roots in the region provide a solid foundation for its mission to pioneer clean energy solutions. Ballard's enduring presence has not only shaped the region's hydrogen cluster but also inspired a new generation of cleantech innovation, solidifying the Metro Vancouver region's status as a leader in the global hydrogen economy.

“The region's infrastructure enables seamless collaboration and efficiency, allowing us to expand while maintaining strong ties to global markets.”

– Dr. Kevin Colbow, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at Ballard Power Systems



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