

## **Author promotes 'local food revolution'**

Says civic gov't has role in promoting healthy lifestyles

**David Hutton**

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Municipalities can do more to support the "local food revolution," one of Canada's authorities on local governments told a national conference Monday in Saskatoon.

Gord Hume, an author and London, Ont., city councillor, said civic governments must recognize the importance of the local food movement and enact policies to help attract farmers' markets, support local restaurants and community gardens, and build neighbourhoods that cater to a healthier lifestyle and more diverse food choices.

"Municipalities are the centre of the health crisis but they don't know it," Hume said. "Cities have to understand how they design and shape communities are impacting people."

Hume, 60, was born and raised in Saskatoon and graduated from Bedford Road Collegiate. He went on to a career in radio broadcasting before joining London's city council, where he has served four terms as a city councillor. His latest book, *The Local Food Revolution*, formed the basis of his talk Monday at the Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council national convention at a downtown hotel.

The local food, or locavore, movement has huge momentum and isn't going anywhere, Hume said. The obesity epidemic -- and the creation of a "fat, sick, and dying society" -- reinforces the need to eat healthier, he said.

Municipalities have not recognized their role in creating policies around food, leaving such policy-making to other levels of government, he said. The availability of good food and a strong local food movement is important in driving a city's image and economy.

"Food is a huge economic driver at the local level," Hume said.

Cities in Canada should enact policies to promote community gardens, to provide incentives to turn vacant land and dilapidated housing into agricultural operations, to create food charters and to put in place incentives to build retail food markets in poor areas, he said. Such policies would fend off food deserts such as Saskatoon's core, where there is little healthy food for sale, particularly at affordable prices.

There also needs to be readily available markets and small, emerging food shops, not just supermarkets, to increase the diversity of food available, he said. Cities need to "build up, not out," he said, and ensure grocery stores are close to dense populations when designing new neighbourhoods or infill developments.

"We used to build neighbourhoods for people and now we build neighbourhoods for cars," Hume said.

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