

COLUMN FROM MAYOR TIM SHADBOLT

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Next week Council will hold its first Council Meeting for 2009. This will probably be the most challenging year our Council has faced since the great floods of 1984. Despite all the negative publicity we've been getting lately, I still believe that Southland will prove to be one of the best places in the world to live during a global economic meltdown. I accept that many will argue that no-one should discuss the recession because it only encourages insecurity which in turn creates a fearful atmosphere on which recessions or depressions thrive.

This Government however believes a recession is inevitable and it would be irresponsible not to prepare for it. They have already implemented a scheme to support workers who are made redundant and next month they are planning a national conference on employment issues. I also believe that local government should do something to prepare for a major economic downturn and it will be interesting to hear the views of my fellow Councillors.

Despite all the problems of the world I've had quite a positive Christmas having officiated at six weddings, as well as raising funds for civil defence and organising a New Zealand Literary Heritage Trail. I look forward to a tough but constructive year.