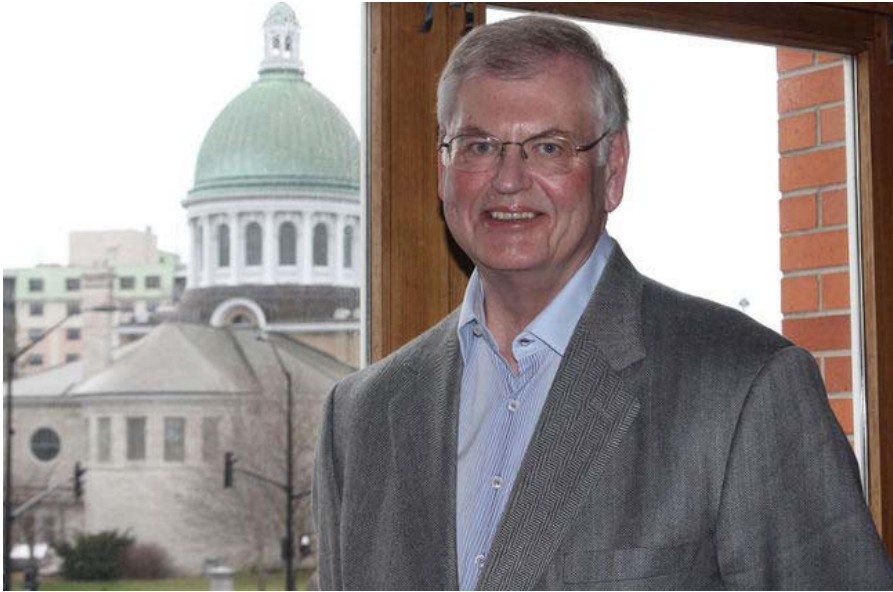


Cities in 'global hunt for talent'



By Danielle VandenBrink, Kingston Whig-Standard
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Author and former London, Ont., city councillor Gord Hume said municipalities need to focus on being competitive with cities around the world. Hume will be the keynote speaker at the Sustainable Kingston Community Forum at 9 a.m. Saturday. Danielle VandenBrink/The Whig-Standard

KINGSTON - Cities must strive to stay competitive in attracting new residents while accommodating the needs of existing ones, says author Gord Hume.

"We are now in a global economy," said Hume, a former London, Ont., councillor who will give a keynote address at the Sustainable Kingston Community Forum today.

"Students who graduate from Queen's University can go wherever they want in the world. They are not tied to boundaries. They are picking cities."

Globalization has meant young professionals can more easily transfer their skills to cities around the world, including popular metropolises in Asia and Europe, he said.

"It is a global hunt for talent," he said. "The question then becomes for North America, are we creating cities for (young people) to be attracted to?"

Affordable housing, public transportation and bicycle infrastructure are just a few examples of areas municipalities need to focus to attract new, long-term residents.

But Hume said cities also have a responsibility to accommodate the growing baby boomer population. This means incorporating initiatives that focus on the safety and health of seniors, he said.

Community or rooftop gardens, for instance, can help seniors thrive in the community, he said.

Hume argued that cities should also be doing more to prevent disease and illness in its residents, including in children. He pointed to rising rates of obesity in kids, which, he argued, could benefit from municipal intervention. For example, Hume said cities could consider banning certain types of food from vending machines at city venues to promote healthier alternatives.

Joe Davis, acting executive director for Sustainable Kingston, said Hume's keynote address will serve to spark discussion around regional sustainability initiatives.

Registration for the forum, which it titled "Community Matters," will take place at 8 a.m. Hume's address will begin at 9 a.m.

In the afternoon, those in attendance will participate in a series of workshops aimed at topics including youth engagement, food security, community health and well-being and transportation.

Admission to the forum will be \$30 for adults and \$15 for students. Lunch and snacks will be provided.

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