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By Mike Thibodeau

Where food is purchased and even grown are two issues rarely discussed by municipal councils but it is becoming a priority that will be difficult to ignore.

That's the premise of Gord Hume, the keynote speaker at a meeting of the Windsor Essex Economic development Corp. at Colasanti's on Jan. 13.

The event was hosted by the Agri Business Committee of the organization that for several years has been the prime group to push area residents to purchase locally grown food.

"Local government has to make the provisions for local food — it's an urban design issue," said Hume.

From the London area, Hume is a former municipal councillor and has written two books detailing his concerns on local food and how it impacts on the economy.

He said the problem of where good nutritious food can be purchased is more of a problem in large cities, like London.

He said people living in the core urban area of that city have very little selection when it comes to store availability.

"All the new grocery stores have been built out in the suburbs," said Hume.

"Urban food terminals is an issue we need to deal with at the local level," he added.

Hume is a strong supporter of community gardens, that is, areas of municipal property where residents can plant and look after gardens.

Proper nutrition for low-income people is as much a local concern as it is a global one, he said.

Hume said the worry for rural communities today is the fact they are losing "their political clout".

"The small town is in jeopardy," said Hume.

Hume cited where successes have been recorded in some areas that promote food as a tourism venture.

And he told the 35 people at the meeting that Essex County, with its wine industry and strong farm background, has the potential to put together such a program.



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