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It's time to shake it up

John Tamihere Rates Freeze/Rent Freeze Policy

Three years relief for ratepayers . . . and renters

The biggest policy announcement of my mayoral campaign clearly differentiates a John Tamihere leadership from Phil Goff. Action by me versus inaction by him.

There will be a general rates freeze for the first 3 years of my mayoralty as:

1. We reset and refresh the balance sheet of the city seeking greater efficiencies and ensuring central government plays a far stronger role in infrastructure investment in Auckland.
2. We require 3 years to reset and refresh the legislation that was passed in 2009. Part of this refreshing is to reassert citizen control of all of our council businesses.
3. A new consultation process will be required to determine whether 21 local boards are the best possible way that citizens can relate to the city administration every 3 years.
4. My whole policy suite resets the relationship between local government and central government, resets the relationship between the mayor and councillors to citizens and resets the obligations and duties of every person paid by the ratepayer as a public servant to the citizens.

The rates increase announced by Goff in March this year, at 3.5% per annum, totals \$260 million over the 3 year period. This rates increase will no longer proceed and the 11.5 cents per litre Goff Petrol Tax will be removed.

The cumulative increase in general rates revenue for the next 3 years (2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22) as shown in the 10 year budget is \$260 million (volume 1, p65). This means for each of the above 3 years, the general rate cumulatively will average out at \$86.6m.

The rates freeze will be funded by greater efficiencies across the Council and the six Council Controlled Organisations. In fact, it will require only a 1% efficiency gain per year.

Most Auckland householders know that if they had to, they could save 1% of their expenditure annually. It's as simple as that.

There are several examples where these efficiencies can be made:

1. I fully support the thousands of council workers. However, I wonder whether we are getting good value from our senior managers and administrators. In the Council alone we have over 200 people paid over \$200,000 a year. In fact almost a quarter of the entire staff receive an annual salary of over \$100,000 or more. In addition, there are thousands of other staff employed in Council Controlled Organisations on similar pay rates. And then there are tens of

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millions of dollars being paid to contractors.

2. My proposal to rebuild the balance sheet of the city through previous announcements, such as the sale of the Ports of Auckland operations. This decision provides a double benefit of receiving a substantial one-off cash injection from the ports sale, and also eliminates the need to find additional money the Ports of Auckland management are requesting to upgrade the port. This also preserves 77 hectares of public land on the waterfront we can preserve for future generations.
3. Recalibrating the Auckland Transport Alignment Project (ATAP) to review projects with no business case such as light rail down Dominion Road, which started at \$1.7 billion, is already up to \$6 billion and new projections of up to \$11 billion.

It is about time that the long suffering citizen ratepayer had a break from the onslaught of out of control CCOs and unrelenting increases in spending by the current mayor.

As a part of the rates freeze over the next three years, I am asking all landlords in Auckland to join us in implementing a Rent Freeze for the following reasons:

1. The city is applying a general rates freeze to every household. All landlords of rental accommodation and business premises will receive a significant financial benefit.
2. We have the lowest interest rates in living memory.
3. There is no Capital Gains Tax.

Therefore, I am asking all landlords to pass these savings onto their tenants and not increase their rents for three years. Of course landlords cannot be compelled to give their tenants a rent freeze, but this is moral leadership that all property owners should follow.

Leadership is about looking after citizens and their interests. Leadership is about taking everyone along major decision making processes and consulting properly with them. Leadership is about asking all Aucklanders to work together and be just and fair towards one another as we go through this reset and rebuild.

I look forward to seeing similar leadership from our business community and landlords at a residential, commercial, retail and industrial level. This is my vision for the first 3 years of a John Tamihere mayoralty.

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