

# **COLUMN FROM MAYOR TIM SHADBOLT**

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## **THE HOTSEAT**

I've never felt so battered, shattered and bruised and it's all my own fault. I'd had a night on the turps and was staggering home from The Frog when suddenly four Frenchmen leapt out from behind a cabbage tree and beat the living daylights out of me. But wait! There's more! When I finally staggered home I tripped over and hit my head on a bedside table. I tell you it was one hell of a night.

Except for the beating, it's been a great week. I accept that putting up the average residential rates by 5% is too much of an increase, but at least we don't cheat. Many Councils throughout New Zealand avoid rate increases by taking out huge loans. I can confidently claim that the combined Councils of Southland would have the lowest level of local government loans compared to any other province in New Zealand. The leaky homes will cost this country about \$40 billion according to experts in the field. Invercargill has virtually no leaky homes so we don't have a huge future liability bearing down on us.

There are some weaknesses in Southland that need to be addressed however. One of them is in the field of high risk investment. Now that we have done all the tough work in relation to a new bio-tech industry with our world famous Auckland Island pigs, other provinces are moving in to reap the benefits. While we are brilliant at building sports stadiums and organising events, we are not so sharp when it comes to science and technology. I believe the future of farming will not just be centred on wool, meat and milk. Algae for fuel and pigs for medicine may seem unlikely, but that is where our future lies.

The need for high risk investment in agriculture was recognised when our Community Trust and the SBS established Invest South. The problem seems to be that after two spectacular failures in abalone and tulips, as well as a global recession, they seem to have lost a lot of confidence. We need an investment company that will fail miserably in 9 out of every 10 investments, but when they do hit the jackpot it will be a stunning success.

I believe our Auckland Island pigs will be a success because \$50 million has already been invested on research, but so far Southland hasn't invested a single dollar in this development. In life if you want to reap the benefits of a new development, you need the courage to invest in it.

When you look at the founders of Southland, they certainly had courage. Captain Cargill fought Napoleon; was shot twice; had 12 children and then at the age of 64 sailed to the other side of the world to build Dunedin. That's courage. And look at Dunedin's new stadium. That's also what I call an act of courage. Auckland has its Sky Tower; Wellington has Parliament; Christchurch is the capital of the South Island and has the best water in the world. Dunedin had to either accept it was dying or do something absolutely outrageous, something that no other city in New Zealand could even dream of. Over 50,000 people in one room. Wow! When Southlanders discuss the Dunedin

Stadium they turn white with fear and trepidation. My view is good on them. They may still die, but at least they're going down fighting. Their battle cry of 'build it and they will come' is heroic and even if it ends up being a white elephant, it will be the most spectacular white elephant in the country.

Next weekend will be Rotary's famous book sale. Last year the volunteers manning the pay out desk got a little bored so when a book turned up entitled 'How to tell family and friends that you're gay', they thought they'd have a little fun. Whenever a male customer approached the counter they would slip 'the gay book' into their pile. "Ah yes Sir, this one's a very rare book and it will cost \$20". "What?", the customer would cry out in alarm, "that's not my book". "It's alright Sir", the Rotarian would whisper, "we are very discreet".