

Wednesday, August, 10, 2011 - 11:11:44 AM

Creativity builds better cities

By Sean Meyer

A quidnunc can be defined as someone who focuses on the small, the petty and the unimportant.

This is certainly the definition longtime former London politician Gord Hume uses in his new book, *Taking Back Our Cities*, but he uses it in a broader sense.

The book, Hume's third in three years, focuses on how North American cities can compete in the 21st Century despite having to use outdated financial and governance models and too often focusing on trivial issues.

"Part of what I am arguing is that we have to stop electing stupid people. We need to elect people with vision and passion, people living in the 21st Century. And this is not a shot at London, but Canada, all of North America," Hume said. "Part of the premise of the book is that if municipalities are going to flourish and succeed, they have to change. They have to change the system, change the thinking, change the relationships between the various levels of government."

After retiring from his career in municipal politics, Hume has focused the past several years writing on — and speaking about — how cities can better prepare for the future. His 2009 debut, *Cultural Planning for Creative Communities*, was released in 2009 and is now reprinted in over 15 countries around the world. His second book was last year's *The Local Food Revolution*.

While this may be his third book, it is a subject of which Hume has thought about a long time. In fact, he has been thinking about it for probably over 40 years. Hume was a cub reporter covering Saskatoon, Sask. city council back in 1968 when he first gained an appreciation for what dynamic elected officials can do to build their communities.

"The city was really beginning to flower. And now you see what Saskatoon has become today. That mayor, that council, helped to transform Saskatoon," Hume said. "Covering that city council was a dynamic experience. That was when I first fell in love with municipal government and realized what it could do."

Hume's first book, indeed much of his political career, focused on what he says cities should be shifting their focus to.

"Part of what I argue is that a council's responsibility is not to create jobs, but to build the community in which the private sector will create jobs," Hume said. "That means designing and restructuring and rebuilding creative communities. It means supporting a prosperity agenda, which encourages entrepreneurs."

To attract the innovative and creative minds the book argues are vital to the growth of any successful community, Hume said attention has to be paid to what he calls the CRINK — a creative, innovative and knowledge-based economy.

"The people who are in that are the ones you want in your community. Bright minds, maybe young, but not necessarily, certainly educated and entrepreneurially driven. Because their asset is their mind, they could live anywhere in the world they choose — Beijing, Barcelona or Boston," Hume said. "That is why the kind of community a city builds is important. An attractive community, good for the family, with a good social environment, good cultural activities and opportunities, a good education system, parks and trails and environmental awareness, these are the things that generation is looking for."

Whether someone is fascinated with municipal government or simply looking for an interesting read, Hume said his new book should fit the bill.

"I think people will find it a good read with compelling message. This is something I believe strongly about, that I have fought for many years. The research was time-consuming, the writing was tough, but I think it is the best thing I have ever written," Hume said. "The content is really strong. And I offer some ideas and solutions. Not because they are the ideal or the solution, but it is a starting point for the discussion we have to have. Some people will agree and some won't; that doesn't bother me in the least."

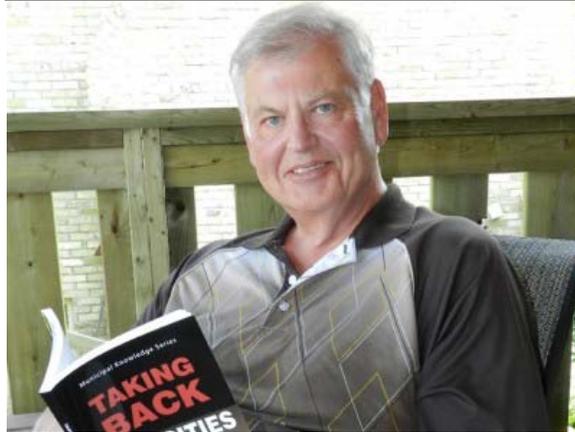


Photo by Sean Meyer/London Community News

Gord Hume has recently published his third book, which as with his previous efforts, focuses on how to create successful and thriving cities.