

CHRISTCHURCH Employment SUMMIT

Media Release

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From: Lee Harris, Marketing Communications Manager
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Canterbury employment summit solutions put forward

Cantabrians need to get over risk aversion, work together more and bring forward initiatives that will improve local infrastructure, delegates at today's Christchurch Employment Summit said.

Key businesses, local authorities, local and central Government agencies and associated Canterbury representatives met in the Christchurch Town Hall today to find solutions to regional employment issues.

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) in conjunction with Canterbury Development Corporation (CDC), the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce (CECC), and the Department of Labour invited key Cantabrians as a follow up to the recent national Job Summit.

Issues discussed included governance, investment, innovation, regional attributes, and human capital (people).

In summarising today's event, CECC Chief Executive Peter Townsend said the region's points of difference included that there is a unified community, committed Council prepared to address any choke points, a relatively better-performing economy, rich resources (water/land etc), the capability to create regional innovation systems and a good quality of life.

Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker told delegates the CCC would focus on infrastructure needs to ensure Christchurch continues to move forward and was in a good position when the economy improves.

"The Council has been in contact with all of its companies, and we've told them to look at bringing forward as much infrastructure work as is sensibly possible to return as much capacity as we can to the local construction and allied trades," he said.

Council was keen to hear about any choke points in Council processes which were causing problems for businesses. Mayor Parker says the Council was actively investing in systems to streamline Council processes.

Canterbury Development Corporation Chief Executive Bill Luff said CDC would undertake an audit of planned infrastructure projects to see what was ready to go and what interventions were needed to make them happen.

“We are of the view that Wellington will be receptive if we can prove good payback beyond the construction phase into meaningful jobs for our community,” Mr Luff said. CDC would also be keen to hear from private companies with projects in the wings.

University of Canterbury Vice Chancellor Dr Rod Carr was keen that the city focus on taking advantage of the educational capabilities Christchurch had to offer and growing the student population.

“Every 1000 students brought to Canterbury will bring \$15million of direct spending, and another \$10million of accommodation and services. That’s attractive,” he said.

Dr Carr also wanted the city to think about the social, cultural and economic issues of the “decile one” end of the community.

Regional Commissioner for Social Development Michelle Mitchell said one of the best initiatives for the community was to ensure people had work. She cautioned employers against shedding staff while times were tough as it might mean skills shortages when businesses were ready to get back into gear.

Christchurch Employment Summit discussions will now be referred to the Mayoral Taskforce on jobs which would report back to attendees within 30 days. Delegates were also asked to forward other thoughts and ideas to the Mayoral Taskforce now and could send these to CDC - cdc@cdc.org.nz, with the words Employment Summit in the subject line, or fax ideas to 03 379 5554.

A summary from the Summit and presentations from keynote speakers will be available on the CDC website www.cdc.org.nz within the next 24 hours.

Ends

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