

Canada's Most Sustainable Cities Rankings

VICTORIA, Canada, February 9, 2011 – Corporate Knights, Canada's magazine for clean capitalism, announced its 5th annual Sustainable Cities ranking this morning at a press conference at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' 2011 Sustainable Communities Conference in Victoria, B.C.

This year Western Canada proves to be the leader in urban sustainability, with Vancouver and Victoria tying for first place in the overall standings as Canada's most sustainable cities. Mayors from both cities participated in the press conference. The 5th annual Corporate Knights Sustainable Cities Ranking recognizes Toronto, ON as first in the Big city group with a score of 69 % (out of 100 %), Vancouver, BC as first in the Medium city group, and Victoria, BC as first in the Small city group. Victoria and Vancouver tied for first place overall in the ranking, with a score of 71 %.

Victoria arrived victorious in the Small cities group in its first year in the ranking. It's the only city in the ranking that achieved a perfect score for both gender and visible minority representation on city council. Victoria also does well in economic security, with low average long-term household debt. The award-winning Docksider Green project is attempting greenhouse gas (GHG) neutrality by connecting a biomass heating system to a hotel site.

Vancouver is making strides on its mission to becoming the greenest city in the world as the Medium city winner for a second straight year. The city's Neighbourhood Energy Utility provides 70 per cent of that area's yearly energy needs by turning sewage into heat. In early 2010, the city launched a residential solar hot water pilot program offering grants to cover half the installation cost of a system. Building codes now require all new one and two-unit dwellings to be "solar ready" for future installment.

Toronto clinched the top big city spot for a second year in a row, with help from the best voter turnout for municipal elections in years—53.2 per cent. Livegreen Toronto's program offers a number of energy efficiency grants and programs for homeowners to retrofit their homes or decrease their annual energy bills. And the city's green roof bylaw— among the first in North America—requires new commercial, institutional, and residential developments with a minimum floor area of 2,000 m² to have a green roof.

"Consistency and follow-through with plans are the keys to success," says Erin Marchington, Researcher at Corporate Knights Magazine. "Vancouver and Victoria tied for first place overall because they have successfully planned and implemented projects in all five categories of sustainability."

Cities were assessed on 28 indicators spanning five categories of sustainability: Ecological Integrity, Economic Security, Governance and Empowerment, Infrastructure and Built Environment, and Social Well-Being. The supporting research included a survey completed by all ranked cities and publicly available statistics at the city level. Overall, 17 cities across Canada were included in the ranking, representing all provinces and territories (with the exception of Nunavut and Newfoundland, as Iqaluit and St. John's declined participation). But with a top score of 71%, it's clear there is room for improvement in all cities. The following trends give some insight into where these improvements could be made:

Environmental Integrity:

< 50 % cities are on track to meet corporate GHG emission reduction targets.

5 of 17 cities do not have a municipal GHG emission reduction target currently in place.

> 50 % cities that have a municipal target do not have current emission data available.

Economic Security:

40 % cities analyzed allocate greater than 20 % of total household spending to shelter.

Governance and Empowerment:

3 of 17 cities have a city council with 50 % females, 50 % male (Mississauga, Quebec, Victoria).

2 of 17 cities have a city council that reflects the % visible minorities in the city population (Victoria, Saint John).

Infrastructure and Built Environment:

2 of 17 cities meet the ideal density requirement for cities (Vancouver, Victoria).

Social Well-Being:

7 of 17 cities have >20% of their population classified as obese.

The full results and methodology of the ranking are available online, as well as in the Sustainable cities issue (Issue 34, Winter 2011) of Corporate Knights Magazine, distributed in the Globe and Mail February 10th, 2011 in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver.