
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Feb. 5, 2018

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology

First innovation commissioner to champion B.C.'s tech sector

VANCOUVER – British Columbia's thriving tech sector will have a new voice in Ottawa and abroad, following Alan Winter's appointment as the province's first innovation commissioner.

"We're thrilled to have Alan Winter take on this newly created role of innovation commissioner, and we look forward to creating new opportunities for B.C. tech companies, shepherding innovation across all industries and all regions of the province, and generating good jobs for people in B.C.," said Premier John Horgan. "Today's announcement is an example of what can be achieved through co-operation and putting the people of B.C. first. I know that Mr. Winter will proceed in that spirit of co-operation to strengthen national and cross-border relationships, and ensure that B.C. maximizes federal funding to benefit B.C. innovators and employers."

The innovation commissioner is a component of the Confidence and Supply Agreement with the B.C. Green Party caucus to help B.C.'s tech sector access the capital, as well as the national and international connections it needs to succeed. Recognizing its potential for success, the B.C. government has adopted the concept as part of its efforts to establish B.C. as a preferred location for new and emerging technologies.

"We proposed the innovation commissioner to be an advocate and ambassador on behalf of the B.C. technology sector in Ottawa and abroad, to enable B.C. companies to more easily tap into existing federal programs and build key strategic relationships," said B.C. Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver. "Alan Winter's distinguished career as a leader in innovation makes him precisely the right person to champion our tech sector and help B.C. to capitalize on our strengths to build a thriving 21st-century economy."

As B.C.'s foremost tech advocate, Winter's mandate will include relationship-building with senior government leaders in Ottawa and with B.C.'s tech and innovation network, including partners in industry, academia and the province's regional tech accelerators.

"Alan Winter's breadth of senior leadership experience in the biotech and information technology fields makes him the ideal ambassador for our tech and innovation sector," said Minister of Jobs, Trade and Technology Bruce Ralston. "His appointment is one of the many ways your government is working to enhance B.C.'s economy and continue to grow our thriving innovation sector."

The innovation commissioner will help leverage federal funding programs in support of B.C.'s tech and innovation sector. He will also take an active role in B.C.'s partnership with Washington state to further develop the Cascadia Innovation Corridor.

"I want to make sure B.C. companies are at the front of the line for investment and partnership

opportunities, both here in Canada and around the world,” Winter said. “My first priority will be championing Canada’s Digital Technology Supercluster, which could provide B.C.’s tech sector with a major boost in federal funding.”

The innovation commissioner has been appointed by order-in-council for a term of one year, with the option for reappointment based on performance.

Quick Facts:

- The technology sector directly employs over 106,000 people, and wages for those jobs are around 85% higher than B.C.'s average.
- B.C. has seen a 3.3% rise in the number of new technology companies in 2016, growing to over 10,200 businesses.
- Canada’s Digital Technology Supercluster, a B.C.-led industry consortium, is shortlisted to receive funding from the Government of Canada’s Innovation Superclusters Initiative. The initiative will make investments of up to \$950 million over five years throughout Canada.
- The Government of British Columbia and the State of Washington have signed a memorandum of understanding to develop the Cascadia Innovation Corridor to grow cross-border innovation.

Learn More:

#BCTECH Strategy: <https://bctechstrategy.gov.bc.ca>

#BCTECH Summit: <https://bctechsummit.ca>

Canada’s Innovation Superclusters Initiative: <https://www.canada.ca/en/innovation-science-economic-development/programs/small-business-financing-growth/innovation-superclusters/funding-superclusters.html>

Canada’s Digital Technology Supercluster: <http://digitalsupercluster.ca>

Cascadia Innovation Corridor: <http://cascadiaconference.com/documents/Cascadia%20Innovation%20Corridor%20Conference.pdf>

The commissioner’s mandate and biography follow in a backgrounder.

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BACKGROUND

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Mandate: B.C. innovation commissioner

The innovation commissioner will:

- Seek and maintain strategic partnerships with federal government representatives;
- Advocate for B.C.'s fair share of federal innovation-related program funding;
- Champion B.C.'s technology sector in Ottawa and abroad;
- Promote B.C. as a lucrative investment location;
- Connect B.C. technology companies with national and international partners to expand market opportunities; and
- Support, where appropriate, the implementation of innovation and technology-related mandates and priorities of the provincial government.

Biography: Alan Winter

Alan Winter has a breadth of experience at senior levels in the technology sector and in government, including such roles as the president and CEO of Genome B.C. from 2001 to 2016. He was the founding president and CEO of the New Media Innovation Centre in Vancouver, the president of the ComDev Space Group in Ontario and the president and CEO of MPR Teltech Ltd. in Vancouver (at that time the largest technology company in B.C.) During his tenure as CEO, six companies were spun out of MPR, including PMC-Sierra and Sierra Wireless.

Prior to MPR, Winter worked for Telesat Canada and the federal Communications Research Centre in Ottawa, where he was responsible for the satellite-aided search and rescue project (Sarsat). The international Cospas-Sarsat system continues to be instrumental in saving many lives.

Winter is a director of the Victoria Hospitals Foundation, Ontario Genomics and Geoscience BC, an adjunct professor at the University of Victoria's Peter B. Gustavson school of business and a member of the University of British Columbia's Research and Innovation Council.

In 2007, he received a Leadership Award from LifeSciences BC, and in 2017 he received its Don Rix Award for Lifetime Achievement. He has served as a director of more than 30 organizations, including the Business Council of British Columbia and Alberta Innovates.

On the federal side, he was chair of the board of the Communications Research Centre Canada, deputy chair of the Council of Science and Technology Advisors, and a member of the Expert Panel on Science Performance and Research Funding, Council of Canadian Academies.

Winter is a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Engineering and a fellow of the American

Association for the Advancement of Science. He is also a fellow of the Canadian Astronautics and Space Institute and received its inaugural Alouette team Award. He received his PhD from Queen's University in Kingston, Ont. and was recognized by the Queen's alumni Legacy of Achievement.

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