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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education

### **Province establishes scholarships for women in technology**

VICTORIA – A \$500,000 investment will establish scholarships at public post-secondary institutions that encourage women to pursue education that align with the needs of the growing tech sector in British Columbia.

“The contribution of strong, talented women to our growing tech sector has been incredible – but we need much more,” said Advanced Education Minister Andrew Wilkinson. “Recognizing that women are under-represented in the sector, we want more women to have the opportunity to get the skills, experience and creativity that the industry needs to keep growing.”

Female students are under-represented in technology-related areas of study such as sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). In the 2014-15 academic year, 53% of students in the B.C. public post-secondary institutions were female. The B.C. public post-secondary system awarded over 8,000 STEM program credentials in 2014-15; 32% of these credentials were awarded to women, while 59% of non-STEM program credentials were awarded to women in 2014-15.

“One of the smartest things we can do to power our technology business sector is to bring more talented women into the field,” said Judi Hess, CopperLeaf Technologies Inc. CEO and Vancouver in Business 2017 Influential Women in Business honouree. “There is nothing better than using 100% of our talented population to drive technology innovation and our economic future. Initiatives like this can provide British Columbia a competitive advantage as a lack of women pursuing technology careers is a global challenge.”

Premier Christy Clark announced a refreshed #BCTECH Strategy on March 14, 2017, that focuses on ensuring B.C. tech companies have access to a highly-skilled workforce that will support the continued growth of the sector.

“Encouraging more women to pursue careers and entrepreneurship in tech is an investment that will pay dividends for our province,” said Bobbi Leach, CEO of RevenueWire and Planet Awards CEO of the Year for 2016. “Our industry and society would benefit from having more women involved in tech and this scholarship is another way to inspire young women to think of tech for their future.”

The scholarship is one initiative the Ministry of Advanced Education is undertaking to encourage B.C. students to pursue education in the B.C. tech industry. The scholarship will be administered by the Irving K. Barber British Columbia Scholarship Society. It is anticipated that the application process for the scholarship will be available to B.C. students in January 2018. Scholarship criteria will be announced over the coming months.

“Creating possibilities for a chronically underrepresented but significant part of our population is imperative, not just for the longevity of ‘Silicon Valley Northwest’, but the future of our economy and our communities,” said Irving K. Barber British Columbia Scholarship Society chairman, Ray K. Gandhi. “The Irving K. Barber British Columbia Scholarship Society is honoured to be able to give our best and brightest women the chance to demonstrate that they are gifted coders, technology contributors and industry leaders.”

The #BCTECH Strategy is a key component of the BC Jobs Plan to support the growth of British Columbia's vibrant technology sector and strengthen B.C.'s diverse innovation economy. The multi-year strategy includes a \$100-million BC Tech Fund and initiatives to increase talent development through graduate seats, co-ops and coding, as well as data innovation and market access for tech companies to drive innovation and productivity throughout the province.

**Learn More:**

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

B.C.'s Skills for Jobs Blueprint: <https://www.workbc.ca/Training-Education/B-C-s-Skills-for-Jobs-Blueprint.aspx>

B.C. 2025 Labour Market Outlook: <https://www.workbc.ca/getmedia/00de3b15-0551-4f70-9e6b-23ffb6c9cb86/LabourMarketOutlook.aspx>

Women in Science and Technology resources: <https://www.workbc.ca/Resources-for/Women.aspx#anchor2>

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