

# MUNICIPAL RUMINATIONS: GORD HUME AND GETTING CITIES RIGHT

**G**ord Hume has a name that many Londoners recognize. The four-time city councillor (1997-2010) has been active in public life for many years, as a speaker, municipal advisor, and author.

Hume's latest book — *Getting Cities Right* — is a rallying call to tackle the big urban issues of our time. Transforming demographics, outmoded economic models, populist leaders, changes to infrastructure, and the role of technology are among the topics addressed in the text.

Recently, SCENE spoke with Hume about *Getting Cities Right* and the considerations he took in the book's writing.

**You've been published many times over. What motivated you to write another book?**

"There were a couple reasons. Ontario is facing two really important elections next year — the provincial election in the spring and the municipal elections in the fall. I wanted to get people focused on the future, on some big issues that we, as a society, and elected people — as a government — will have to face. Too often I find elections and governing gets bogged down with little stuff and there's no focus on the big changing issues."

"This book was an attempt to summarize a view of the future, and identify some of the big civic-changing issues — things like autonomous vehicles, and how municipalities will get their money in the future; the impact of artificial intelligence and robots, on city hall, on our streets and in businesses, our homes."

"[*Getting Cities Right*] is by no means the end, but I think it's a pretty good catalyst — a good starter — for larger discussions that I hope people will have during the election campaign, and sitting around the kitchen table, talking

about life and the future. I think those are very important discussions for families to have, as well as people running for office."

**What are your thoughts on the appeal of the populism?**

"The reality is that Donald Trump has changed politics. You're seeing that in elections in Europe. You're seeing that in the Congress in the US and how divided it is, and their inability to get things done. You saw hints of it during Rob Ford's one term as mayor of Toronto. And even [former prime minister] Berlusconi in Italy before that."

"One of the questions that I raise in the book is this new style going to be more a part of politics in the future? Will we see more rich people running for office, just because they can afford it? People are already talking about [businessman and television personality] Mark Cuban running for US president in 2020. Smart guy, rich guy, but he has absolutely no political experience."

"We've seen with Trump that, without political experience, Washington is eating him up. That's why he's not getting anything done. He's not getting anything accomplished with Congress; he doesn't know how to work with the House and the Senate. When you look at a mayor like Rob Ford, he didn't have a very good relationship with a number of the Toronto city councilors, and as his own problems were magnified, his ability to accomplish anything decreased dramatically. Are these the people we want as leaders?"

"In London, the last council, the last mayor — Fontana — certainly was a problem, and resigned in disgrace. The council was divided. I can't think of many big accomplishments from that council, and the public rose up — rightly, I think — and 'threw the bums out'."

"What kind of a council, what kind of people will be running next time? What



GORD HUME IS A FORMER LONDON CITY COUNCILOR AND  
AUTHOR OF *GETTING CITIES RIGHT*

kind of ideas will they be bringing forward to persuade us to elect them? These are really important questions and we need to have these bigger discussions in our community."

**How do you feel about the major projects the current city council is proposing?**

"I like the idea of rapid transit; I like the concept of good public transportation. I am not a fan of the BRT as it has been presented, however. I don't see how it's going to help people in the west or southeast parts of London."

(Read the review of *Getting Cities Right* that appears in this month's edition of SCENE — ed.)

— Chris Morgan