

David Miller Presentation Analysis

Event

February 9, 2024 – Halifax, NS

Climate Action Research for Transportation (CART) Network's Inaugural Research Showcase

Keynote Presentation: Lessons for Canada from the Climate Leadership of the World's Great Cities

Speaker

David Miller is a politician, lawyer, author, and a leading thinker on urban issues. He is currently the Director of International Diplomacy at the C40 Climate Leadership Group. Under his leadership as Mayor of Toronto (2003-2010), the City became widely admired internationally for its environmental leadership, economic strength, and social integration.

Focus

Addressing climate change from the perspective and actions of international cities. Ideas from local actors are being transformed to have a global impact and could be implemented in Halifax and across the province.

Analysis

David Miller explores how climate change actions from the local level can assist adaptation and mitigation efforts on a global scale. Miller introduces the C40 Climate Leadership Group, a network made up of 100 mayors from world-leading cities, that collaborate to deliver urgent climate action. Miller believes the best ideas can be drawn from cities across the world: "If we do the best things that are happening somewhere, everywhere, we actually have a chance of getting to halving emissions by 2030." To increase this chance, proper analysis and climate plans are needed. A mindset shift is also needed, by focusing on creating cities for people instead of cars. Miller believes that Halifax would benefit by enacting municipal-derived ideas.

Miller highlights the importance of cities conducting proper analysis and developing a climate plan to reflect where their emissions stem from. Waste management, electricity generation, how we heat and cool our buildings, and transportation-based infrastructure and systems are factors that should be prioritized in the development of these climate plans. As explained in the 'Cities Race to Zero' movement, the context and size of municipalities are influential in determining focus areas. For example, in Africa, waste management is a more pressing issue, while in North America, cities tend to focus on transportation emissions. C40-affiliated municipalities employ different strategies to combat their respective situations. Miller believes Halifax should observe the actions coming from C40 cities in order to achieve success itself. Miller presented Johannesburg, a city in South Africa, and described their battle with social inequality. To combat this, the municipality started enforcing a mandatory 30% inclusionary housing policy. Halifax is currently facing a housing crisis; therefore, inspiration could be

taken from such policies and actions. These climate plans are not ‘copy and paste’ methods; municipalities should adapt previously used solutions to their own benefit.

Miller stated that city leaders must start thinking about cities for people rather than for cars. Miller implored citizens to apply their ideas and be active through council to integrate this philosophy into how we create cities. Miller explained it took 28 years for the United Nations to put in writing that we must phase out fossil fuels, showing the lengthy process involved in creating cultural shifts. The United Nations' COP28 conference announced fossil fuels will no longer be viable in the upcoming years, and this should encourage policymakers to step away from cars and put more investment in electric rail-based public transportation. Cities across Europe have already started creating policies to disincentivize cars and put people first. Paris required a lengthy legal battle against its government for unethical planning practices (e.g., not following its own set regulations and enacting processes without informing its citizens). The aftermath of the conflict resulted in people-focused built areas, including car-restricted and prohibited areas. In London, due to its execrable air quality causing incredibly high rates of asthma and asthma-related deaths in youths, London's city council decided to charge non-efficient vehicles that entered London. For Canadian context, Miller explained the success of Toronto's climate plan, which managed to reduce GHG emissions to 30% below the level in 1990. As transportation was the most pressing issue for the City, the Transit City Light Rail Plan was driven by the idea that one does not need to own a car to live in Toronto. Miller also highlighted how people-first spaces can support social equity; Toronto's Light Rail Plan considered the socioeconomic struggle of those who cannot afford to own a car and responded by creating ‘priority investment’ neighbourhoods.

David Miller provided a unique strategy for attaining climate goals, showing how important the local level can be in assisting mitigation efforts on a global scale. All cities are bound by their respective context; however, Miller believes each municipality should create a proper analysis and climate plan and focus on creating cities for people instead of cars. This includes Halifax, as Miller emphasized the potential of the CART Network researching cities that have undergone success. His quote emphasizes the value in attaining the most promising ideas from cities across the world: “If we do the best things that are happening somewhere, everywhere, we actually have a chance of getting to halving emissions by 2030.”