

COLUMN FROM MAYOR TIM SHADBOLT

28 February 2009

THE HOTSEAT

Well the Jobs Summit is over and I'm feeling a lot better already.

Just because New Zealand only represented -000001% of the global economy doesn't mean we are irrelevant. I'm sure China is still celebrating after sewing up the contract to make New Zealand Army raincoats.

If things get tough we can always engage in a little fiscal stimulation.

I love the idea of fiscal stimulation for Kiwi icons, but at the end of the day I hope the Jobs Summit is honest enough to admit that although we can tinker or ponder there is very little we can do when struck by an economic tsunami like a world wide global recession.

Now for deserts. A leading British Climate Scientist, James Lovelock has announced it's too late to save the planet from global warming. We're nearly all going to fry by 2100 and the icing on the cake is that we can't even drown our sorrows with a six pack of Speights without dying of cancer.

The only issue that confuses me about all this doom and gloom was watching the launch of TV 3's Million Dollar Catch at the Eagle Hotel in Bluff.

As the heroic fishermen faced danger and drama in the wild ocean the price of crayfish rocketed up to almost \$100 per kilo. There must be some people in the world who have missed out on the global recession, or they have chosen to ignore it. Perhaps they are the recipients of fiscal stimulation.

When the Government announced it was ploughing \$500 million into infrastructure every Mayor and his dog went rushing to Wellington pleading for cash. Our Council decided to take a different approach. We told this Government we didn't want any money from the infrastructural fund. Instead we wanted relief from all the new Government regulations being forced on us which our ratepayers are forced to pay for. We've worked out how we can save \$1.6 million every year by cutting red tape.

The latest outrage is typical. There were a few serious food poisoning cases in Auckland so now the Health Act of 1956 is being "reformed".

The present system is simple and works brilliantly for Invercargill.

Our Health Inspectors have a one-page checklist that makes sure we get no rat tails in our mince pies. Our local café and restaurant owners don't want to poison their customers anyway.

Now, under the stomach-churning “one hand fits all” philosophy of central government we will be forced to adopt a 10-page monster check list that will cost our ratepayers an extra \$80,000 at least to administer.

It just goes on and on. Gambling, brothels, liquor control, roading, public records and of course the super monster of them all, The Long Term Council Community Plan. Councils are supposed to inform their ratepayers what Invercargill will be like in 10 years time when in fact we haven't got the vaguest idea what challenges we will be facing in 10 months time.

All we know is that the world is facing the greatest economic meltdown since the Great Depression and the bush fires raging in Australia are symptomatic of climate change on a scale not seen since the disappearance of the dinosaurs.

We can't plan for the future. We can only be innovative, flexible, compassionate and intelligent enough to help our community cope with the huge changes we are about to face.

Strategically we live in the best City in the world, regardless of whatever meltdown we may face.