

Courage My Friends Podcast Series VII – Episode 1
Climate and the City: Are We Ready?

[music]

ANNOUNCER: You're listening to *Needs No Introduction*. *Needs No Introduction* is a rabble podcast network show that serves up a series of speeches, interviews and lectures from the finest minds of our time

RESH: Why are cities so crucial to solving the climate crisis? What are we doing right? And do we have the political will to overcome what we're doing wrong? From fire to flood, are our Canadian cities ready for the mounting challenges of a burning planet?

[music]

COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER: Welcome back to this podcast series by rabble.ca and the Tommy Douglas Institute at George Brown College and with the support of the Douglas Coldwell Layton Foundation.

In the words of the great Tommy Douglas...

VOICE 1: Courage my friends, 'tis not too late to build a better world

Ashley: This is the Courage My Friends Podcast.

RESH: Welcome back and welcome to the season launch of the Courage My Friends podcast. I'm your host, Resh Budhu.

In episode one, *Climate and the City: Are We Ready?* we're joined by Managing Director of the C40 Centre for City Climate Policy and Economy and former Mayor of Toronto, David Miller. We discuss the role of cities who stand on the front lines of the climate crisis, what we can learn in building sustainable and equitable urban communities and explore the question of just how prepared Canadian cities are to meet both the planetary and political challenges posed by this crisis.

David, welcome. Thank you so much for joining us.

DAVID: Resh, I'm thrilled to be here. I love the name of the podcast. I love the idea of the podcast and I'm really looking forward to our conversation.

RESH: Lovely. So you are currently Managing Director for Urban Climate Policy and Economy with the C40 Cities Leadership Group, a group you actually helped found. So tell us about C40 and its mission.

DAVID: C40 is a group of mayors of the world's largest cities who've come together to use their action and their voices to help the world avoid climate breakdown. It was started in 2005 by then Mayor Ken Livingstone [of London, UK] in partnership with a

number of us. The original idea was it would sort of be a parallel to the G20. So it would be the capitals of the G20 countries.

Pretty quickly Ken realized - because we told him - that that wouldn't quite work. And what we really needed is not just the capitals like Ottawa. In fact, we didn't really need the capitals, we needed the world's biggest cities. So in Canada's case, Toronto.

So we were a founding member.

The idea was the 40 biggest, most important and influential cities in the world. And half Global North and half Global South from inception. So we moved broader than the idea of the G20 alone.

Since then it's grown to about nearly 100 mayors of major cities in the world, Beijing, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Rio, Sao Paulo and the like. And the basic membership criteria is that you, as a mayor, have to be a climate leader.

And the definition of that is your city has to have a climate plan that you're acting on and that plan has to be consistent with science that shows we have to keep overall global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees or less.

That's the condition of membership and the organization has had some amazing successes. Although, of course, worryingly, international climate action is lagging on the national side, what science says we must do.

RESH: Right. And the climate crisis does demand action at all levels of government as well as intergovernmental action globally, which you say, yeah, tends to be lagging behind.

But you say that it is the municipal or city level that is most crucial. And having served on City Council and as the former Mayor of Toronto, you bring particular insight to this.

So why cities?

DAVID: Well, that's always the question I'm asked because people, I think, recognize that climate change is an international problem. So think, well, there have to be, it has to be, international organizations or national governments that lead. And of course, they have important roles to play.

But cities have an exceptionally important role.

First of all, because most greenhouse gases are emitted either from cities or from the activities needed to support them - like a power plant, even if it's outside the boundary of the city - about 70%.

And most greenhouse gases within cities are from 4 things:

How we generate electricity.

How we heat, cool and build buildings.

Our transportation systems.

And how we manage waste.

And all of those things have solutions today that can dramatically lower greenhouse gases and actually build better places to live. More equitable places to live. More interesting places to live.

So for me, when people say, well, why cities? Well, the answer is that's where the problem is and that's where the solutions are.

RESH: Right. Cities are the center of industrialization. Industrialization is what has essentially birthed this climate crisis. So it would make sense that cities should be on the forefront of resolving this crisis as well.

And city planning is quite vital to this, right? I mean, you have the meeting of the Mayors through C40 and you're talking about city planning. So could you just go a bit more into that aspect of it?

DAVID: Sure. Maybe if I can just do a little bit of a segue first, because there's a subtlety about cities as well, that is very different than national governments.

Mayors are elected to take action. City governments have a whole range of responsibilities, particularly in Canada. I mean, look at what Toronto's responsible for. It's responsible for social housing, administers income support, it's responsible for parks, the urban forest, water, water management in the sense of stormwater and flooding. It's responsible for transportation. It's responsible for city planning. It's responsible for public health.

And there are huge correlations between poor health outcomes because of bad air and the pollutants that cause both bad air and climate change.

So cities are very positioned to take action because of the responsibilities they have and also because of the form of government. It's one that people expect action. They don't put up with a government saying, well, we're going to study this.

And in the case of the international community, you know, the international community said, okay, climate change is a problem. And then they took 21 years to come to agreement. Twenty-one years! You know, everybody celebrated in Paris, but it took 21 years.

A mayor would be thrown out if she waited 21 years to act on anything. It's just inconceivable.

So the nature of city governments lends themselves to action. And because they have responsibilities that significantly impact on whether we're going to have low-impact cities from a planetary perspective. Whether we're going to have cities that emphasize equality or produce inequality. Their actions are really important.

And you spoke to planning. Well, from my perspective, there's huge pressure right now in Canada, the United States and elsewhere about housing. It's huge pressure to build new housing.

I think some of the arguments are misguided, but maybe we can get into that later.

But we can build that housing in a sprawl-based fashion as we've done in and around Toronto since the 90s. Or we can build a dense urban form loosely called "15 Minute Cities," although different names are used in different places in the world; basically a city of neighborhoods. Densify and build around a city that is walkable, that meets people's needs for recreation, for work, for public facilities like libraries and parks, within a very short walk or bike ride or bus trip or streetcar trip or subway trip from their house. That's a choice we can make.

And if we build cities that meet people's needs in that kind of dense urban form, we can also build cities that do their part to dramatically lower greenhouse gas emissions. That's a choice we can make. And that's about city planning and cities using the legal powers and the influence they have to make change.

RESH: Now, I want to get more into solutions and the book that you wrote on that. But before that, just a little bit more into what we're facing.

So over 70% of the world's cities are experiencing the effects of climate change. Currently what are the types of impacts that Canadian cities are experiencing? What are some really key areas of concern right now?

DAVID: Well, cities are literally burning down.

I mean, Jasper, okay, it's a town, not a city, but it's burnt down. And it burnt down because wildfires in British Columbia, Alberta, and Eastern Canada are being made worse, more frequent and the season is lengthening because temperature's warming.

It's also wildfires in B. C. in particular being made worse because of the spreads of certain kinds of parasites that are harming trees that are spreading further north. Because the range of insects is changing because of climate change.

We're seeing public health impacts of wildfire smoke. Last summer, Montreal and a number of East Coast U. S. cities like [00:10:00] New York issued a public statement about the public health impact of Canadian wildfires on East Coast, US cities.

It's extraordinary to think of that.

There was a crisis, particularly for people with asthma or other breathing difficulties on the East Coast of the the United States and the East Coast of Canada, because of wildfires in Canada, thousands of kilometers away. Which wildfires had been made worse and their likelihood that they're going to happen more often because of climate change. That's a huge impact.

Flooding is a huge impact. And it's a very significant worry. You know, if you own a house, and it's most people who are lucky enough to own a house - my family grew up as renters, I'm actually the first person in my family that I know of to own property. So it's a massive investment for people.

If you own a house that's flooded, it is very possible that you won't get insurance again.

So what happens the next time it floods? What happens to that major life investment that you've made? In addition to that, of course, there's billions of dollars of damages, a billion in Toronto from the second last storm alone, and we're seeing storms that we thought would happen every 50, 100, or in the case of Houston in the United States every 500 years, starting to happen every year.

And that is really challenging because the infrastructure that's been built to handle storm waters, what we call green infrastructure like ravines and parks and hard infrastructure like sewers, that was all built on the assumption that rainfall would happen in these volumes very rarely. And what we're seeing is not only are storms happening more often and in bigger levels, the rainfall is happening much faster.

So you'll get the rainfall in a half an hour or an hour that you should get in a day or a week. And it means the land can't absorb it. So you have really bad flooding.

Another really quite serious impact is heat. And extreme weather events that are particularly impactful on uh, seniors, low income people and other vulnerable people. Really worrying.

And then we're going to see, and there's interesting research starting to be done about diseases born by mosquitoes and other, what they call vectors, vector-borne diseases that are spreading in places where they were never heard of before. And they're going to come to Canadian cities too.

So those are all extremely serious impacts of climate change. They're happening today. This isn't what's going to happen in 2050. This is right now as we speak.

RESH: Exactly. Every year we're breaking heat records. We're breaking all sorts of records. So it really is right outside of our windows, right on our doorsteps.

Now, late 2020 saw the publication of your book under, as you say, the deliberately provocative title, *Solved: How the World's Great Cities are Fixing the Climate Crisis*.

So tell us about the book and what motivated you to write it.

DAVID: Well, I was motivated to write it because I've been in a privileged position.

You know, I've been the Mayor of Canada's biggest, and I would say greatest city. Although, you know, we'll get comments. But Toronto is a very special place. It is a city of neighborhoods. It's a city that welcomes newcomers. It's a city where, you know, most of the Canadian economy, about 20% of the Canadian economy is within an hour's drive of Toronto City Hall. It's incredibly important in a Canadian context.

You know, I've been privileged to see through a mayor's eyes what's happening. And I've been privileged to be with C40 Cities, and see what mayors around the world are doing. And it's amazing. But nobody knew.

Nobody knew that story.

And when I wrote the book, people were beginning to lose hope that we could actually make a difference on climate.

So I wrote it for those 2 reasons. To tell these positive stories of real climate action, of interesting climate action. Of climate action that was working in great cities around the world. And also to inspire people. Because the truth is, we don't need to invent new things, at least to grapple with the issue we have today and get us on a path to solving the problem.

What we need to do is take what's working somewhere and do it everywhere.

And that's something we can do because that's a choice we can make. It's not about creating some wild new technology. It's about taking the best ideas and spreading them rapidly at scale.

So I wrote the book to help people understand that] was possible. To inspire them to make change.

And it's just come out in paperback, by the way - so, it's a timely conversation we're having - and audio book. The messages in it are still relevant.

RESH: Very relevant. I've read the book. I teach using that book as well. It's one of my resources for when I teach climate.

DAVID: Thank you.

RESH: You're quite welcome. And thank you. Because when I'm teaching climate, it can be incredibly depressing. And this book, which is very solution-oriented as you say, it casts a really hopeful light on what can often feel like an overwhelming and irresolvable climate crisis. So again, thank you. And my students thank you too.

And it focuses on 4 key areas energy, buildings, transport and waste, and I just want to quickly get into some of those strategies, beginning with transportation.

You have long been an advocate of public transit, including from your own time in municipal politics. So what are some examples from Canada, but also other cities around the world of how transportation can be made sustainable?

DAVID: Well, Resh, one of the reasons I got involved in municipal politics is because local governments ran public transit. It's always been an interest of mine. And partly I think because of my background.

You know, when mom and I emigrated to Canada, we moved to Ottawa. We lived in my uncle Jimmy's basement. It's typical immigrant story and until we got on our own feet. And, you know, the next year, my mom got an apartment and we lived there.

But we came from England. And the first winter we were in Ottawa, there was 14 feet of snow. So, you know, nearly 5 meters. It was incredible. My mom said, I'm not driving in this crazy country. How can you possibly drive on these roads?

So we took the bus everywhere. So, it's been part of my life since I was a 10 year old boy.

And from my perspective, public transit is exceptionally important to climate change in a whole variety of ways.

The first thing is, of course, if people take public transit instead of driving, we've got lower greenhouse gas emissions immediately from a transportation perspective.

But secondly- and it's a little bit more subtle - if you build a city around public transport, you can build a city that gives people the opportunity not to have to drive and therefore creates a city that is far lower emissions.

So if you look at a dense city like New York, built around public transport or London, England or Berlin or Paris, their greenhouse gas emissions, relative greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, are far less than a spread out, sprawling city, like some of the American cities.

So, it's really important from those perspectives.

So what do we see globally? Well, we see first of all, a really interesting movement to make transit affordable by building and electrifying bus rapid transit.

So Curitiba, Brazil, which long ago created a bus ways with stations where you pre-pay. When you go in the station, the bus comes in, you just got in the bus and it goes really quickly with its own designated right of way. Really fantastic. And cities around the world are starting to catch up to Curitiba that has been doing this since Jaime Lerner was the mayor, and now adding a layer of completely electrifying their bus fleets.

Canada, we're pretty slow. We're still running what are more or less pilots. Brampton's doing some interesting work, trying to bring in electric buses. Toronto is pushing slowly.

But if you look at China, Shenzhen, China, for example, it has a completely electrified bus fleet of over 16,000 buses. It has electrified its taxi fleet as well. And it has used that electrification, not just to lower the emissions from the transportation sector, but also as a driver of employment and industry. And the world's biggest electric bus manufacturer is located in Shenzhen, , it's called build your dreams. B. Y. D.

Very smart policy connection between future-looking jobs and solving the climate crisis. And we're starting to see now - and this wasn't true let's say 5 years ago, when there were a handful of electric buses. Today, there's a well over 60,000 on the streets of C40 cities alone; a big push for them in Latin America. And a huge electrification of public transport.

And the buses are important because buses are relatively cheap.

Subways have a place. They're really important when you have really dense built-up cities. Streetcars and light-rail have a place when cities are a bit less dense. And buses have a really important place.

So we're seeing a movement, not just to build rapid transit networks, which really matters because then you can densify your city around it and people don't need to drive. But also to electrify the public transport networks that exist and thereby dramatically, well, eliminate tailpipe emissions and depending on your electricity grid, quite dramatically lower greenhouse gas emissions as well.

RESH: Now, surprisingly, buildings, particularly in our larger cities are some of the biggest carbon emitters, even outpacing the pollution coming from vehicles, cars, buses, other types of vehicles. So what are some strategies for curbing building emissions?

DAVID: You know, it's so interesting Resh I guess buildings aren't really kind of sexy.

People can get their head around building a subway. I think they can understand about building bike lanes and walkable cities. And what appeals to people - and we'll get into this later. I'm sure - but, you know, solar panels. But I don't think people see buildings for the challenge they are.

And the fact is in many cities of the world, how we heat, cool and build our buildings is the the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions. It's certainly true in Toronto. It's true in New York. It's true in a lot of places.

So what can we do? Well, the first thing to understand is that most of the buildings we're still going to have in 2050, when we need to be at net zero emissions, have already been built. So those buildings need to undergo really dramatic energy efficiency conversions. And there's some good examples. Toronto's Better Buildings Partnership for example - which was actually promoted first by City Councillors like Rob Maxwell and Jack Layton quite a long time ago in the late 80s and early 90s - is a partnership, between Enbridge Gas Company, downtown office building owners and managers and the City, to reduce the reliance on gas in buildings. And that's really important.

In North America, in particular, gas is used, so called natural gas is used often to heat and cool buildings. Gas is nearly as bad for the climate as coal because of the leaks in the pipelines to supply it. So we need to do everything we can to stop using gas to heat and cool buildings. It's really important.

So the Better Buildings Partnership has had really terrific outcomes and it's been so useful. It's been copied elsewhere, like in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia. So that's one example of addressing existing commercial buildings.

A second is in New York City. It's done two things under Mayor Mike Bloomberg. It posted the energy consumption of office buildings. And in the best office buildings, the tenants who were very sophisticated said, we don't want to pay for a lousy building. You need to up your game. And the really best buildings like the Empire State Building went through huge energy retrofits to dramatically lower the amount of energy they used to heat and cool the buildings and the resultant greenhouse gas emissions.

But the more modest commercial buildings for a variety of reasons, didn't do the same thing. Maybe their tenants weren't as sophisticated. Maybe the owners had a shorter term view and didn't want to own for the long-term. So Mayor Bill de Blasio, when he was in office, brought in a law called Local Law 97 that requires buildings by 2030 - commercial buildings to halve their greenhouse gas emissions.

And that's important because it's often the commercial buildings that are the biggest greenhouse gas emitters. And it's also important because that's what we all need to do. Global emissions have to be halved by 2030 if we're gonna have any hope of avoiding climate breakdown. So it's a very urgent thing. That's 6 years away.

RESH: Are we on track? I mean, that's a target. We have the 2030 target, the 2050 target. Could you speak more about that? The targets and whether our Canadian cities are on track to meet those.

DAVID: Toronto's on track , but it's stalled.

So, when I was in office in 2007 we brought in a climate strategy. It was called Changes in the Air, passed Council unanimously. And at the time there were 44 members of Council, plus the Mayor, some of whom rarely voted with me. Let's put it that way. In fact, deliberately didn't I suppose. But it was unanimous. And I think that showed, you know, local politics is very local. People are in touch. Good councillors are in touch with their constituents. And I think it showed that people in Toronto expected that their elected officials would adopt a climate strategy.

And that strategy was supposed to be renewed every five years. It wasn't by my successor, but it was by his successor. And as a result of that strategy and the provincial government's closing of the Lakeview Coal Fire Plant, after 10 years the City of Toronto was 33% below 1990 greenhouse gas emission levels.

That's quite extraordinary. But we need to at least get to 50% by 2030 and we're stalled We need to do much more.

Montreal has a good strategy. I don't know the figures at the top of my tongue, but it's doing a lot. Vancouver has been doing a lot as well. And both in Quebec and BC, there's a clean electricity grid.

So, I think it's definitely safe to say the big Canadian cities are leading.

Halifax is another one that's doing great work. It even has a local tax that's a climate tax for infrastructure to help mitigate , climate change. It may have been a bit controversial, but people were re-elected. So it's something that people want.

I think that the sad thing about Canada is despite electing a pro-climate Parliament and despite having a pro-climate government, Canada is not anywhere near being on track and it's deeply worrying.

You know, to me, there's some obvious things, for example. Energy retrofits on residential apartment buildings built in the 60s, 70s and 80s. They're all over Canada. They're built out of concrete. They have virtually no, if any, insulating power.

There's a massive opportunity to create jobs. Dramatically lower our carbon emissions by doing energy retrofits on all of those buildings across the country. It's the kind of leadership that the federal government could take seeing what's happening in cities and it hasn't seized the opportunity for reasons. I don't understand.

RESH: Well, it's interesting. From what you said, also what we've been seeing and what I've read in your book. Because basically the solutions to nearly all of the climate issues facing our cities exist, if not here, then somewhere. But the political will, as you're describing, seems to be lagging behind.

We have it at some levels of government, not at other levels of government. Some provinces, not at other provinces. I mean, this has become an area of pretty divisive political debate.

Things like you can either have a strong economy or a green economy, not both. It's a choice between jobs and environment. If we want more housing to tackle the housing crisis, then we have to sacrifice protected conservation areas like we saw with the whole fiasco around Ontario's Greenbelt. So do you want to speak to those kinds of messages?

DAVID: Well, I think, first of all, let's be blunt.

There is a deliberate effort at misinformation led in Canada by those closely allied to and quite likely funded by the Fossil Fuel Industry.

We know this because they got caught. They ran ads in British Columbia that were lies. They were not telling the truth. They tried to give a message that somehow or other, gas is green. And of course it isn't.

Independent studies, including one commissioned by C40, show that because of methane leaks in the pipeline systems, gas is just as bad essentially for the climate, not quite, but very close to coal. It's coal. It's not solar panels. And the industry ran ads in BC, including on public transit buses, saying the exact opposite; trying to imply that somehow it was clean.

It isn't. It just simply is not.

And there was a private complaint by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment to the industry watchdog, which held that these ads were false and misrepresentations and had to stop. And the industry kept running them for months. And it only came out because somebody leaked the report months later and the decision.

And it's outrageous. And that kind of thing contributes to an inability to have a conversation.

Why should we as a society accept the idea that we should run inefficient buildings so that a multinational fossil fuel company operating in Canada can make their shareholders rich? It makes absolutely no sense.

And there are ways to ensure that we do our part on climate and rapidly change, that also create significant numbers of good skilled technical union jobs. For example, doing energy retrofits on buildings, building public transit, etc.

The arguments of the fossil fuel industry are very like the arguments of the tobacco industry before people finally had enough and said: We don't want to go to a restaurant to breathe somebody else's smoke, we want to go to have a meal.

And I think we're at that stage, but it's definitely the case that some in Canada, generally involved with the Conservative Party, want to spread these falsehoods and mistruths. And it's just not true. There is absolutely overall no evidence whatsoever that changing to a clean economy is going to be worse for jobs. And there's lots of evidence that it's better.

RESH: And these industries are incredibly powerful, right? I mean, according to Oxfam International's latest poverty report, *Inequality Inc.*, which] we've talked about a lot on this podcast. We are in a new era of inequality that is primarily being driven by corporations, and they do this in several ways, some of which you've already mentioned, but also exploiting workers, eroding public spaces, budgets, and policy through tax dodges, privatization and powerful political lobbying. And of course, they drive climate breakdown. Everything counter to what you've said and everybody saying we need for renewable, sustainable cities.

And another interesting difference between renewable and non-renewable resources is where fossil fuel corporations rely on the harnessing and privatization of non-renewables, such as oil, gas, coal, and also lumber, renewable energy sources, such as solar, water, wind, geothermal still largely belong to the Commons, they belong to us. Though there have been attempts at privatizing water, for instance. ,

In *Solved*, you point out that in a renewable economy ordinary people can generate their own energy to some extent. I mean, not everyone can have an oil derrick in their backyard, but a lot of people can have solar panels on their roof.

It seems that clean energy cities would, as you say, undermine the power of fossil fuel industries. So what can be done to close the gap, to bring them on side, or to push back against this power?

DAVID: Well, first of all, there are quite interesting examples like Austin, Texas, where there have been massive sort of rooftop solar programs have been highly successful. It's actually cheaper than building a power plant. So the idea that people can have their own access to energy is not far fetched at all; it's quite real.

And it also answers a problem we have with storms and the consequences of climate change with a loss of power and power outages as energy, the ability to generate, it is distributed more and more locally. It makes the system more resilient in the event of problems. It's not only a solution to reduce greenhouse gases; it's a solution to make the system more resilient to the changes that are already happening.

But I think your comments get to the heart of a bigger issue. What is driving the climate catastrophe is really our economic system. And it comes down at its heart to kind of intellectual ideas about what economics is and the rules that the international community has established because of those ideas, which we could loosely call neoliberalism. It's not precisely accurate, but it's accurate enough for the purposes of this conversation.

So what's wrong with those rules? Well, first of all, as supply, they encourage what are essentially monopolies or industries with very few businesses controlling them. There is a very few number of oil companies around the world that essentially run things certainly in the western world. We can count them on one hand or so They have outsized political power because of the economic rules that have let them get so big and powerful.

Then there's a second and really important thing. The economic models that underlies the rules that the international community has established for trade and so forth assume that there are no resource constraints; that pollution is free; that there are no negative consequences of any economic activity- that's all something outside the economy- and it's blatantly false.

Of course, there are negative consequences. Pollution isn't free. There aren't infinite resources. We're not just going to invent our way out of every problem. And there are economists from different schools, one school is called the Well Being School, which looks at the impact of these trends on inequality and how do we satisfy human well being and set up rules that support that.

There are others, ecological economists that look and start with the proposition that the economy is a subset of the planet - and we only have one of them. And are trying to help think about how do we set up those international rules that govern our economic activity to really reverse this so we have a system that actually meets people's needs, promotes equality, not inequality, and lives within our planetary boundaries.

At its heart, that is really the nub of the problem. And of course, that's a difficult one to overcome because there are some industries and some businesses and some business leaders and a lot of billionaires who have done very well in the current system and are powerful because of their position in society and don't want to see change

RESH: Now, as you said, we have to deal with the inequality here as well. Cities are hubs of entrenched inequality. And in times of crisis, it is those marginalized or equity-seeking groups that tend to experience crisis first and worst. And then when we have the solution, they tend to be left behind.

We saw this with COVID. It's the same with climate.

Could you speak about how climate inequities play out for marginalized people in urban centers and how this is and can be addressed within sustainable planning.

DAVID: Yes. And I think it's probably obvious to all of us how climate inequalities play out. In a global sense, the poorest people live on the fringes of urban areas in informal settlements often, and they're the first ones when there's a flood, like in Jakarta and their massive floods or a landslide or other challenges that are most at risk.

And we see the same thing in relatively prosperous cities, like Canadian cities.

Let's say there's an extreme heat event. Well, who is most vulnerable? It's street involved people living on the street. Or if there's flooding, who is most vulnerable? It's often people living in the lowest income neighborhood.

So, what's the answer to that challenge? Well, I think the first thing is in your climate planning, you need to include everybody at the table and their voices at the table in developing a plan and a strategy.

And we've seen good examples of this. Los Angeles did this. It called its plan a Green New Deal. And it engaged, what in the US you call "equity-seeking communities", so low income communities who are seeking environmental justice because they have particular impacts: bad air quality health from bad air quality from diesel trucks, let's say, living near the port of Los Angeles. And those same trucks are contributing to climate change.

And people there said, We want better health outcomes for our families and our children. We want the most advanced climate technology. And we also want jobs and employment so that we can participate in this new economy. And so Los Angeles created programs to train people in the solar industry.

They created programs to install solar on people's roofs and low income neighborhoods at low cost. They created job training programs for electric truck operators. They created mandates to change to electric trucks from diesel in the vicinity of the port to deal with the health issues. They created a program to paint roads with the surface, so they got less hot on hot summer days with a white surface. They created a electric car rental program subsidized for low income neighborhoods.

All because people in those neighborhoods, seeking environmental justice were given a platform to speak up and say, these are our needs. And there's lots of other examples of that, but the basic principle's the same:

Everybody needs a voice. Everybody needs to influence the decision-making and the programs that our city government can lead or help to implement or help create, so that their needs are met. Not just the needs of those who have a really powerful voice in society.

RESH: Right. And you bring up environmental justice. You know, we're hearing climate justice, environmental justice. It's not just about switching out materials to

renewables. It's also about changing practices and relations and governance, the way we've been doing things that have led us to this crisis as well.

DAVID: Exactly.

RESH: Yeah. Finally in our drive to climate resilience, what are the principles of a resilient city and what advice would you have for our listeners, for people, city residents and policy-makers in terms of these pillars?

DAVID: Well, the first pillar is one of social justice. A resilient city should be one where everybody from every walk of life has a part to play in that city, and can see their needs met. Which is about strong public services like libraries, community centers, parks. You know, all the public services we sometimes take for granted. As well as all sorts of other things like jobs and the opportunity to be engaged in the economy.

Second. A city to me is a city that is relatively dense, built around the fabric of excellent, rapid public transit so that people do not have to own a car. Owning a car is incredibly expensive and bad for the planet. Cities that are walkable, cyclable, neighborhood-based, built around the backbone of public transit are paradoxically far less expensive to live in. Can be more welcoming. And have a far lower impact on our planet.

And we need to think about those cities in the context of food and green space and trees and outdoor recreation and natural systems for dealing with extreme weather.

All of those aspects as well are a part of a great city where everybody can be welcome.

So, if we start with the principle that people all need a say and all need a chance to live a meaningful, fulfilling life that's in a relatively dense city with the facilities people need, like, schools, public health, jobs, all built around a public transport network. And that city is a place that is green, has great nature, and access to safe and healthy food; then you've got a city that's going to succeed in the future.

RESH: David, thank you so much. It has been a wonderful conversation and a pleasure.

DAVID: Resh, I really appreciate the opportunity. Please keep up the great work and continued success both with the podcast and the other work at the Tommy Douglas Institute.

RESH: Lovely. And we will be linking your book, *Solved: How the World's Great Cities Are Fixing the Climate Crisis*, which is about to come out in paperback, to the show notes for this episode.

That was David Miller, former Mayor of Toronto and current managing director of the C40 Centre for City Climate Policy and Economy.

And this is the Courage My Friends podcast.

I'm your host, Resh Budhu. Thanks for listening.

COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER: You've been listening to the Courage My Friends Podcast, a co-production between rabble.ca and the Tommy Douglas Institute at George Brown College and with the support of the Douglas Coldwell Layton Foundation.

Produced by Resh Budhu of the Tommy Douglas Institute, Breanne Doyle of rabble.ca and the TDI planning committee: Chandra Budhu and Ashley Booth. For more information about the Tommy Douglas Institute and this series, visit georgebrown.ca/TommyDouglasInstitute.

Please join us again for the next episode of the Courage My Friends podcast on rabble.ca