

## Submission to Christchurch City Council 2008/2009 Draft Annual Plan

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### **Introduction:**

Last year was the first time I forwarded a written Submission. It related to the then proposed 10 Year Plan and its costs.

After speaking to my Submission I felt the Council had a closed mind and had already decided on the Plan it wanted. It appeared that I was only being "humoured" so the Council could honestly say they had "consulted" its Ratepayers (as required by Law).

On this occasion I ask you to seriously consider the issues I raise. Then, if you have the courage – act positively on some of them.

### **General**

You were elected to effectively and efficiently run our City within a budget that your citizens can afford.

This year's Draft Plan is tied to last years confirmed 10 Year Plan. That Plan was confirmed at a time when New Zealand's economy was booming and costs of living was manageable (just).

Today, the economy is changing fast for the worse.

It is now time to show sound judgment and urgently re-assess and re-prioritise the 10 Year Plan.

It may mean extending time lines and dropping some projects. Then, and only then, a revised Draft Plan for this year must be issued for public consideration.

Do not be misled by the number, or lack of numbers of Submissions. Surely all valid points raised are what you must consider.

Maybe thousands of Ratepayers have not forwarded a Submission. Some of the reasons given by the neighbours I have asked are:

1. They lack confidence to write and/or speak;
2. They lack the ability;
3. They feel they would be overshadowed by Authority figures;
4. They believe their views will be ignored.

Don't think they are not vitally interested in your actions. Believe me, they are.

### Proposals for Consideration:

I believe the Council must:

- A. Revisit and re-work the 10 Year Plan approved in 2007; then,
- B. Re-work the Draft Plan for 2007/2008; and
- C. Seriously consider some form of "User Pays".
- D. Concentrate on its Core Public Responsibilities;
- E. Cease all Central Government functions not fully funded by them;
- F. Work within a budget that it's Ratepayers can afford;
- G. Work for all Ratepayers – not just select groups;
- H. Do you Wish List Projects only with surplus budget cash;

### Reasons for Suggested Actions:

- A. The 10 Year Plan was endorsed in 2007. However, in 2008 New Zealand's economy is in decline. House prices are falling and expected to drop 30% (according to Press, TV and radio media) in the next 10 years. Every day the cost of living is also skyrocketing. Thus the original 10 Year Plan must now be reworked. Projects, costs and time lines must then be revised.
- B. The 2008/2009 Draft must then be reworked and the new 2008/2009 model put forward for Submissions. Not to do so would be both arrogant and foolish.
- C. Core Responsibilities – Now is the time to take a long serious look at what is deemed to be Local Councils' Core Responsibilities e.g. water, sewage, rubbish etc. These must be given priority over any other projects. Money for other projects should only come from any Budget surplus.
- D. Non Funded Government Projects – Local Councils should now refuse to do any work that is required by Central Government and not funded by them e.g. housing etc.
- E. Budget that Ratepayers can afford – Be prepared to work within a Budget that all Ratepayers can actually afford.

When dealing with millions of dollars, please, be aware it is too easy to think of thousands of dollars as chicken feed. Remember everything is relative. If you are on a good income then making decisions that mean a \$6.00 per week rates increase is nothing. But, if you are retired and on a fixed income, the \$6.00 is a massive amount. When fixing rates don't hide behind the Rating Act (if house prices fall from now – will our Rates?)

Council should be reminded every day they attend a super market that 2008 is a year of rapidly rising costs of everyday living.

For example:

Petrol	-	nearly \$2.00 per litre
Gas	-	over \$100.00 per 45 litre tank
Electricity	-	going up
Cheese	-	\$16.00 per kg
Food	-	going up
Rates	-	going up?

You may say that Central Government gives a Rate Rebate, yes it does to some, but for those of us who through hard work and financial sacrifice over the years have managed to have a small other income, it pushes us over the limit and we are now penalised.

Please when setting Rates – “cut your cloth to suit your Ratepayers.”

- F. Work for all Ratepayers – If you believe in the “trickle down theory” then take it from one at the bottom layer of the heap that, in real life, it is an urban myth, and it does not work. The only thing we get is the need to fund “the Project” e.g. recently Council spent \$50,000 on promotion of a concert in Christchurch. Those who benefited were the promoter, the musicians, Hotels, Motels, shops and maybe the 3,000 odd who attended. The Ratepayer basically subsidised everyone.

It is great that Christchurch has a World Class name as a Boutique City as well as a famous Art Gallery. It would also be great if it had a World Class reputation for the way in which it looks after its elderly Ratepayers. After all, it is they who have provided funds and goodwill to get the City where it is today.

- G. Wish List Projects – (The City “X” factor) – Only after all Council Core Responsibilities have been catered for in any Budget should you consider your “Wish List” projects. These must only be funded from Budget Surpluses and NOT by putting up Rates higher. Ratepayers are NOT cash cows.
- H. User Pays – Businesses must be responsible for their own promotion and funding not all Ratepayers. Wish List Projects must now be fully or partially funded by some form of User Pays. Overseas and New Zealand visitors certainly benefit businesses, but their money does not “trickle down” to me and the vast majority of your Ratepayers. Christchurch Museum should be free to local schools and Ratepayers as is the Art Gallery or both be user pays

I recently visited Rotorua, New Zealand and if I wanted to visit their Museum it would have cost me \$12.00!

**Summary:**

1. Revisit the Original 10 Year Plan.
2. Rework the 2008-2009 Plan;
3. Check and prioritise Council Core Responsibilities;
4. Refuse non funded Central Government work.
5. Spend only what your Ratepayers can afford. Be very cautious as the world economy is shuddering to a halt and extreme care needs to be take with expenditure from the householder to the prime Minister if we are to weather the storm
6. Remember every \$1.00 comes from someone else's purse.
7. User pays – Businesses and visitors.
8. "X" factor projects only funded by budget surplus.

**Conclusion:**

Please, think before you Act. Stick to basic responsibilities first. Keep rates affordable for **ALL** Ratepayers.

Please give really serious consideration to the benefits of your actions to your community

I; and thousands like me would very much appreciate this Council showing it has not lost touch with its Ratepayers.

Thank you



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