



5th Most Unaffordable City in the World Stands Up Local Politicians for Solutions

TAURANGA, Thursday 21st September 2023: The local business community packed out the Tauranga Yacht Club yesterday, to hear about the strategic growth plans for Tauranga city from local political candidates.

With Tauranga being the 5th most unaffordable city in the world to buy a house* candidates were asked to outline their party's policies on infrastructure, housing and tax.

Hosted by Tauranga's Urban Task Force (UTF), who represents the city's property owners, developers and business communities, the event sold out quickly.

UTF Chair Scott Adams says over 100 members gathered to hear and engage with candidates Cameron Luxton from ACT, Sam Uffindell from National, Larry Baldock standing as an independent and Labour's candidate for Bay of Plenty, Pare Taikato standing in for Hon Jan Tinetti, who was unwell.

One of UTF's strategic priorities is to provide powerful property leadership to local and central government, and key stakeholders in local business, economic and iwi sectors.

“An important part within this is maintaining constructive communication with central and local government MPs to raise awareness of key strategic priorities for our region,” says Adams.

Hot topics from the audience were around the time it takes to get housing projects completed, unnecessary red tape, assurances on tax deductibility for rentals and policies around the Resource Management Act (RMA). The RMA means that councils set rules and requirements around building houses.

Frustrated with the time it takes to make progress in Tauranga, a member used the example of building 8 apartments in Australia, takes 6 months to turn around, in Tauranga the same project takes 3 years.

Taikato says a full reform is required with the RMA, with Uffindell saying National will get rid of the Natural and Built Environment Act 2023, (NBE) and reform the RMA. “We have to stop piling unnecessary red tape on people,” says Uffindell.

Baldock says the RMA is never going to be perfect, but he doesn’t believe we should tinker with it, “it’s how the RMA is being interpreted that has to change”.

“I think bad law should be thrown out and replaced with something better,” says Luxton, who says ACT would replace the RMA and focus on private negotiations to resolve issues and opportunities between property owners.

Luxton, who is 11th on ACT’s list and not seeking a candidate vote, instead a party vote, says we can’t be afraid of international investment in our infrastructure, land and labour, with Uffindell agreeing that innovative funding needs to be sought. Luxton also challenged the huge costs of building products in New Zealand and wants to bring them in from overseas to make them more affordable.

Independent candidate Larry Baldock, who is a former United Futures MP and deputy mayor of Tauranga says the city is desperately behind.

“\$2-3 billion of port shares reside with the Regional Council, how do we unlock that, as it is a huge resource for Tauranga,” he says.

“Everyone in National is aware of the importance of Tauranga nationally and how significant our Port is” says Uffindell.

Luxton says we are the poster-child city for New Zealand’s housing problem and advised through ACT’s housing policy there would be a share of more than a billion dollars of GST revenue with local councils based on their building consent activity and allowing targeted rates to fund infrastructure on new developments.

Put me in and I’ll bring people down (leaders/experts from Tauranga) to Wellington and get things done, was the parting shot echoed by all the candidates.

UTF holds quarterly meetings with local MPs throughout the year but holds a neutral position on a party leader and for disclosure purposes the UTF have not and will not provide any party donations.

- <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/tauranga-ranked-fifth-least-affordable-city-in-the-world-why/N4EH7DVDOHRIMNXLRY4WC5M4NA/#:~:text=Tauranga%20is%20the%20fifth%20most,a%20home%2C%20ahead%20of%20Auckland.>

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For more information about the Urban Task Force see: <https://urbantaskforce.co.nz>