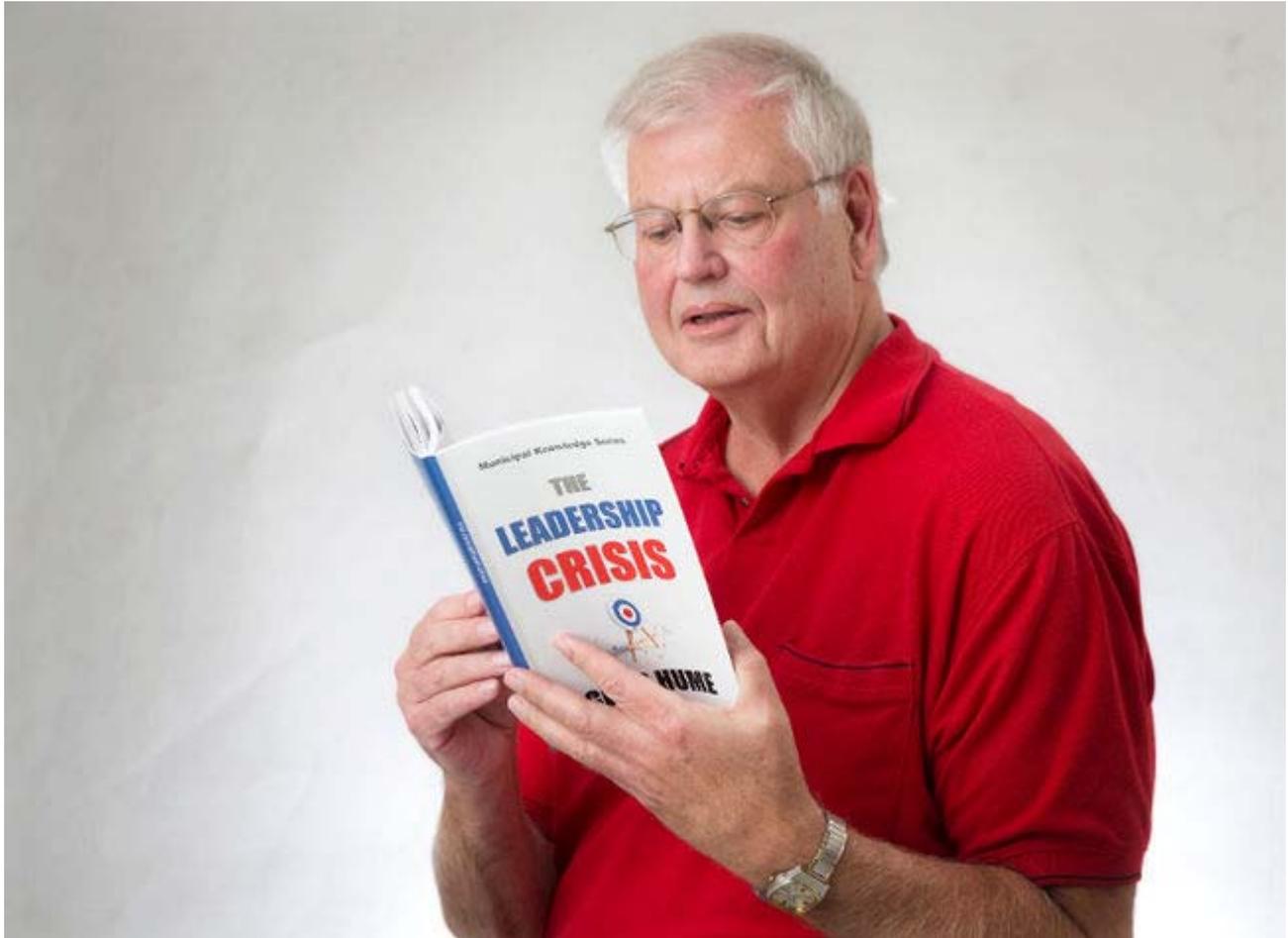


Gord Hume answers leading questions



By Patrick Maloney, The London Free Press
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Former London politician and author Gord Hume poses for a photo with a copy of his new book, *The Leadership Crisis*. (CRAIG GLOVER, The London Free Press)

When a Canadian city succeeds, it's largely due to the leadership of its municipal politicians, a former longtime London councillor writes in his latest book.

And when it stumbles? Look no further than council incompetence and scandal — a lesson he believes London learned up close.

Gord Hume, a four-term London council member, has published *The Leadership Crisis*, his sixth book, that examines the rising importance of towns and cities in Canada, and ongoing questions about the skills of local leaders.

There are positive recent examples, of course. He cites three: Goderich after its tornado disaster; Calgary amid severe flooding; and Lac-Mégantic, Que., after a train derailment.

But Hume also cites a trio of bad examples, including London under the leadership of Joe Fontana from his 2010 election to his 2014 resignation.

It was “extraordinarily negative” for the city, Hume said in an interview this week. “I worry that the momentum we had in the early 2000s, we’ve seen it diminished.”

Hume also takes a swing at Toronto, comparing it to a similarly sized city he believes has much better leadership: Melbourne, Australia.

While Toronto politicians have allowed traffic to slowly choke their city, Melbourne is often cited as one of the world’s most livable cities. As Hume notes: they have the world’s largest tram (mass transit) system; they’ve turned 26 hectares of downtown asphalt into development and they plant 3,000 trees per year.

Half of all trips in downtown Melbourne are by foot, Hume said.

“I teach a lot of new councillors about being councillors,” he said. “I suspect a lot of councillors think they’re running city hall” and its day-to-day operations.

“They’re in fact setting policy and budgets and direction for the city. There’s a feeling (from his research) that councils don’t in fact understand their role as a council.”

Hume’s book is available for \$29.95 at municipalworld.com. He can be contacted online at gord@gordhume.com.

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In his new book *The Leadership Crisis*, former longtime London politician Gord Hume argues that poor local leadership in Canadian cities often results in five things that damage the communities:

- Losing the voice of local government (when lobbying provincial or federal officials)
- Losing good people in local public office (scandal keeps potential candidates from running)
- Losing economic momentum (investors crave government stability)
- Losing staff and hurting morale (employees often take heat from taxpayers unhappy with elected officials)
- Losing political clout and the urgency to change (provincial and federal governments can just ignore their bad-behaving little siblings, essentially)