

Gord Hume

Gord Hume moved to London nearly 30 years ago and has been on city council since 1997, the last nine years on board of control. "I ran because I really didn't like how London was doing economically or politically through the 1990s, especially how the downtown was

deteriorating, and there wasn't much energy or excitement about the city," he recalls. He recently authored a book about cities and culture, *Cultural Planning for Creative Communities*, which last month went into its third printing, and plans to write more about municipal government. The

city is ditching board of control before the next election, in November, 2010, raising the possibility Hume will run for a council seat or possibly the mayor's job. He won't comment on the question, beyond saying he plans to make a decision by the end of this year.

Since being elected you've been covered by the media, but most of your career was on the other side of the fence, running media organizations, right?

I moved to London in 1981 to take over a failing radio station, CKSL. We built the station into a contender, and radio in the '80s in London was terrific radio—great local personalities, a tremendous focus on community, fabulous local promotions and events, a wonderfully competitive local news focus. London radio at that time was amongst the best in the country, no question about it. In fact, London media was top-notch—and all locally owned. I am saddened by how local media in Canada has diminished in recent years. In fact, I worry how government will communicate with the electorate in the future. Right now, for example, if city hall thinks it's communicating with people under 35, I think we're kidding ourselves. That's why I've had a motion passed to have our staff rethink our entire communications strategy.

You moved from radio into the newspaper business when you created *The Londoner*, now a part of Sun Media.

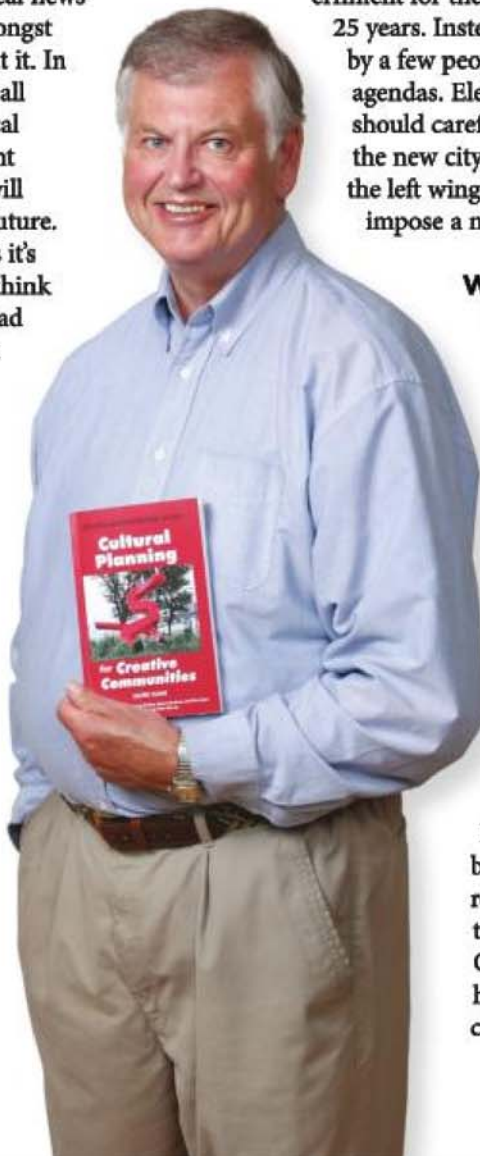
I led the battle to get a new FM station in London licensed, and we were successful. That station is now Q97.5, part of the Astral [Media Inc.] group. After the stations were sold I decided to stay in London and started my own business. Then, in 2002, Phil McLeod and I started *The Londoner*, which became Canada's largest independent community newspaper. We sold it a few years ago, of course, and Phil recently retired as editor.

Did you support the abolition of the board of control?

I did not support the abolition of board of control because I am not persuaded the alternative governance model that was adopted is better for the community. I was terribly disappointed that the debate became personal rather than focused on the issues. I have maintained for years that this should have been about developing a new, leaner, better form of government for the people of London for the next 25 years. Instead the process was taken over by a few people with their own narrow agendas. Electors in November, 2010, should carefully reflect on their voting for the new city council, because I really fear the left wing will take over the council and impose a new agenda.

What prompted you to write your book?

I wrote *Cultural Planning for Creative Communities* in 2008 and it was published in January, 2009. The book has just gone into its third printing, which is quite remarkable. It has really caught the attention of municipal leaders, community activists, arts and cultural supporters, the heritage community and others looking to make change in their local community. I think the economic problems recently have actually helped book sales because local councillors are now realizing they can't keep doing things in the same old way. Cultural planning is not about hanging pictures on the wall of city hall—it is about how to tran-



sition from the old economy to the new CRINK economy. That's a phrase I created to describe the new economic reality—creative, innovative, knowledge-based. It's beginning to catch on. I've been doing a lot of speaking to municipalities across the country over the past couple of months, and it is an experience to hear other people use the phrase during their speeches at conferences. It is also a thrill to have people come up to me with the book and ask me to sign it for them.

What did you learn while writing it? I have always enjoyed the writing experience. I have no artistic ability or musical talent, but the creation of a well-crafted written piece is something I've always loved doing. I've written two novels, both unpublished, but one got to the final editorial board at Stoddart Publishing before getting rejected. I've now signed a deal with Municipal World to write two more books on municipal government over the next three years. I'm researching the second book now, and it should be published in late 2010. The topic is particularly interesting and perhaps even provocative—I'll tell you about it later.

Of what are you most proud during your time on council? I'm proud of a number of things during my time on city council, but three stand out. First, the critically

important investments we made in our downtown and how it is really beginning to come along—the JLC is a fabulous facility, the market, now we're getting more housing and new restaurants and entertainment facilities opening. Downtown London is vastly better than it was 10 years ago. Second, I served as chair of the library board for four years and we had a remarkable group of board, staff and administration that was committed to transforming London's library system from an antiquated operation to today's modern, leading-edge library system. When I first came up with the idea of moving the main library to the closed Bay store in the old Galleria, people thought I was nuts; today it delivers a million people a year onto Dundas and has helped to rejuvenate that area. Finally, I'm very proud of the entire creative city movement in London that started in 2004 when I chaired the Creative City Task Force. We were the second city in Canada to do such a report, and it has really provided an opportunity for change and improvement to our entire community—everything from heritage preservation to public art to changing the economic focus. I think those three legacies are important for London's future prosperity. **Ω**

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