



## B.C.'s new media, entertainment exports on the rise

Statistics say the industry is growing five per cent each year

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Goods and services produced by new media and entertainment sectors make up a small percentage of the province's exports, but that percentage grows every year.

According to figures provided by the B.C. Ministry of Economic Development, high-tech goods and services account for less than 10 per cent of the province's \$73 billion in exports. However, this industry is growing by five per cent each year.

In a 2005 report entitled Profile of the British Columbia High Technology Sector, published by BC Stats and the now defunct Leading Edge BC, the province's high-tech gross domestic product in 2004 climbed 4.6 per cent to more than \$8.3 billion. High-tech revenue for the same year increased 6.8 per cent to \$14 billion.

(These 2004 figures, the most recent available, do not separate new media and entertainment ventures from other high-tech industries.)

The technology sector employs 64,000 skilled workers whose average weekly wage is \$1,070, significantly higher than the over-all industry wage of \$690.

The province has 900 new media companies, employing more than 14,000 workers, with sales of \$1.4 billion (this figure includes sales from B.C. by U.S.-based parent companies, such as Electronic Arts, headquartered in California).

In total, B.C.'s technology industry exports \$1 billion in services and \$800 million in goods. Once you factor in the film and television industry numbers -- \$1.2 billion in production last year and growing -- you can see the significance of Vancouver's entertainment hub.

A 2003 report by the Business Council of British Columbia stated that exports of Canadian audio-visual services (covering film, video, broadcasting, recordings and organized sports) had risen 15 per cent annually since the mid 1990s.

The provincial government recently contributed \$40.5 million toward a masters in digital media program at the World Centre for Digital Media Entertainment, which will be part of the new Great Northern Way Campus. The program, spearheaded by New Media B.C. in partnership with the University of B.C., Simon Fraser University, B.C. Institute of Technology and Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, is scheduled to begin next September, with construction of the centre beginning early in the new year.

"This will really help to anchor the cluster of new media companies," says Colin Hansen, minister of economic development.

"B.C. is really developing an international reputation in the area of new media," says Hansen. "This industry is very important.

"You have to look at where our niches are. Within the high-tech sector, we have niches in health sciences -- biotech in particular. We're building a world reputation in terms of alternative energy. We have an opportunity to establish a niche in environmental technologies, and we have opportunities in new media and digital entertainment.

"Today we talk about Vancouver being Hollywood North," says Hansen. "There may be a day when down in Los Angeles or New York they will talk about being Vancouver South."

The B.C. Export Awards chooses a winner in the new media and entertainment category next Friday at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Companies in the running are Vancouver's Rainmaker Limited Partnership, which produces high-end visual effects for movies and television, Vancouver video game company Next Level Games, and Victoria publisher Trafford Publishing.

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