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Hume's star shines bright as AMO prez Can a campaign to be Ottawa mayor be far behind?

By **SUSAN SHERRING**

Having toiled for more than a decade in various roles with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Alta Vista Coun. Peter Hume took over the helm of the organization yesterday.

That's good news for Ottawa residents.

After working for former Coun. Darrel Kent, Hume began representing the ward in the early '90s. He was elected at the same time as Rideau-Rockcliffe Coun. Jacques Legendre, Bay Coun. Alex Cullen and Municipal Affairs Minister Jim Watson.

Having Hume and Watson, two homegrown boys, both involved in municipal affairs and having a sound understanding of local issues can only bode well for the nation's capital.

Throw in a local boy for Ontario premier in the form of Dalton McGuinty and surely some of Ottawa's beefs will be heard at the decision-making table.

While AMO might not be a household acronym, you'll no doubt be hearing more about it and what it does with local boy Hume steering the agenda.

AMO is a non-profit organization representing almost all of Ontario's 445 civic governments.

The mandate of the organization is to support and enhance strong and effective municipal government in Ontario. AMO develops policy positions and reports on issues of general interest to municipal governments. It conducts ongoing liaison with the provincial government's elected and non-elected representatives.

It also works to inform and educate governments, the media and the public concerning municipal issues.

At his inaugural speech as president yesterday, Hume impressed several hundred AMO members during the final day of AMO's conference at the Ottawa Congress Centre.

Intertwining his goals for AMO, along with touching personal anecdotes, Hume brought more than one tear to observers' eyes.

"I am joined by some very special guests for my first addresses as your president -- my father Peter Sr. and my wife Ann Marie are in the audience.

"My biggest political supporter, my mom, isn't here today. I lost her to cancer last year. I don't think that 17 years ago, as we knocked on doors, she ever imagined that I would lead Ontario's municipalities as your president," Hume said of his mother, Patricia.

Along with tears, Hume also brought laughter to the Congress Centre, with a sweet story about his nine-year-old daughter Helen Patricia, who decided her dad's inaugural speech wouldn't be as much fun to attend as golf camp.

KIDS WILL BE KIDS

"She bluntly told me that I'm not as interesting as golf camp," Hume told the group.

It seems Helen lost interest in her dad's new role when she learned the job didn't include a black SUV, more money, a security team, airplane or even a boat.

"That doesn't sound like much fun to me," Hume joked.

Hume will be a strong president for AMO, no doubt bringing attention to both the organization and his own personal political strengths.

As a city councillor, Hume has no match on procedural matters. In fact, until Mayor Larry O'Brien realized Hume could be a political threat, he frequently had Hume chair council meetings for him.

But yesterday, O'Brien had nothing but kind words for the new AMO president.

"I think it's good for Ottawa and it's good for the province," O'Brien said.

Watson concurred, praising Hume's expertise and dedication to AMO.

Hume said AMO is an essential organization for liaising with the province.

SERVICE PROVIDER

"We provide the services to people, we provide them every day. We're the reason children can drink their tap water, we run buses people depend on, we maintain roads they drive on, plan communities, create them and nurture them, we maintain the parks and playgrounds for people of all ages, we build libraries, cultural facilities, and yes, we take out the trash.

"If there is any doubt how broad our reach is, consider there were 15 ministers here to take our questions from the floor," he said.

Remember Hume's name.

He could well be not just one of AMO's most solid presidents, he could very likely be the next mayor of Ottawa.

Don't worry about leaking the news to O'Brien.

He's already painfully aware of Hume's strengths.