



The **Vancouver Economic Development Commission**, an agency of the City of Vancouver, works to strengthen the city's economic future by helping existing businesses, attracting investment, researching the business environment and making policy recommendations.

Media Backgrounder

LIFE SCIENCES

1.0 Industry Snapshot

Overview

Metro Vancouver is situated at the core of one of the most dynamic and diverse Life Science clusters in North America. Making up 70 percent of British Columbia's (BC) Life Science industry, Metro Vancouver's strength has historically been in biopharmaceuticals, but has now expanded into Medical Device, BioProduct and BioEnergy sectors. While most Life Sciences companies in BC are small to medium enterprises, several have achieved remarkable success through strategic partnerships and mergers with leading, international Life Science firms.

Sub-Sectors

The Life Sciences industry in BC includes approximately 100 Biopharma companies, 90 Medical Device manufacturing and distribution companies, and 200 Bioproduct and BioEnergy companies. Leading companies and research institutions work in virtually all sub-sectors, with expertise in everything from genomics and personalized medicine, to diagnostics and prognostics, to industrial, environmental, forest, marine and agricultural biotech.

Much like the Biopharma cluster in BC, the Medical Device & Diagnostics sector has long been a diverse community of small to medium inventors and innovators challenging the methodology and efficiency of conventional medical instruments and procedures, both alone and in combination with pharmaceutical therapies.

BC is also home to a Provincial Government noted internationally for its leadership and dedication to clean energy solutions. This commitment has resulted in the emergence of the Bioenergy and Bioproducts sector. Recognizing that BC's Bioenergy assets include top researchers, innovative companies, forward thinking communities, and half of the entire country's biomass electricity-generating capacity, the BC Government released the BC Bioenergy Strategy.

Top Industry Performers

Vancouver's successes in life science innovation began with the pioneering Biopharma company QLT, founded in 1981, that was spun out from research at the University of BC and launched the world's first photodynamic therapy for treatment of eye diseases. Soon thereafter, Angiotech Pharmaceuticals released their TAXUS drug-eluting cardiovascular stent, the most successfully launched product in medical history (\$2.69 billion in 2005). Since then, many other life science companies have succeeded on a global level through strategic partnerships and mergers with large pharmaceutical and device companies or significant progress towards generating plentiful, clean energy from biological sources.

2.0 Sector Incentives and Support

The Federal and Provincial governments back research-based companies, including diagnostic and device companies, through the federal Scientific and Experimental Development Tax Credit Program (SR&ED) that provides Canadian companies with refundable tax credits. The Government of Canada is also providing \$60 million in funding for five new centres of excellence in commercialization and research in B.C – three in Life Sciences, and two in areas that includes some Life Science-related applications.

BC is also the first jurisdiction in North America to grant companies a corporate tax refund based on revenue from Life Sciences patents. The maximum refund is the lesser of \$8 million or 75% of corporate income tax payable, allowing commercially successful companies to re-invest in research and development at an accelerated pace. BC's Small Business Venture Capital Act (SBVCA) provides resident and corporate investors into venture capital funds or eligible small businesses with a tax credit of 30%.

Vancouver's Life Sciences sector has flourished because of provincial government investments in R&D of more than \$1.6 billion since 2001. The \$90 million BC Renaissance Capital Fund provides additional funding for early stage ventures in bio-technology and other high-technology sectors.

Resource Organizations

- LifeSciences BC
Industry association for Biotechnology industry
www.lifesciencesbc.ca
- National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)
Canadian granting council that invests in post-secondary students, post-doctoral fellows, basic research and university-industry research projects.
www.nserc.ca
- BC Cancer Research Centre
Research arm of the BC Cancer Foundation
www.bccrc.ca
- Centre for Drug Research and Development
Non-profit that works with academic researchers, health organizations and private companies to help commercialize drug discoveries
www.cdrd.ca

- Genome BC
Research organization that brings together governments, universities and private sector partners in major, genomics based research projects
www.genomebc.ca
- National Research Council Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC-IRAP)
National Funding & Support Resource for Technology Companies in BC and Canada
www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/ibp/irap/about/bc-yukon.html

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