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David Miller speaks on the current 'climate crisis'

By Julia Galt

David Miller, former Toronto Mayor and President and CEO of the World Wildlife Fund Canada and current Director of International Diplomacy at the C40 Climate Leadership Group, spoke to students and employees of Seneca College in the latest virtual chapter of Seneca Business' Sustainability Speaker Series July 7.

Drawing on his seven years of experience as Mayor of Toronto (2003-2010) as well as his book "Solved: How the World's Great Cities Are Fixing the Climate Crisis," Miller discussed the solutions to climate change that lie in our urban areas and the methods of avoiding a climate catastrophe.

In order for the world to hold over-all average global temperature hikes to 1.5°C, CO2 emissions must be halved by 2030. To reach that goal, and an eventual net zero by 2050, we need to act now, said Miller, where we can. If changes are not made, the earth has the potential to face 5°C of heating by the same time- causing, amongst other issues, a lack of arable land and mass human displacement.

"Climate change is not some distant threat in the future," said Miller, citing the disproportionate damage of the 2021 Jakarta floods and British Columbia wildfires. "It's now and it's here."

Up until 2010, the world's population was predominantly and historically rural. Now that a rapidly growing 55% of the global population lives in cities, urban areas account for 80% of the economy and 70% of greenhouse gases.

"If you're going to attack climate change, you do it where the problem

is, and that's in cities. It's where the emissions are, it's where the economy is, it's where the people are, it's where the energy is consumed, and, interestingly, it's also where the equity issues are, because most of the urban expansion in developing countries is near hazard-prone areas like oceans."

After 2015's Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change, 97 of the world's largest cities (the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group) set a plan to peak emissions in 2020, halve them by 2030, and reach net zero by 2050. The plans address energy consumption in cities (cleaning the energy grid by switching to solar, wind, and more), transportation (implementing a predominantly rail-based public transportation system), equity (equal access and outcomes for all), waste management (implementing a thorough recycling system, composting wet waste), and how buildings are cooled and heated: for many cities, the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

It's important for businesses and their employees to take part in this urban revolution, as the problems faced are not technological or financial, said Miller, but structural and political.

"It's not about inventing new things. It's about doing what we can do today, really well, everywhere. And the place we're able to do this the most is in our urban areas and cities, because solutions exist globally to address climate change - they just need to be scaled up rapidly."

In 2007, Toronto unanimously passed "Change is in the Air," a climate plan that aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Toronto urban area



King's improved Community Calendar open to submissions from the public

King Township has launched a one-stop-shop to find out information on what's going on in the community with an enhanced Community Calendar at www.king.ca.

The Community Calendar was included in the launch of King's new website earlier this year. However, events listed in the Community Calendar were limited to King Township-run events. With the new feature, anyone from the public can submit their events easily using an online form, as long as the event meets a set of guidelines.

"The timing of the launch of the improved Community Calendar couldn't be better," said King Mayor Steve Pellegrini. "As we start to emerge from our long series of lockdowns due to COVID-19, people and organizations will start holding public events again, as long as they follow public health guidelines. We want to help them get the word out and also make it easy for people to find events on the calendar."

Submitting an event is simple. Visit <https://www.king.ca/eventssubmission>. There you will see several fields to be filled out, including the event date and time, location and description. Events that meet submission guidelines will be approved within one business day.

In order to qualify for posting, the event must be organized by an individual, organization, service club, association or business operating within King Township or surrounding area, performing work that benefits King Township residents.

Events that are non-Township or Library programs that require paid enrolment - such as camps, lessons or courses - are not eligible. Neither are events that are commercial in nature and are attempting to advertise, promote or sell products or services of an individual business.

30% by 2020. The plan worked: five years later, an independent study showed that Toronto was 15% below 1990 levels of greenhouse gases, and another five years later, 33% below.

Unfortunately, on a national scale, there is still much work to be done.

"Very few countries, two, are on track for 1.5°C. The rest of the world isn't, from a national perspective," said Miller. "It's extremely worrying."

However, by implementing the suc-

cessful plans of cities on a national scale, Miller concluded, it is possible that an international reduction of 50% by 2030 can be met.

Seneca Business' Sustainability Speaker Series is an ongoing program that provides staff and students the opportunity to learn why sustainability in business matters. Guest speakers known for their sustainability advocacy will continue to address Seneca's community over the coming months.

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