

Speech
by **Gérald Tremblay**,
mayor of Montreal and executive vice president of Metropolis
at the opening ceremony of the 8th World Congress of Metropolis
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Speech as delivered

I want to begin by stating that it is a great pleasure for me to join you at this 8th World Congress of our association in order both to meet my opposite numbers and to share and partake in discussions on major issues and challenges facing all of us.

Our metropolises, in fact, are in constant evolution, and their sustainable development takes place in a complex context with the interaction of different economic, social, financial and institutional spheres. This complexity coincides with new complex issues emerging in the wake of globalisation.

Our metropolises impose the need on us to accept permanent challenges every day, constantly anew and in all spheres of activity to ensure our people ever better conditions of life.

At the threshold of the new millennium, all of us are striving for a society with greater justice and openness. In this new era of globalisation, citizens' new demands refer to diverse questions. They constitute the groundwork for new methods of governance.

As local and regional authorities, our mission and challenge are to be seen in placing citizens at the heart of our concerns. It is a matter of recognising their demands and aspirations. This has nothing of a generous choice, but is rather an imperative of our duty.

Beyond a certain uniformity of the problems which our metropolises encounter, the richness of our association lies in the diversity of the approaches and the solutions put to work in order to reach it. The results of our association's works are fertile and carrying hope for the sustainable development.

To ensure our citizens the growth, the progress and the quality of life to which they aspire, we must also turn towards outside, be more interested in the world which surrounds us and learn from one another.

In our era, the era of interchange and openness, it would be an error to cut oneself off from the outer world. New rules are being established and new orders are falling into place. The flow of trade is accelerating. Dissemination of information is ever more speeding up. Everyone is well informed of what is happening in the wider world. National borders are becoming blurred, and global threats are an evidence of the need for us to show solidarity henceforth. The devastating tsunami disaster furnished us an example of that international solidarity for the reconstruction of disaster areas.

The key subject of our Congress which is opening today is "Tradition and Transformation: The Future of the City". This subject is an extensive one, and at the same time of a complex

nature while holding manifold outlooks. It encompasses even all major urban topics and challenges our local and regional authorities have to cope with.

For all of us this World Congress is of particular importance for its coincidence with its 20th anniversary of the foundation of our association. This Congress is of particular significance for the city of Montreal as an institution and for my elected colleagues, because it is in Montreal that our association was formally founded in 1985.

I seize this opportunity to pay tribute to the founding cities, especially to the founding president Michel Giraud and to all people who have shared in the development of our association over the years.

During the three days of this Congress we shall discuss key issues relating to citizens' quality of life in our metropolises. We shall share our experience, our expertise and know-how. We shall, everyone in his own way, draw lessons from this or that experience with the aim of being able to enhance our way of proceeding. It is in our interchange and our relations we have built in our respective fields of activity that the real purpose of this Congress is to be seen.

I am very happy that this Congress is held in Berlin, because this city symbolises perfectly the topic of the Congress: "Tradition and Transformation".

In Berlin, the history is alive, the city is in effervescence. During the last years, since the reunification of Germany, the landscape is in constant evolution. Berlin became again the seat of the Parliament and the Government. As regards the social aspects, whole districts were revitalized. From the economic point of view, Berlin becomes dynamic and attracts new companies.

Nearly two weeks ago, the new Embassy of Canada has opened its doors at the Leipziger Platz, where, once, the Berlin wall was erected. In this way, Canada wanted to share in the recovery of urban life at this town square in Berlin and to be engaged in the greatest urbanisation project of the city.

In short, Berlin combines in perfect harmony history with culture, tradition, business and social affairs without losing sight of the youth and cultural communities. We are glad to be here and this Congress will be an occasion for us to get to know the city even more.

I would like to seize this opportunity to salute my colleague, the mayor of Berlin, for his well balanced vision of the development of this city. At the same time I would like to thank him and his team for their hospitality, their willingness and their graciousness that are evidence of Berlin's determination to make this Congress a real success.

With your permission, finally, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the president of our association, to my fellow colleague Jean Clos for his leadership and commitment. We give him credit for all his hard work and assure him of our unwavering support.

It is my sincere hope that this Congress will help our association to make strides and to provide us also with a clearer vision of the future development of our metropolises in the 21st century.

Thank you for your attention.