

Speech to the Local Government New Zealand Conference “Investing in Our Future”

**Basil Morrison, President Local Government New Zealand:
Conference Closing, Wednesday 18 July**

Well, here we are at the end of another local government conference.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for attending this year. It's been great catching up with all of you over the past three days and meeting up with old friends from the sector.

I'd also like to thank Dunedin for their southern hospitality and Mayor Peter Chin for his input into the conference.

We've had a busy few days here in Dunedin - I'd like to take a moment to reflect on some of the conference highlights.

On Monday, the conference was officially opened by our Minister, the Hon. Mark Burton. He touched on our conference theme, “Investing in our future”, and recognised the valuable role councils have to play investing in our communities.

I think it's a positive reflection of our relationship with the Government that we have consistently had a strong presence from Ministers of the Crown and Members of Parliament.

We've also been fortunate to again hear the views of the Leader of the Opposition. It is the best speech I've heard from the Leader of the Opposition in my seven years in the job - I'm greatly encouraged by the offer to work with us, and look forward to influencing their manifesto for next year's election.

Over the past few days we've heard from a range of interesting and motivating keynote speakers. I think one of the key presentations for councils came from David Shand, Chair of the Rating Inquiry. We're certainly looking forward to hearing the outcomes of the Inquiry in the next few weeks.

We have been lucky to hear from speakers of such high calibre - Sir Michael Lyons and Sherri Torjman. With sustainability and climate change so topical, it was also valuable to get a business perspective from Rob White.

These speakers provided us with international and national viewpoints on local democracy, and useful practical knowledge on how to best invest in the future of our communities.

The conference theme seems particularly relevant given the imminent recommendations of the Rating Inquiry.

As I have said in my opening speech, we are looking forward to the Government making some positive decisions about funding and resourcing local government.

The central government election next year will give us the opportunity to lobby all political parties for change and present them with a manifesto for the future of local government.

Closer at hand are the local government elections. While thousands of Dunedin scarfies have recently finished their exams, we have ours coming up in October.

We know that elections bring change. Some of you will be stepping down and moving on to pursue other things. Past experience also tells us there's not a 100 percent pass rate. We know there are no guarantees, myself included.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank you for your hard work and support and wish you all the very best for the elections. I'd like to thank our current National Council for the leadership and guidance they have provided during the current term, and to farewell

Mary Bourke, Michael McEvedy and David Walter who have indicated they won't be standing again.

As you know, I'm now entering the final year of my presidency. I look forward to working with the new National Council elected in November, and with all of you as we continue to make local government a central focus of our communities.

Well, this brings our conference to a close. Please remember to fill out a conference evaluation form. You will be sent a form in the next few days. As usual your feedback on any aspect of the conference is welcome.

Thank you once again, for joining me here in Dunedin. The 2008 Conference is in Rotorua. I wish you all a safe trip home and thank you for making this conference such a success.