



Former councillor's book says leadership lacking

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Former London Mayor Joe Fontana had it, so did former Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, as does current U.S. presidential hopeful Donald Trump.

All these men undoubtedly have charisma — at least in the minds of their supporters — but is that the same as having the ability to responsibly lead a community or even a nation?

The question of political leadership is at the heart of the sixth and latest book from former London city councillor Gord Hume.

A former four-term council member who has spoken about municipal issues around the globe since he walked away from politics some five years ago, Hume said a growing lack of political leadership led to him investigating what truly defines the quality.

"I got concerned when I saw what was happening in Québec with local government, when I saw Rob Ford's activities in Toronto, when I lived through the London problems of the last council and mayor," Hume said. "Part of my theme for several years has been that for most people, most businesses, most of the time local government is the most important level of government. So if that's the case, when I look at the larger picture, you have a whole bunch of issues."

Released through the publisher of Municipal World, *The Leadership Crisis* encapsulates Hume's exploration of leadership.

But to help give him a well-rounded look at an often hard to define quality, he turned to almost a dozen former and current politicians — both Canadian and global — and municipal civil servants.

Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi and Stratford Mayor Dan Mathieson were among those interviewed, as were former Lac-Mégantic Mayor Colette Roy Laroche, former Goderich Mayor Deb Shewfelt, former Ontario Premier David Peterson and former Prime Minister Paul Martin.

While their knowledge can be found throughout the book, a chapter on leadership in crisis — addressing the 2013 Lac-Mégantic railway disaster, the 2013 Calgary flood and the 2011 Goderich tornado — is one Hume describes as probably being the best he's ever written.

"The personal stories of sacrifice they all had, the understanding they needed to be the calm, rationale voice for their communities," he said. "That's the kind of courage they all had, the kind of leadership they all stepped up to in a time of extraordinary need."

Courage, Hume said, is one of the traits of leadership.

However, other qualities include empathy, the ability to organize, and the understanding that in times of crisis, leadership is what defines not only a person, but also a community.

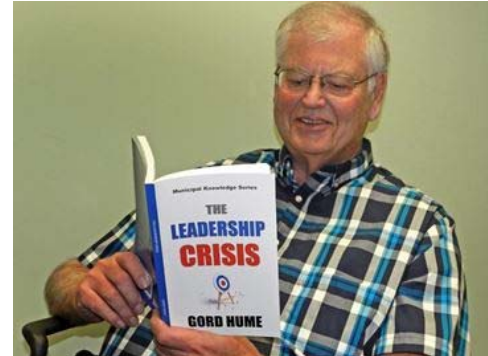
Of course, the book also examines what happens to a community when its political leaders fail to show leadership. That brings the discussion back to Fontana, Ford and Trump.

"I think the last council was very damaging to London in a number of ways that people are just beginning to understand better now," Hume said. "Donald Trump has charisma. Is he a great leader, a great potential president? That's a totally different question. Rob Ford had great charisma, but excluding Ford Nation — whatever that is — a lot of people thought he was a disaster as mayor, an embarrassment to the city. That's one of the things that made the book so fascinating."

In travelling through the U.S. in recent months, Hume said he has spoken with many people and has gained the sense there is "a depth of anger and frustration and disgust with politics" that is fuelling — some would say distorting — the current U.S. primary process.

The flip side of that has been the wave of popularity that swept Prime Minister Justin Trudeau into power.

Although he said it is too soon for anyone to know what kind of a leader Trudeau will be, Hume sees positive signs.



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