

Legacy Paper

Web Summit Vancouver 2025

Naturally Innovative

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Contents

Executive Summary 5

The Origin Story: Why Web Summit Vancouver, Why Now, Why the Alliance 6

A Vision for B.C.'s Tech Future 10

B.C. Tech Ecosystem Engagement 12

Naturally Innovative Alliance Initiatives by the Numbers 14

The Path Forward 17

Case Studies 18

- British Columbia Pavilion 18
- Road to Web Summit Vancouver 2025 (R2WSV) 20
- Innovation & Investment Insider Tours 22


Vancouver
British Columbia
Where the tech world meets
Lisbon
Naturally Innovative
Naturally Innovative
Naturally Innovative

Executive Summary

In 2025, Canada, British Columbia, and Vancouver welcomed the global technology community to the inaugural **Web Summit Vancouver (WSV)** — the newest addition to one of the world's most influential series of tech conferences widely regarded as "the Olympics of tech". Behind its successful launch was the **Naturally Innovative Alliance (NIA)**, a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership dedicated to leveraging WSV to elevate British Columbia as a global centre for innovation, investment, and inclusive economic development.

This partnership group of funding and delivery partners from across government and industry — including the Government of Canada, through Pacific Economic Development Canada (PacifiCan), the Province of British Columbia, through the Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth (JEG), Innovate BC, Invest Vancouver, the City of Vancouver, and Destination Vancouver — shared one vision: attract WSV to Vancouver and maximize opportunities around it to grow B.C.'s tech economy, globally and inclusively.

In year one, the Naturally Innovative Alliance was more than a partnership, it was a startup in itself. It required trust, experimentation, and learning-by-doing. As one partner put it, "We built the plane as we flew it." Thanks to its success, the Alliance has laid the foundation for a replicable model for public-private collaboration, and a new approach to hosting business events focused on driving economic development.

This document highlights the NIA's key initiatives and outcomes, which have helped accelerate a strategic, aligned, and high-impact future for the B.C. tech ecosystem.

The Origin Story: Why Web Summit Vancouver, Why Now, Why the Alliance

A Global Opportunity Lands in B.C.

B.C. and Canada stand at a critical moment in time. Technologies like AI, and quantum computing are ushering in a new industrial revolution that is impacting every aspect of society in Canada and around the world. These emerging technologies also have the power to shape economies, as entrepreneurs and tech sectors worldwide compete for investment and talent, and look to seize the countless new economic opportunities before them.

To succeed and thrive in this ultra-competitive race to develop new products and grow market share, B.C. must position itself as an innovation leader at the forefront of this technological wave and demonstrate why it is the best place for investors and workers in the global tech sector to grow thriving companies and careers.

B.C. Tech Sector at a Glance

COMPANIES

12,400

EMPLOYMENT

182,000

(274 companies have 100+ employees).

1st

Vancouver ranks first in North America in high tech job growth.

GROWTH

Fastest

Technology is the fastest growing sector in the province.

REVENUE

$54 billion

in 2023

GDP

$33 billion

in 2023

UNICORNS

Unicorn companies include Dapper Labs, Trulioo, Clio, Blockstream, Layer Zero Labs and Visier



In 2023, Web Summit was entering the final year of its contract with Toronto for the hosting of Collision, the only North American edition of its prestigious series of tech conferences, recognizing that Toronto's run was ending and Web Summit was seeking a new host city, a delegation of key stakeholders from British Columbia seized the opportunity to keep this important global gathering of tech leaders platform in Canada and bring it west.

A group of government, tourism, and technology organizations sought to bring Collision to Vancouver and leverage it to benefit the tech sector across the province. They saw the event as a platform that could exponentially expand our global exposure, grow strategic clusters, and scale-up local companies to drive accelerated economic growth in British Columbia.

Hosting the event would be an investment in British Columbia's economy that had the potential to yield significant returns in terms of FDI, job creation, and long-term economic growth.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the B.C. and Canadian government stakeholders joining forces with regional economic development agencies to pitch Vancouver's many attributes (walkable, sustainable, globally connected, and home to one of the fastest-growing tech ecosystems in North America), Vancouver soon emerged as a compelling option, and in 2024, Web Summit announced a three-year partnership to hold its Web Summit conference in Vancouver, beginning in May 2025.

A New Kind of Partnership

From the outset, it was recognized that Web Summit Vancouver couldn't be "just another event." It had to drive lasting value — for startups, investors, communities, and B.C.'s innovation economy.

Destination Vancouver signed the Host City Agreement with Web Summit and the Contribution Agreement with PacifiCan, on behalf of the B.C. and Canadian government stakeholders, and the Naturally Innovative Alliance (NIA) was formed. The new partnership co-developed a model relationship from scratch which included shared governance, working groups, joint programming, and coordinated delivery.

The result was a dynamic, province-wide activation that supported and showcased hundreds of startups, hosted hundreds of international delegates, and seeded new global relationships.

What started as a bid to host a conference evolved into a platform for long-term ecosystem impact, built on new collaborations and bold experimentation.



The Naturally Innovative Alliance's ability to engage key ecosystem partners in collaboration around Web Summit Vancouver was a powerful example of B.C.'s innovation sector working together to create global opportunities. It was an incredible experience for InBC, our investor network, and for entrepreneurs across British Columbia, advancing our mission to drive sustainable economic growth and job creation in the province.

Jill Earthy, former CEO, InBC Investment Corp

A Vision for B.C.'s Tech Future

To guide and align their approach, the NIA partners created a vision and developed goals to guide their WSV-related work.



Vision

Elevate Vancouver and British Columbia as a preferred centre of innovation, technology and as a tourist and event destination on the global stage.

Catalyze, foster, and grow tech innovation and collaborations made in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Canada with landed investments and jobs created.

Goals

GLOBAL RECOGNITION



Increase worldwide awareness of the B.C. tech ecosystem and its recognition as a global centre for opportunities in technology and innovation.

PARTICIPATION



Ensure maximum opportunities for the B.C. tech ecosystem to participate in Web Summit Vancouver, including clusters outside the Lower Mainland, Indigenous communities, underrepresented groups, and for youth to see future careers in technology.

COMMERCIAL WINS



Increase trade, investment, and strategic partnership successes in B.C.'s tech ecosystem.

STRATEGIC PLANNING



Catalyze the creation/refinement of a long-term technology and innovation plan for the advancement of B.C.'s tech ecosystem.

B.C. Tech Ecosystem Engagement

Road to Web Summit Vancouver (R2WSV), engaged the entire B.C. tech ecosystem.

- Innovate B.C. worked with 20 industry partners across the ecosystem to develop and implement a comprehensive suite of programming and events that enable B.C. companies to capitalize on the opportunities available at the conference. This approach helped maximize participation from founders across British Columbia's various sectors, regions, and diverse communities.
- There are twelve unique tech sectors in British Columbia. In 2025, the B.C. Pavilion showcased digital media and entertainment, life sciences, AI, and quantum computing. By 2027 all twelve will have participated in the B.C. Pavilion.
- The NIA partners worked closely with industry associations and post-secondary institutions. 2026 sees these relationships growing.

Participating in the R2WSV was a transformative experience for me and my team at SensoDrive. The initiative not only helped us refine our pitch and connect with key stakeholders but also gave us the opportunity to showcase our work at the B.C. Pavilion—an incredible platform that amplified our visibility and credibility. Being part of the Pavilion allowed us to engage directly with investors, partners, and fellow innovators, making our Web Summit experience far more impactful. R2WSV was a vital steppingstone in our journey, and I'm excited to see how it continues to support B.C. startups.

Sasan Pasha, CEO and Founder, SensoDrive Technology



Insights from investors were really helpful. I learned about building a world-class advisors board and getting traction.

Winnie Liang, Co-Founder & CEO,
Ma Robot AI

Naturally Innovative Alliance Initiatives by the Numbers



Global Recognition

WSV MEDIA COVERAGE

3,376 mentions of WSV

1,627 different media outlets from 73 countries

INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS AT WSV

156 international delegates from 13 regions managed by TIBC

WEB SUMMIT RIO

20 person delegation from Canada

Canadian Trade Commission Services programming facilitated over 60 B2B meetings and 7 validated business opportunities

7 Canadian Startups (Alpha & Beta) selected to participate at WS Rio



Commercial Wins

INVESTOR TRACTION

87 international investors attended side events organized by Trade and Invest B.C. (TIBC) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

88 meetings were held

40 Venture Capitalists recruited by TIBC's Trade and Investment Representatives

29 multinationals looking at tech scouting

Participation & Inclusion

B.C. PAVILION

1 Indigenous panel

4 individual welcomes representing 3 Nations

4 member drum/dance

22 panel discussions

60 tech ecosystem organizations participated on stage

Wordly, an AI-powered platform, was used to offer real-time live transcription of stage content at the pavilion

R2WSV

249 Women led startups

20% of startup participants were from outside of the Lower Mainland

BC Regional Showcase and Networking Event

117 Canadian, B.C., and international attendees

7 economic regions from British Columbia

21 regional representatives

Through the Innovation & Investment Insider Tours, global investors stepped beyond the conference floor to witness the Metro Vancouver region's unmatched ability to turn bold ideas into world-class innovation.

Jacquie Griffiths, President, Invest Vancouver

B.C. has a lot of innovation that people don't know about across Canada and the world. The stage is set for Vancouver, and we need to take advantage of it. What excites me as an investor is seeing the journey — from early-stage founders at Startup Week to growth-stage companies here at Web Summit Vancouver.

Christopher Chung - Investor

Strategic Planning & Ecosystem Building

R2WSV IBC HOSTED EVENTS

4 events with 1,109 registered guests

835 startups engaged

30% Women

1% Indigenous

3% Youth

R2WSV PARTNER PROGRAMMING

40 initiatives delivered by 20 partners

1 Indigenous founders series

2 women in tech programs

B.C. PAVILION

72 startups showcased

3,200 visitors per day =10,048 attendees

Digital Media & Entertainment, Life Sciences, AI, and Quantum programming.

Web Summit Vancouver has been fantastic. The B.C. Pavilion is a great hub to network, showcase quantum and AI, and make connections that would be harder to build elsewhere. Focusing on quantum and AI here is a unique opportunity to highlight the companies and people driving innovation in the sector. British Columbia has so much happening in tech that sometimes it's hard to step out of our own environments and see it. Web Summit allows us to connect locally and globally. This opportunity to network — both within B.C. and internationally — is fantastic for the province's economy.

Louise Turner, CEO, Quantum AI

The Path Forward

We look forward to using WSV 2026 & 2027 as a catalyst to grow this new model — an evolving platform for international visibility, talent attraction, commercial wins, and sector growth.

Web Summit Vancouver has exceeded expectations. It brings a global audience and a cross-section of industries together — and Canada has raised the bar of knowledge while sparking powerful new collaborations. Bringing Web Summit to Vancouver highlighted our own expertise, talent, and even some of our 'secret unicorns.' We learned from each other and showcased the power of collaboration.

Brett McFarlane, Founder, MLD

Case Studies



British Columbia Pavilion

1. Overview

The British Columbia Pavilion at Web Summit Vancouver showcased the province as a global hub for innovation, technology, and investment opportunities. The B.C. tech sectors showcased in 2025 included digital media and entertainment, life sciences, AI, and quantum computing.

2. Objectives

The B.C. Pavilion aimed to highlight the strength and diversity of B.C.'s technology ecosystem while supporting economic development goals.

Key objectives included:

- Elevating B.C.'s global profile as a leader in technology and innovation.
- Generating trade, investment, and partnership opportunities.
- Enabling broad participation from across B.C.'s tech ecosystem, including Indigenous communities and underrepresented groups.
- Advancing long-term strategic planning for B.C.'s innovation ecosystem.

3. Execution

The B.C. Pavilion was constructed as a 15m x 15m booth on the exhibition floor, designed with interactive showcases, lounge areas, a stage for panels and keynotes, and meeting spaces. A collaborative working group including representatives from the Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth (JEG), Destination Vancouver, Innovate BC, Pace Group, and TK Events guided the planning and delivery of the B.C. Pavilion. Weekly meetings ensured the planning partners were aligned and made timely decisions that achieved a balance between creative vision and budget considerations. The space's design elements emphasized B.C.'s natural beauty, sustainability, accessibility, Indigenous representation and an open, high-quality environment.

The Ministry worked directly with the tech sector associations to map out programming. Each sector was given a day to highlight their industry on the pavilion stage. Themes included Indigenous innovation, quantum and AI, healthtech, digital media and gaming, and investment.

The B.C. Pavilion also included a B.C. Venture Spotlight zone which gave 72 startups selected by Innovate BC each had a half-day to showcase themselves to an international audience. Innovate BC also hosted a popular startup pitch competition on day one and two, with the finals taking place on the closing day of the Summit.

4. Outcomes

The Pavilion successfully engaged thousands of attendees, providing significant exposure for B.C.'s technology sector.

Key outcomes included:

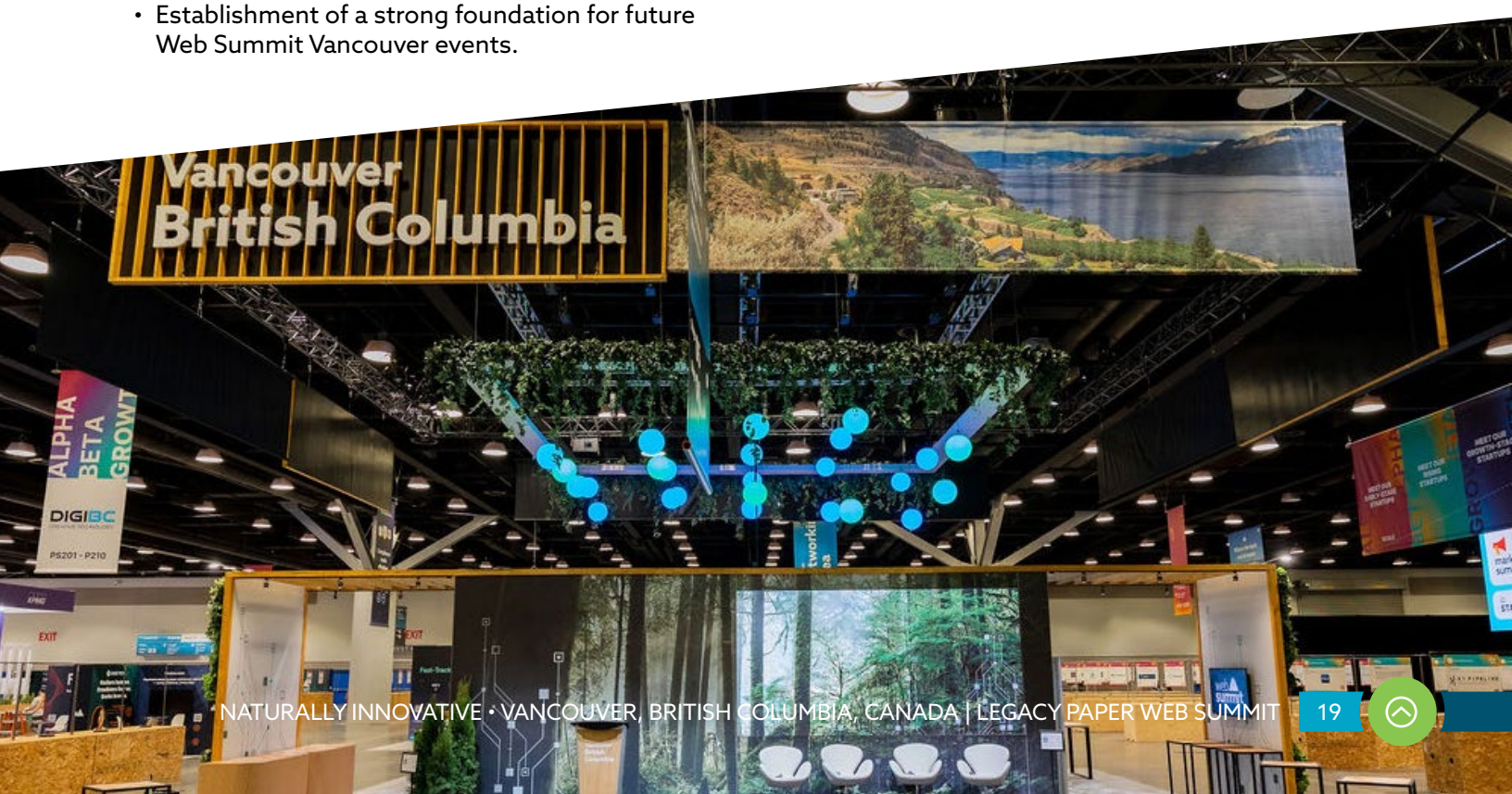
- Strong international recognition of B.C. as a centre for innovation.
- Enhanced visibility and networking opportunities for B.C. based companies.
- Active participation from Indigenous communities and startups.
- Positive attendee engagement with cultural, technological, and sustainability themes.
- Establishment of a strong foundation for future Web Summit Vancouver events.

5. Highlights

- The B.C. Pavilion's design featured natural and Indigenous elements.
- The program delivered a diverse mix of expert panels and informative keynotes, and an exciting three-day pitch competition.
- Sustainability-related features of the B.C. Pavilion included a reusable booth design, biodegradable F&B materials, and locally sourced rentals.
- The B.C. Pavilion offered numerous visitor engagement opportunities through booth activations, networking opportunities, meeting spaces, and stage programming.

6. Looking forward to 2026

Building on the success of 2025, planning is well underway for the 2026 BC Pavilion at Web Summit Vancouver. Learnings from the first year will inform improvements to booth layout, programming, and onsite logistics. The B.C. Pavilion will continue to serve as a central showcase for B.C. innovation over the next two years of the hosting period, driving investment and global recognition for the province's technology ecosystem.





Road to Web Summit Vancouver 2025 (R2WSV)

1. Overview

Road to Web Summit Vancouver (R2WSV), powered by Innovate BC, was a technology and innovation sector development program designed to equip B.C. companies with the tools, skills, resources, and connections to succeed on the global stage at Web Summit Vancouver. As part of R2WSV, 20 organizations hosted 40 events and initiatives across B.C.'s tech ecosystem, with Innovate BC directly delivering four key R2WSV events.

2. Objectives

The key objectives of R2WSV were:

- Build momentum and equip startups with skills in investor readiness, media engagement, and global networking for Web Summit Vancouver.
- Strengthen the visibility of B.C.'s innovation ecosystem to international audiences.
- Engage tech ecosystem partners to maximize participation from startup founders across B.C.'s various sectors, regions, and diverse communities (including Indigenous, women, newcomers, and people of colour).
- Leverage Web Summit Vancouver as a platform to attract investors, acquire customers, and drive growth for B.C. companies.

3. Execution

As a part of R2WSV, Innovate BC worked alongside partners across the ecosystem to develop and implement a comprehensive suite of programming and events that enabled B.C. companies to capitalize on the opportunities available at Web Summit Vancouver. Events were designed in a progressive sequence, starting with a virtual kick-off and culminating in a hybrid bootcamp. Each event addressed a key readiness theme: program orientation, investor engagement, media relations, and strategic preparation. Engagement was broad, spanning startups, investors, media experts, and community leaders.

The R2WSV program featured four key events, hosted by Innovate BC:

- Feb. 5, 2025 – **Road to Web Summit Vancouver: Kickoff for B.C. Startups** introduced startups to R2WSV's goals and the resources available to them to make the most of the many opportunities presented by WSV.
- Apr 1, 2025 - **Beyond the Pitch - The Investors Perspective: Building a Fundable Start Up** provided startups with useful information on investor-related programming at WSV and how to make the most of opportunities to engage and initiate connections with local and international investors.
- Apr 9, 2025 – **Beyond the Pitch: Crafting Your Startup's Media Story**, a virtual and in-person event, that provided startups with practical information on how to effectively promote themselves and attract the attention of the hundreds of local and international business and tech journalists attending Web Summit Vancouver.
- May 15, 2025 - **Road to Web Summit Vancouver: Bootcamp** helped B.C. delegates get the most out of their Web Summit experience through actionable strategies, networking tips, and insider knowledge to maximize opportunities for learning, collaboration and growth.

4. Outcomes

The R2WSV program successfully:

- Engaged 1,109 registrants representing 835 startups across four Innovate B.C.-led events.
- Fostered collaboration and helped build connections among 20 ecosystem partners.
- Ecosystem partners hosted 40 events and initiatives. Delivered high satisfaction scores across all events, rating them an impressive 8.4 to 9.1 out of 10.
- 72 startups showcased in the B.C. Pavilion.
- **Company stage of startups** (note – not all participating in R2WSV identified their stage)

Idea	35
Discovery	71
Validation	264
Efficiency	88
Scale	125
Mature	10

5. Looking forward to 2026

The success of R2WSV in 2025 sets the stage for future sector development initiatives as we prepare for WSV 2026. Learnings from event design and delivery will guide continued programming, ensuring B.C. startups are even better prepared for global opportunities. Future plans emphasize sustaining momentum, expanding international networks, and embedding global readiness into B.C.'s innovation strategy.





Innovation & Investment Insider Tours

1.Overview

On May 26, 2025, Invest Vancouver partnered with InBC Investment Corp, SFU Venture Labs, NorthX, Life Sciences BC, DigiBC, AInBC, Invest Surrey, Innovation UBC, and the Naturally Innovative Alliance to host the Innovation & Investment Insider Tours. The event showcased groundbreaking innovation across cleantech, life sciences, and creative tech sectors to a global audience of investors and media. The program provided a unique opportunity to highlight the Metro Vancouver region's role as a hub for innovation and investment.

2. Objectives

The Insider Tours were designed to:

- Showcase three of the Metro Vancouver region's leading technology sectors to global investors.
- Highlight anchor company success stories and growth potential in the region.
- Facilitate meaningful connections between investors and local companies.
- Strengthen the Metro Vancouver region's reputation as a centre for global innovation and investment.

3. Execution

The event began with a luncheon hosted by the City of Surrey where a forward-looking panel spotlighted leaders from four companies that are driving scalable, globally relevant solutions. During the panel, leaders shared their perspectives on how being located in the Metro Vancouver region helps their businesses succeed. Attendees also enjoyed a networking and exhibition session that featured 13 local companies, including: Sarcomere Dynamics, CIMtech Green, ThoughtsWin Systems, Moment Energy, CO280, Fuse, CereCura, Sonus Microsystems, VodaSafe, Buffalo Buffalo, Phase Lab, Simply Sweet Games, and Coal Car.

Attendees were then divided into three sector-specific groups that were taken by bus to the headquarters of leading companies in B.C.'s cleantech, life sciences, and creative tech sectors, where they toured the facilities and enjoyed presentations by some of B.C.'s top innovation

leaders and CEOs. The life sciences companies included AbCellera, Gandeeva Therapeutic, and Kardium. The cleantech companies included Hydron Energy, Arca Climate, and pH7 Technologies. The creative tech companies included Industrial Light & Magic and Kabam.

4. Outcomes

The event achieved strong results:

- 351 registrations were received, with 234 approved applications.
- 200 attendees, representing 17 countries.
- The event was oversubscribed and sold out, with a 20% attrition rate accounted for in planning.
- Positive global visibility for the Metro Vancouver region's cleantech, life sciences, and creative tech sectors.
- Strengthened relationships between local innovators and international investors.

5. Highlights

- Strong collaboration among nine B.C. sector organizations: Invest Vancouver, DigiBC, AInBC, Life Sciences BC, NorthX Climate Tech, Innovation UBC, SFU VentureLabs, InBC Investment Corp., and Invest Surrey.
- The exhibits at the luncheon showcased a diverse mix of innovative local companies.
- The industry-specific tours provided tailored exposure to investors' interests.
- High levels of international participation, with representation from 17 countries.
- Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with investors requesting early registration for 2026.

6. Future Outlook

Given the success of the Innovation & Investment Insider Tours in 2025, planning for 2026 tours has already begun in response to partner and investor demand. Future tours will continue to showcase B.C.'s tech sector strengths while providing additional opportunities for investor engagement.

The event is poised to become a flagship initiative, strengthening the Metro Vancouver region's position as a global destination for innovation and investment.





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