

# New Regional Effort Aims to Establish Cascadia Innovation Corridor

British Columbia and Washington leaders come together to strengthen collaboration, create cross-border opportunity

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VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Sept. 20, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- The creation of a new global hub for innovation and economic development is the focus of a conference being held today in Vancouver.

The Emerging Cascadia Innovation Corridor Conference brings together business and government leaders to explore the potential for joint partnerships in education, transportation, university research, human capital and other areas. The conference is jointly hosted by the Business Council of British Columbia, the Washington Roundtable and Microsoft Corp.

Leaders on both sides of the border acknowledged the opportunity to create a single interconnected region that could be more competitive in today's global economy and took immediate action today to deepen relationships and strengthen partnerships.

At the conference, Washington Governor Jay Inslee and British Columbia Premier Christy Clark signed a formal agreement that committed the two governments to work closely together to "enhance meaningful and results-driven innovation and collaboration." The agreement outlines formal steps the two governments will take to collaborate in several key areas including trade, research, transportation and education.

In addition, the BC Cancer Agency, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance agreed to develop a new "master collaboration agreement" expanding patient access to care and clinical trials, advancing immunotherapy, enabling research collaboration, and providing better training opportunities for young scientists and researchers.

Seattle and Vancouver, the two cities at the heart of the new initiative, share a number of complementary strengths. These include a high quality of life, diverse communities, skilled and well-educated workforces, and strong economic and social ties to Asia. And yet, according to a new Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study released at the conference, the level of connectedness between the two cities remains remarkably low for two cities so close together. While only 120 miles or 190 kilometers apart they behave more like cities that are thousands of miles apart.

"In an increasingly competitive global market for talent and capital, harnessing our collective strengths and the power of innovation will drive greater productivity and business growth across the region," said Greg D'Avignon, Business Council of British Columbia President and CEO. "We welcome leading thinkers from both sides of the border to British Columbia to discuss how improved collaboration will create greater prosperity for the benefit of all residents in B.C. and Washington State."

According to the BCG study, major city-regions around the world are increasingly becoming centers for global competition, including city-regions like Singapore, San Francisco and London. Simultaneously,

economic gains are increasingly going to regions with thriving innovation economies. When looking at the shared strengths and opportunities in Seattle and Vancouver's innovation economies, the study found a unique opportunity to collaborate and raise the region's profile as a new hub for innovation.

The region has the "potential to become an important innovation corridor," but doing so will require regional leaders work together, the study said. This could be possible through sustained collaboration aided by an educated and skilled workforce, a vibrant network of research universities and a dynamic policy environment.

The study involved interviews with dozens of private and public sector leaders and outlined a number of steps that could help connect the region, including (but not limited to):

- Developing a Cascadia working group to drive progress — perhaps featuring an annual summit to share trends, best practices and continue the dialogue.
- Driving greater collaboration between the region's major research universities, perhaps drawing inspiration from the Research Triangle.
- Fostering relationships both within startup communities and between investors and entrepreneurs to increase the availability of capital and other support.
- Coordinating educational strategies and programs to prepare current and future workers to participate in the innovation economy.
- Building a broader set of transportation solutions to reduce travel time, perhaps featuring seaplane service between South Lake Union and Coal Harbour in the near term or even drawing on autonomous solutions or high-speed rail in the long term.

Speakers and attendees include British Columbia Premier Christy Clark; Washington Governor Jay Inslee; Seattle Mayor Ed Murray; Deputy Mayor of Vancouver Heather Deal; Microsoft Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the Gates

Foundation Bill Gates; Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella; Microsoft President Brad Smith; TELUS Chief Corporate Officer and Executive Vice President Josh Blair; University of Washington President Ana Mari Cauce; University of British Columbia President Santa Ono; Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center President Gary Gilliland; and BC Cancer Agency President Malcolm Moore, among other elected officials, regional CEOs and academic leaders.

"Our cities share many common attributes," said Washington Roundtable President Steve Mullin. "Throughout history, Cascadia has been a region on the forefront of economic growth, whether trade, energy, aviation or technology. To stay competitive in a global economy, we need to think regionally about where we can align resources to make a greater impact on our society and economy."

While acknowledging common attributes and strengths, each respective economy could also benefit with better connections and more formalized relationships in different sectors. For instance, Seattle has a strong innovation economy particularly with what many consider to be a leadership position in cloud computing, while Vancouver's tech economy is growing through local companies like TELUS and the expanding footprint of U.S. companies like Microsoft.

Microsoft recently invested \$90 million to open Microsoft Vancouver, a state-of-the-art development facility that will create innovative products for the global market and develop technology talent in British Columbia. The Centre will grow to more than 750 positions and have an estimated economic impact across B.C. of \$180 million each year. In addition, Boeing also recently opened a laboratory in Vancouver to focus on data analytics, software development and professional consulting work. However, as the BCG report makes clear, there are significant opportunities to work much more closely together.

Microsoft's rapidly expanding presence in Vancouver and its deep roots in Washington State helped it see firsthand the potential for deeper connections and stronger partnerships across the region.

"Working together, we can build a globally competitive 21st century innovation corridor that connects and enhances both regions. This is a unique opportunity that can create benefits for people throughout the region for generations to come," said Microsoft President Brad Smith.

### **About the Business Council of British Columbia**

Celebrating its 50th year as the preeminent business organization in the province, the Council has a strong history of providing relevant public policy research and advice on issues to enhance BC's competitiveness. Since its inception the Council has been comprised of major employers from across all sectors in BC's economy who have played meaningful roles in building British Columbia. Today, the Council is a source for insight on the BC and Canadian economies and how international trends and domestic policies are impacting our ability to compete in a global economy. Priority areas of focus include: environmental sustainability policies, economic reconciliation with First Nations, innovation, building a competitive tax and regulatory regime, supporting trade and market access, and the development and the attraction of a deep and diverse talent pool. Learn more at [bcbc.com](http://bcbc.com).

### **About Washington Roundtable**

The Washington Roundtable is a nonprofit organization comprised of senior executives of major private sector employers in Washington state. Our members work together to effect positive change on public policy issues that they believe are most important to supporting state economic vitality and fostering opportunity for all Washingtonians. Learn more at [waroundtable.com](http://waroundtable.com).

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