



## **10 Minutes For The Planet**

### **Vancouver Shows its Green Side ©**

*by Pierre Vercueil*

Hi there and welcome back to our weekly environmental series here on EnglishWaves, Ten Minutes for the Planet. We're currently looking at the world's greenest cities by working our way down the *Economist* Intelligence Unit's Green City Index. As you'll recall, we kicked off with the Danish capital Copenhagen, before moving on to the canal city of Amsterdam. Last time we looked at why Stockholm takes place number 3 on the list. Today we move on to the only non-European city to make the top five, the Canadian beach city of Vancouver.

Canada has long been regarded as having the worst climate change policies in the industrialized world. In 2011, it refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on emissions reduction targets and has promoted the exploitation of oil from tar sands, which is arguably the most polluting form of oil extraction with the highest carbon dioxide emissions. However, one of the country's major cities, Vancouver has set out to defy its central government and become 100% carbon neutral.

Shortly after he was elected in 2008, Mayor Gregor Robertson set out to fundamentally reshape the city's economy, infrastructure, energy and transportation systems in terms of environmental sustainability. Vancouver plans to establish itself as the greenest city in the world by 2020 through a policy plan named the Greenest City Action Plan. The initiative by the city's government demonstrates economic growth and the future of its citizens depends on successfully developing renewable energy sources, public transportation systems, and lowering the high dependence on cars.

The 2020 plan is based on ambitious goals including reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 33% from 2007 levels; doubling the number of 'green jobs'; requiring that all new buildings be carbon neutral; cutting per capita water consumption by 33% from 2006 levels; and reducing waste going to landfills by half from 2008 levels. Vancouver also plans to give its residents the cleanest air in the world. So far the city has made impressive strides towards reaching these goals. For example, Vancouver currently generates 93% of its electricity from renewable sources.

Perhaps most significantly is the way in which the city has been lauded for the implementation of the greenest building code in North America. This has been a bold

move in the tough global economic climate in which governments have been trying to avoid regulations that might potentially deter investment in infrastructure. Similarly, Vancouver has shifted its own investment towards walking, cycling and transit infrastructure instead of building new roads.

In late 2015 Vancouver was granted the C40 Cities Award during the COP21 summit in recognition of the scope and scale of the city's Greenest Action Plan, proving that it truly deserves its spot in the top five. Join us again next time when we continue our look at the world's greenest cities. Stay tuned to Ten Minutes for the Planet on EnglishWaves.