

Section II

The Metro Vancouver Region's
High-tech Engine

A control room with multiple computer monitors displaying simulation software and maps. The room is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the screens. The monitors show various data, including maps and simulation controls. The overall atmosphere is professional and technical.

Evaluating Metro Vancouver's Regional Tech Sector

Key Location Selection Factors for International Firms

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Indigenous Territorial Recognition

Metro Vancouver acknowledges that the region's residents live, work, and learn on the shared territories of many Indigenous peoples, including 10 local First Nations: **qíciáy'** (Katzie), **q̓w̓a:ńł̓ən** (Kwantlen), **k̓w̓ik̓w̓əł̓əm** (Kwikwetlem), **máthxwi** (Matsqui), **x̓m̓əθk̓w̓əy̓əm** (Musqueam), **q̓iq̓éyt** (Qayqayt), **se'mya'me** (Semiahmoo), **Sk̓wx̓w̓ú7mesh Úxwumixw** (Squamish), **sc̓əw̓aθen məsteyəx̓w** (Tsawwassen) and **səlilwətał** (Tsleil-Waututh).

Metro Vancouver respects the diverse and distinct histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, which collectively enrich our lives and the region.

About Metro Vancouver

Metro Vancouver is a diverse organization that plans for and delivers regional utility services, including water, sewers and wastewater treatment, and solid waste management. It also regulates air quality, plans for urban growth, manages a regional parks system, delivers affordable housing, provides an economic development service through Invest Vancouver, and serves as a regional federation. The organization is a federation of 21 municipalities, one electoral area, and one treaty First Nation located in the region of the same name. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors of elected officials from each member jurisdiction.

About Invest Vancouver

Invest Vancouver is Metro Vancouver's regional economic development service. By attracting strategic investment in key export-oriented industries, conducting research and policy analysis, and fostering collaboration on a local, national, and global scale, Invest Vancouver is facilitating the creation of high-quality jobs to achieve a resilient regional economy that delivers prosperity for all residents of the Metro Vancouver region. Working closely with leaders across all levels of government in the region and beyond, Invest Vancouver is addressing regional concerns to increase economic resilience, strengthening strategic export-oriented industries, attracting world-class companies, and laying the foundation for a region where every resident can thrive in today's rapidly evolving global economy. Our data-driven, objective research aims to provide actionable intelligence to position the region for success in a rapidly evolving global economy.

For any questions about the report contact: info@investvancouver.ca

Acknowledgements

Invest Vancouver gratefully acknowledges funding from the CanExport Community Investment program.

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Overview & Methodology

This report snapshot investigates the region's technology sector through the lens of multinational enterprises navigating decisions to either expand or establish operations in new locations. According to seasoned location experts who work directly with such firms, the most important considerations guiding these decisions are: talent; an established cluster and supporting ecosystem; return on investment; and ease of doing business. Invest Vancouver evaluates the region's technology sector based on these factors, adding comparisons to relevant Canadian and US West Coast jurisdictions. The snapshot concludes by analyzing why the region is not top of mind for many international technology firms – despite rating well on many location factors – and considers ways to raise the region's profile and increase investment attraction.

The findings are informed by structured interviews conducted with founders and executives from firms with operations in the region, as well as leaders, professors, and knowledgeable representatives from industry groups, accelerators, academic institutions, and investment funds. The primary research was supplemented with findings from a KPMG study conducted on behalf of Invest Vancouver, as well as secondary research that draws from academic, industry and government studies and reports, media coverage, presentations, and other public sources.

The report snapshot is extracted from Invest Vancouver's comprehensive analysis in 'The Metro Vancouver Region's High-tech Engine: Boosting the Economic Landscape.' Dive deeper into the full report to explore a data-driven analysis of the emerging technology hub in the region, and a detailed analysis of the region's applied artificial intelligence (AI) sector. It also investigates regional economic development opportunities for AI solutions across healthcare, construction, and resource extraction sectors.

Location decisions and the regional technology sector

Developing an evidence-based strategy for investment attraction requires an understanding of how firms evaluate potential locations.¹ Many of the largest firms do not work with public investment attraction agencies (like Invest Vancouver), and if they do, the engagement happens after the shortlist of possible locations has been decided. Instead, these multinational enterprises work with one of the global consultancies that offer corporate site selection advice, and rarely explain their decisions or explain where the runners up fell short. Invest Vancouver created a project to investigate this process with the ultimate goal of increasing the success of investment attraction.

Invest Vancouver engaged KPMG to connect with their global network of location experts and technology industry specialists, i.e. the people with firsthand experience of how companies make such decisions. The objective was to discover which factors have the most influence on locations decisions, and where the Metro Vancouver region fits in the expansion plans of multinationals in the technology sector.

Invest Vancouver learned that the ranking of location factors varies widely among multinationals, even across the divisions of a single firm. The relative weighting of site location factors varies based on firm size, subsector, investment scale, operational models and the unique needs and priorities of individual firms. Nonetheless, despite these differences, there is consistency in the key elements sought by firms across the high technology sector.

In short, firms care most about access to suitable **talent**, followed by the presence of a **cluster** of firms engaged in similar activities, along with a supporting ecosystem, the potential **return on investment**, and the **ease of doing business**.² Surprisingly, the Metro Vancouver region is not at the forefront of international options for many expanding firms, despite scoring well on these considerations. The rest of this section elaborates on these site selection factors and to outsiders perspectives on the region.

1 The focus here is on multinational firms looking to expand research, development and production, rather than those expanding their sales, support and distribution activities. The latter type of expansion decision is primarily driven by cut market size and access. An expansion can come in many forms: an international firm might purchase a local one; establish an entirely new operation; or scale up their current activities. Whatever the form, these firms are making an additional investment in the regional economy that could have gone elsewhere.

2 Firms take factors such as government transparency (i.e. clear and accessible information on regulations; accountability in public services; and openness in government procurement processes) for granted outside the developing world. Similarly, modern infrastructure, including transportation links, reliable and sustainable energy, and high-speed internet are not typically competitive factors in location decisions, though affordable, clean power, for example, is an important consideration for many.



Talent is the top priority in investment decisions

Insight from location experts: Notwithstanding unique firm needs, the availability of skilled workers is generally the most important location factor. Specifically, firms seek specialised skills that match their immediate needs and confidence they will be able to meet future hiring needs. Firms often adopt a 'dual lens' when evaluating a location: it must meet their own needs for available talent while catering to the preferences of prospective employees seeking an attractive place to live.

Invest Vancouver findings: Interviews with senior executives of technology firms with operations in the region consistently confirm the attraction of the region's highly skilled workforce. International firms that have opened new branches in the region or purchased established local firms have repeatedly cited the acquisition of talent as their primary motivation.

The region's talent pool is a source of quality workers for the high technology sector.

Access to high-quality talent is the primary reason multinational firms choose to invest in the region. Many also expand for the same reason. CBRE, a global commercial real estate services and investment firm, provides further confirmation via its comparison of the technology labour pool in 50 North American jurisdictions. Based on market depth, vitality, and attractiveness to companies seeking tech talent and to tech workers seeking employment, the region ranks eighth overall (and second in Canada, after Toronto).³ Maintaining this advantage will require ensuring a continued stream of graduates through the region's institutions of higher learning, and workforce development initiatives.

The region's post-secondary institutions provide the technology sector with a steady stream of graduates.⁴ Post-secondary institutions can play a greater role in upskilling and providing micro credentials as they respond to rising demand from workers facing technology changes and evolving job requirements, particularly the need to integrate emerging technologies like AI.⁵

The Canadian immigration process, which has a streamlined visa process and policies favouring skilled workers, helps firms fill labour market gaps. Multiple federal programs apply to the technology sector, providing a path to permanent residency, targeting US H-1B visa holders, and permitting the temporary hiring of specialized talent.⁶ At the provincial level, the Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) and its technology variant, the BC PNP Tech Pilot, offer pathways for foreign skilled workers and graduates to become permanent residents, with the latter providing a streamlined process for in-demand tech roles.

Generally, the Canadian process is easier to navigate and more permissive than the American system for technology firms seeking to hire skilled foreigners. Thus, a location in the region can allow a multinational firm access to talent they might not otherwise be able to hire if they were located in a different jurisdiction like the US. In interviews, Invest Vancouver heard that the region's high quality of life, ethnic and cultural diversity, and openness to immigrants also help attract foreign workers.

³ CBRE, "[Scoring Tech Talent 2023](#)" (July 17, 2023).

⁴ The BC Tech Association is working on a report on this talent pipeline with the BC Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, and the post-secondary institutions.

⁵ The World Economic Forum predicted in a 2023 that the core skills of 44% of workers will be disrupted over the next five years, largely due to the adoption of frontier technologies. World Economic Forum, "[Future of Jobs Report 2023](#)" (May 2023).

⁶ These programs include the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP), the Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP), and the Canadian Experience Class (CEC), H-1B Visa Holder Program, the International Mobility Program (IMP), and the Global Talent Stream (GTS). Please see Invest Vancouver's "[Tech Talent Guide](#)" for more information.



An established cluster and supporting ecosystem signal a favorable business environment

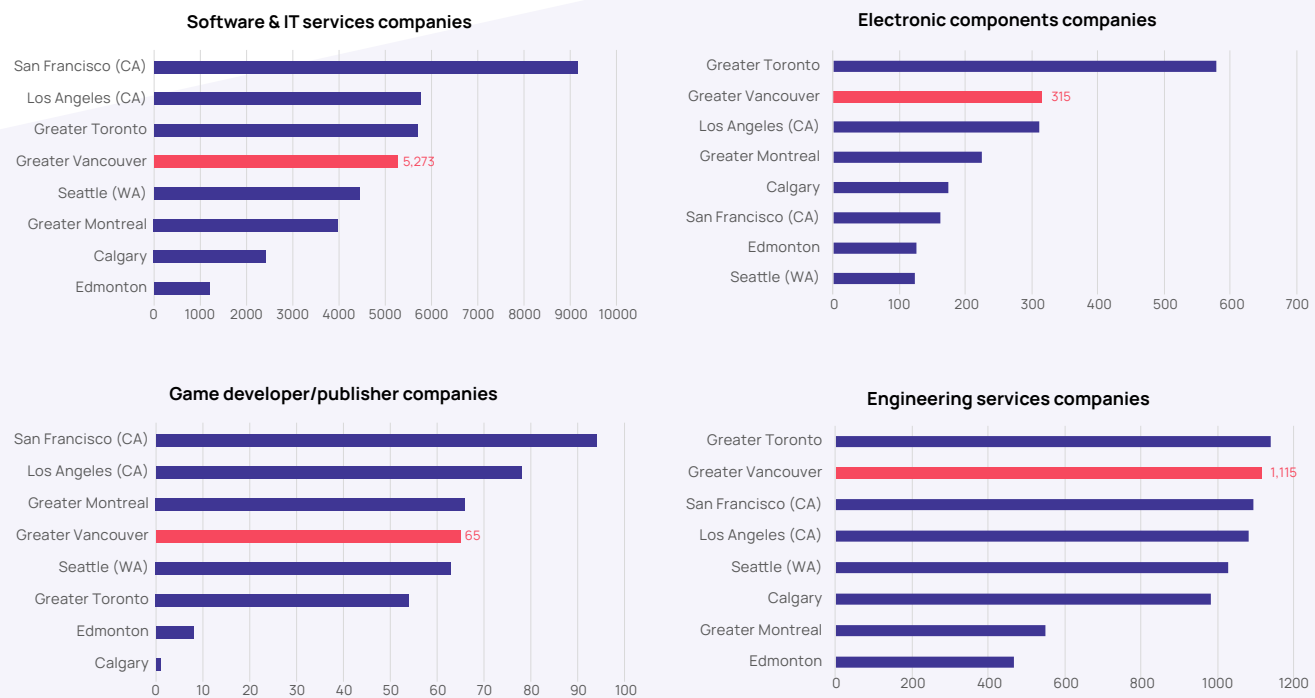
Insight from location experts: The presence of a cluster is an important factor in location decisions because it indicates the maturity and health of the broader ecosystem.

Invest Vancouver findings: A group of successful firms engaged in similar activities in close proximity implies that the necessary business inputs and resources are available and supported by a favourable regulatory environment. The presence of major multinational firms is a powerful indicator to other multinationals that the region could be fertile ground for their operations, too. The significance of clusters extends beyond current conditions. Over time, a cluster can catalyze a virtuous cycle wherein a growing workforce attracts more firms, which incentivizes a further increase in the pool of workers as more people stay or relocate in response to the greater demand for their skills.

The signs all point to emerging technology clusters in the region

There are emerging technology clusters in the region. Figure 1 compares the number of companies in several high technology industries in five Canadian census metropolitan areas (Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, and Edmonton) and three West Coast American jurisdictions (Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles). These rankings, based on firm counts in 2021, represent the type of evidence of a cluster a firm might consider in the initial stages of a location search. Overall, the Metro Vancouver region stands out positively with a high concentration of firms operating in the technology sector, compared to these other metropolitan areas.

Figure 1: Number of firms in selected technology industries (2021)



SOURCE: FDI BENCHMARK FROM THE FINANCIAL TIMES BASED ON DUN & BRADSTREET GLOBAL REFERENCE SOLUTION.

The data from fDi Benchmark is for 'Greater Vancouver', which includes Vancouver, Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam, Langley, Delta, North Vancouver, Maple Ridge, New Westminister, and Port Coquitlam.

The signs of clustering are also evident in the corporate logos affixed to buildings across the Metro Vancouver region, which is home to branches of major multinationals engaged in motion picture production, animation, gaming, software, aerospace, networking, telecommunications, and semiconductors and more. Figure 2 shows a selection of the growing roster of multinationals operating in the region.

Figure 2: Selected multinational enterprises with operations in the Metro Vancouver region⁷

High-tech Services	Amazon	Brex	Flexport	Microsoft	Sage Group
	Arista Networks	Collabera	Fortinet	MasterCard	Salesforce
	Asana	Cisco Systems	Fujitsu	MongoDB	SAP
	Change Healthcare	Dialpad	Grammarly	Netgear	Sophos
	Cvent	Darktrace	Ignition	Ping Identity	Silo AI
Digital Media & Entertainment	DNEG	Kabam	Unity	Walt Disney	
	Electronic Arts	Nintendo Company	Industrial Light & Magic		
Life Sciences	Xenon Pharmaceuticals	StemCell Technologies	Amgen		
High-tech Goods	Ballard	Boeing	Broadcom	cellcentric	Intel
	ASCO Industries	Schneider Electric	Samsung Electronics	Teledyne FLIR	Molicel (E-One Moli)

An established innovation ecosystem supports high technology firms in the region

Firms in the region’s high technology sector benefit from a robust innovation ecosystem. The supporting environment, summarized in Figure 3, includes educational institutions, research institutes, accelerators, and industry associations. Contributions from the federal and provincial governments underpin the ecosystem.⁸

7 Some firms conduct business in multiple industries. The region’s Life Sciences industry is predominately comprised of local firms who often work with MNEs based in other locations.

8 This is not an exhaustive list. For further information on the overall business ecosystem, see Invest Vancouver’s [Innovation Ecosystem Profile](#).

Figure 3: The Metro Vancouver region's high technology sector supporting ecosystem

Accelerators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Destruction Lab (CDL) • Empowered Startups • entrepreneur@UBC (e@UBC) • Launch Academy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Ventures BC (NVBC) • SFU Venture Labs • Spring Activator • Zen Launchpad
Industry Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artificial Intelligence Network of BC (AINBC) • BC Tech Association • DigiBC • First Nations Technology Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontier Collective • Motion Picture Production Industry Association of BC • Vancouver VR/AR Association
Post-Secondary Institutions and Specialty Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) • Capilano University • Centre for Digital Media • Douglas College • Emily Carr University of Art + Design • Kwantlen Polytechnic University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langara College • Northeastern University • Simon Fraser University (SFU) • University of British Columbia (UBC) • Vancouver Community College (VCC) • Vancouver Film School (VFS) • Vancouver Institute of Media Arts (VanArts)
Public Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation (JEDI) • Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) • Canada Innovation Corporation • Creative BC • DIGITAL • Global Affairs Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovate BC • Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada (ISED) • Mitacs • National Research Council (NRC) • Pacific Economic Development Canada (PacifiCan)
Research & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantum Algorithms Institute • SFU Clean Hydrogen Hub • Stewart Blusson Quantum Matter Institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRIUMF Particle Accelerator • UBC Smart Hydrogen Energy District

A strong **post-secondary education system** anchors the region's innovation ecosystem. The University of British Columbia (UBC) and Simon Fraser University (SFU) are internationally recognized for their focus on research and development.⁹ The British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) emphasizes technical skills, problem solving, and real-world experience. These organizations and the rest of the post-second system are a crucial source of skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and innovation.

⁹ In 2023, UBC was ranked in the top 5% of universities in the world by several prominent global university ranking agencies. UBC, "UBC's Institutional Rankings." SFU was the most innovative university in Canada and 13th most innovative in the world in 2023. WURI, "Wuri Ranking 2023."

Complementing this educational foundation is a network of **accelerators** and **industry associations**. The accelerators help entrepreneurs and researchers transform innovative ideas into viable business ventures with financial support, mentorship, and strategic guidance. The industry associations serve as platforms for networking, knowledge sharing, and advocacy, and thus contribute to the sector's overall vitality.

The **public sector** plays a pivotal role advancing innovation, talent development, and investment. The public support extends to **research & development** organizations that focus on advancing technological innovation in frontier technologies such as quantum computing technologies and particle and nuclear science.

Maximizing potential return on investment is a priority for firms

Insight from location experts: Cost differences are implicit in any discussion of location decisions. Firms consider tax rates, labour costs, property costs, and the costs of regulatory compliance. While firms generally seek to minimize these costs, they may prioritize access to top-tier talent over lower costs in certain cases. Financial incentives (in the form of subsidies and tax breaks) can also be influential, though their significance varies among technology firms. Some firms consider such incentives crucial, while others regard them as supplementary rather than primary drivers of their decisions.

Invest Vancouver findings: Given the focus on maximizing return on investment, firms routinely scrutinize their cost structure. In interviews, firms providing services mentioned the region's relatively low labour costs as an advantage. Since labour is their largest input, the region's high office costs are not as much of an obstacle as they might be in other sectors. Land costs can be an obstacle for goods-producing technology firms, particularly for those that require a large footprint, because industrial land is scarce and expensive in the region. Both the provincial and federal governments have put in place incentives to help offset costs related to talent, R&D, and investment.

The cost of doing business in the region is attractive

The region is an attractive choice for companies in high-cost locations requiring a talented workforce and seeking strategic locations with relatively low labour costs.¹⁰ Compared to US technology hubs like Silicon Valley and Seattle, the Metro Vancouver region offers access to high-quality talent at attractive rates. The region is also competitive with other Canadian metropolitan areas.



10 CBRE, "Scoring Tech Talent 2023" (July 17, 2023).

Figure 4 illustrates the average annual operating costs (labour + office space) in 2023 for a representative technology firm in the Metro Vancouver region compared to Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Edmonton and high-tech hubs along the US West Coast.

Figure 4: Average annual operating costs for a representative technology firm (USD millions, 2023)

Jurisdiction	Labour cost	Office cost	Total costs	Office cost as % of total costs
San Francisco Bay Area	\$74.7	\$4.2	\$78.8	5%
Seattle	\$59.3	\$2.7	\$62.0	4%
Los Angeles/Orange County	\$53.3	\$2.6	\$55.9	5%
Calgary	\$37.5	\$1.3	\$38.9	3%
Toronto	\$36.0	\$2.1	\$38.1	6%
Vancouver	\$35.1	\$2.4	\$37.5	7%
Edmonton	\$32.6	\$1.5	\$34.1	4%
Montreal	\$32.2	\$1.6	\$33.9	5%

SOURCE: SCORING TECH TALENT CBRE REPORT (2023).
 Estimated one-year company costs based on an office space of 60K square feet, with 500 employees using metro area office costs.

The region’s cost-competitiveness may be surprising to residents accustomed to thinking of the region as expensive. Yet, operating costs in the Metro Vancouver region are significantly lower than in major centres on the US West Coast and land right in the middle among large Canadian metro areas. The region’s office space is the most expensive in Canada, at almost double the low-cost leader, Calgary. However, office space is such a small component of annual operating costs for a typical technology firm that its cost is negligible as a competitive factor. Conversely, labour costs, which make up the greatest share of annual operating costs, are lower in the region than in Toronto and Calgary and dramatically less than in US jurisdictions.¹¹

Firms also consider additional costs beyond basic operating expenses in their location decisions. Such costs might include those associated with immigration (to address that skills gap, as discussed above) and healthcare. The Canadian immigration process is less expensive than the American equivalent, and interviewed firms mentioned these savings. Similarly, firms with US and Canadian locations noted that Canada’s universal healthcare system saves them money on benefits packages for their employees.

11 Invest Vancouver replicated the CBRE cost comparison using fDi Intelligence from the Financial Times firms in various technology categories offered by fDi Intelligence, including software development, informatics R&D centre, video game design centre, engineering services, multi-media design centre, and film & TV and found the same result.

Industrial land requirements reduce the low-cost advantage

The region compares less favourably for firms requiring industrial space. Demand for industrial land in the region is high, the vacancy rate is very low, the supply is constrained, and market prices reflect the resulting scarcity.¹² The cost of industrial land in the Metro Vancouver region is the highest in Canada and the third highest amongst the jurisdictions in the previous example.

In contrast to service-producing firms, where the cost of physical space is a small share of total costs, land costs for typical industrial firms can be substantial. For example, in the same set of metro areas, fDi Benchmark estimates that industrial land costs for an electronic components manufacturer constitute 46% to 61% of a firm's total annual operating costs. Thus, finding suitable industrial land and absorbing the cost is likely to be an obstacle for new entrants to the region, making investment attraction more difficult.

Government and not-for-profits help firms in the region reduce their costs.

Support and incentives are important in attracting investment to the region. They are primarily provided through public sector and not-for-profit organizations and include various forms of assistance, such as funding, tax incentives, and programs for talent development. The supports loosely fall under talent; research & development; and business growth.

Firms in the tech sector have access to skilled labour, in part, due to programs aimed at upskilling and talent attraction and retention. They can benefit from financial support for R&D and programs that connect academia with industry as well as various incentives to increase capital investment, expand their operations, and adopt digital technologies.¹³ Additionally, the Digital Media & Entertainment industry benefits from targeted tax incentives that have helped foster and grow media production, post-production, and video game design by reducing the of qualified labour expenditures.¹⁴

The ease of doing business matters to firms

Insight from location experts: Firms prefer not to waste time. Local municipalities and investment attraction agencies can enhance a region's attractiveness with custom services, such as organized site visits and one-on-one consultations. Sought after services include help accessing local resources, navigating administrative complexities, and swiftly resolving issues as they arise. Firms are more likely to favour regions that smooth out hurdles and provide a seamless and expedited path, thereby reducing their time to market and the start of revenue generation.

12 Claire Wilson, "[Metro Vancouver's Industrial Land Shortage Threatens Future of B.C.'s Trade Economy](#)," Business in Vancouver, September 21, 2023.

13 See [Appendix](#) for additional details.

14 For additional details, see Invest Vancouver's forthcoming Digital Media & Entertainment Sector Profile and BC Government, [Film and television tax credit](#) and [Interactive digital media tax credit](#).

Invest Vancouver findings: Firms making location decisions behave like consumers. They try to minimize their expenses, which means avoiding situations where they have to pay interest and salaries while not earning revenue. Thus, they prefer jurisdictions with short, guaranteed permitting processes to those with lengthy, uncertain ones. In general, firms will prefer locations where the regulatory framework is simple to navigate, predictable, and stable. Creating business-friendly policies can be a cost-effective way to improve a region's attractiveness, particularly when competing with regions that offer substantial incentive packages. Also, enhanced coordination among the Metro Vancouver region's local ecosystem players would ensure a streamlined experience.

Progress among all orders of government in BC in the race to catch up with other regions

The Province of BC and other governments in BC are making progress in implementing business-friendly policies. However, they lag behind other metro regions such as Montreal, QC and Calgary, AB that have gone further in coordinating between local, regional, and provincial governments. This coordination presents a unified experience for prospective companies.

Signs of progress among all orders of government in BC include the Province of BC's Clean Energy and Major Projects Office (CEMPO), which it created to improve regulatory certainty, competitiveness, access to labour, and coordination with First Nations and local communities. At the municipal level, many communities have been systematically streamlining their development permit processes to make them simpler, faster, and more predictable. In particular, the City of Surrey has guaranteed timelines, an online permitting portal, pre-application meetings, and outreach to help applicants understand and correct application deficiencies. Business friendly efforts like these improve the region's chances of attracting investment in the technology sector.

The Metro Vancouver region is not always top of mind for many international technology firms

Insight from location experts: For many technology firms, the Metro Vancouver region is not at the forefront of international considerations when discussing possible investments and expansions. Toronto and Montreal overshadow the Metro Vancouver region and are themselves eclipsed by San Francisco and New York. To the extent that site selection is like a job search, firms have drawn up the interview list without ever having reviewed the Metro Vancouver region's resume.



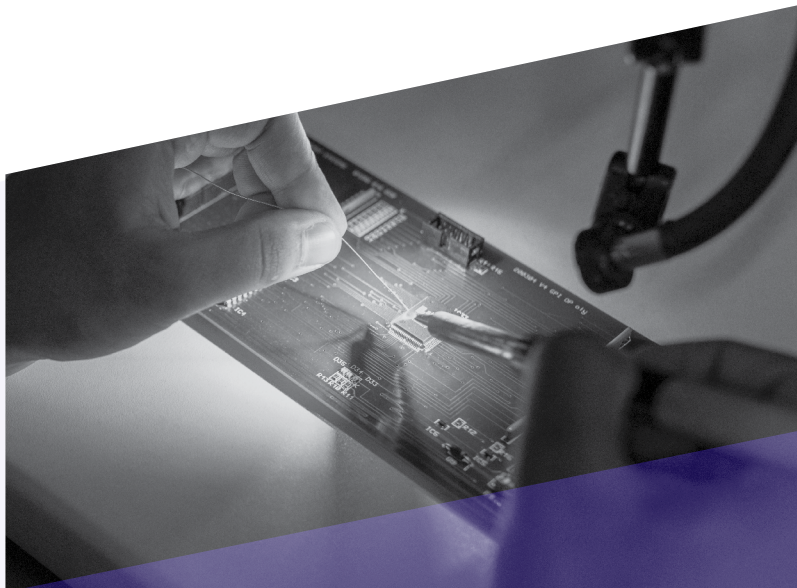
Invest Vancouver findings: This may seem contradictory given the region scores well on the key factors identified as top determinations for investment location and the significant presence of prominent international tech firms. Yet, the region's international reputation rests on its appeal as a tourist destination, not as a technological powerhouse. Moreover, building a reputation takes time. The technology industries' rise to prominence in the region is relatively recent, particularly compared to its historical roles in international trade and resource extraction. Bridging this gap between the current reality and outdated perceptions is vital for raising international investors' awareness of the region as a potential location.

Firms that are aware of the region's value proposition have chosen to expand here

When the region's specialized expertise ranks among global leaders, firms are more likely to recognize its value proposition. In hydrogen, for example, the Metro Vancouver region has firms along the entire value chain and is a leader in fuel cells. Firms such as cellcentric Fuel Cell Canada (a joint venture between Daimler Truck AG and the Volvo Group Ab) have selected the region specifically to tap into the specialized talent in this field. Similarly, the region is a prominent location for filming and many elements of "creative tech," notably animation, visual effects, video game development, and increasingly, immersive media. The process is mutually reinforcing, since each multinational firm that adds a location in the Metro Vancouver region expands the cluster that attracted it and adds to its reputation.

Geographic proximity has also helped overcome reputational lag, with firms on the West Coast of the US more likely to be familiar the region's strengths, especially in Digital Media & Entertainment, software, the Life Sciences, and clean tech. For firms engaged in development work, proximity and a shared time zone combine to make the region a better fit. The more the work requires the engagement of high-level management, direct consultation, and creative collaboration among geographically dispersed teams, the more likely geographical proximity and a shared time zone matter. Executives facing frequent travel for in-person meetings prioritize shorter travel times and consistent time zones. The shared time zone also means that work hours overlap among remote teams based on the West Coast, allowing for immediate feedback and engagement via phone, email, and collaborative software tools.¹⁵

¹⁵ These considerations are not unique to the West Coast. Toronto, for example, benefits from proximity to and a shared time zone with New York. Interestingly, the opposite can also be true. Firms in Asia are ending their day when it is early morning in BC, which means a location in the region can help cover 24-hour operations for client needs, crisis management, etc.



More work is needed to raise the profile of the region's technology hub

Promoting the Metro Vancouver region at key international technology events will help elevate the region's value proposition and strengthen connections to the global tech ecosystem.¹⁶ Such outreach and connection cultivates an increasing awareness of the region and can highlight its advantages and strengths. The region could also raise its profile by hosting tech-oriented events. As an example, Lisbon's Web Summit has become one of the world's most prominent technology conferences and it has raised that region's prominence in the international tech community.

Proactive engagement with prospective firms is also important. This includes identifying and reaching out to firms considering expansion and providing business intelligence highlighting the region's strengths. The outreach may take the form of outbound delegations, which help raise awareness of what the region has to offer. Similarly, hosting inbound delegations provides an opportunity to sell prospective firms on the strengths of the regional technology sector, the supporting ecosystem, and the ease of doing business here. Finally, building relationships and networks is worthwhile because some of the best investment attraction opportunities grow out of such connections. Sharing information about an exciting project in the early stages of development or a compelling idea percolating in the local ecosystem, for example, may spark interest from a company that was not already considering the region.

¹⁶ Invest Vancouver engages in this work, often in partnership with Global Affairs Canada, Invest in Canada, and Trade and Invest British Columbia.



Appendix

Metro Vancouver Regional Tech Sector Growth Supports

Talent

Upskilling and work-integrated learning. The *Stronger BC: Future Skills Grant* supports workers seeking short-term skills training at public post-secondary institutions for in-demand skillsets. *Mitacs'* internship program bolsters industry-academic collaboration, while the *BC Workplace Innovation Fund* invests in graduate scholarships and tech workforce development to address labor shortages.

Talent attraction and retention. The *Digital Skills for Youth* and the *Innovator Skills Initiative* focus on developing digital skills and promoting diversity in the tech sector. The *WorkBC Wage Subsidy Program* helps firms hire and retain talent, with a priority for youth and those with disabilities. *MOSAIC* connects newcomers to the region with employment opportunities. *NPower Canada's* programs provide free training for underserved youth and adults for in-demand tech roles.

Research & Development

Conducting R&D. The *Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED)* program is a national tax incentive supporting R&D conducted by businesses regardless of size or sector.¹⁷ The *Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP)* delivers financial assistance and advisory services to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) developing and commercializing technologies, while *Innovations Solutions Canada* funds SMEs providing innovative solutions to pressing government needs.

Connecting academia and industry. The *Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)* funds collaboration between academia and industry with grants. One such grant is *Idea to Innovation*, aimed at transforming academic research into commercially viable products or services.

¹⁷ To learn more about SR&ED, see: Government of Canada, [Scientific Research and Experimental Development \(SR&ED\) Tax Incentives](#) (December 1, 2023).

Business Growth

Expanding operations. The *Accelerated Investment Incentive* encourages investment in assets like machinery and equipment with an enhanced capital cost allowance. The *Strategic Innovation Fund* (SIF) offers grants and loans for large-scale, transformative projects to support R&D, commercialization, firm expansion, and public-private collaborations. The *Venture Capital Tax Credit* offers a tax incentive for investments in BC small businesses, facilitating their access to early-stage capital for development and growth. *PacifiCan's Business Scale-Up and Productivity Program* offers interest-free loans to innovative and high-growth potential businesses.

Adopting digital technologies. The *Canada Digital Adoption Program* assists SMEs in digital transformation through two streams: *Grow Your Business Online* grants for e-commerce integration, and *Boost Your Business Technology* grants for digital adoption planning and access to interest-free loans.

Digital Media & Entertainment

A variety of credits that reduce the cost of qualified labour expenditures have helped foster and grow media production, post-production, and video game design in the region.¹⁸

¹⁸ For additional details, see Invest Vancouver's forthcoming Digital Media & Entertainment Sector Profile and BC Government, [Film and television tax credit](#) and [Interactive digital media tax credit](#).



Interested in reading more about the high-tech sector in the Metro Vancouver region?

Check out Invest Vancouver's comprehensive analysis in

"The Metro Vancouver Region's High-tech Engine: Boosting the Economic Landscape."



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