

17 Totara Street
Riccarton
Christchurch

6 April 2004

LTCCP Christchurch City Council
Christchurch

Dear Sir

Re: Successive Rate Increases

Having just read today's Press, and the article entitled "Homeowners Face Successive Rate Rises", I felt compelled to write.

I was dismayed to read of the proposed rate rises in the next few years, namely 3.62% this year, 3.98% in 2005-06, 3.18% in 2006-07, 3.99% in 2007-08 and **6.12%!!!** in 2008-09.

These figures are irresponsible in the extreme. I do not believe the Council should overspend so much year after year, at a level way above inflation.

We are a one income family with 2 teenage children and my husband has not had a pay increase for almost two years. Our rates are currently \$2,700 a year, which is \$50.00 a week! Why does the council keep overspending to such a degree. Surely the first rule of a budget is to live within your means.

I particularly find the \$11 million for a flat water sports facility ridiculous (not important at all – should be scrapped completely), as is \$10 million to upgrade the Botanic Gardens (surely a more modest outlay would suffice) and 50 million for new Civic Offices is completely irresponsible. We would all like a nice new large home, but if you can't afford it, you don't get one. This rule should apply to the council regarding it's fancy new offices.

Also, the "Sister Cities" plan seems to be just a waste of money, and only a reason for councillors to go off visiting these countries at the rate-payers expense, for very little, if any, monetary gain for our city. At the very least, the councillors should pay their own way if they wish to visit these so called "sister cities".

Lastly, my sister and father live in Timaru, where all homes are provided with a large "wheelie bin" as part of their rates, and all power lines are being placed underground as part of their rates. In Christchurch, by contrast, even though I recycle as much as I can, find one black rubbish bag insufficient for our rubbish, so we pay approximately \$240.00 a year for a green bin. Also, I find it hard to believe that although our end of Totara

Street is in the process of being totally upgraded, no-one thought far enough ahead to place the power lines underground, even though the whole street was being dug up anyway! Where is the sense in that? Timaru can do it , so why not Christchurch. (I know that we could have had the powerlines places underground but only if everyone in the street had agreed to pay between \$2000 - \$4000 themselves!, over and above the already expensive rates, but that was completely unacceptable as proved by it not happening).

However, the reconstruction of our end of Totara Street is almost finished and is looking wonderful. The Sicon team are doing a great job and I am most impressed with their careful work. Well done in that respect.

Also, recently our neighbours lost a huge branch from their willow tree into the stream in some high winds. I rang the council to advise them and in no time at all some men came out and chain-sawed and removed the branch very efficiently. Well done for that as well.

Yours sincerely

Alison Gibbs (concerned and financially challenged rate payer)

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'AM Gibbs', written in black ink.