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## Time to Become Involved

by Ian Walker

*Farmers of New Zealand is Northland's largest rural and farming advocacy organisation. As such we are active in many areas of interest to both our members and the wider rural community. We have an active interest in the performance of government policy in general, but in particular local government.*

Local government, through rates and district and regional plan rules, have a direct cost and influence on the operational viability of North land's farming community. Local government also has a significant impact on the vibrancy of our towns and communities.

A poor performing council can become a serious problem for a community. It's not just obvious problems such as long delays in obtaining building permits, consents, or poor road maintenance. Poor councils can cause long-term insidious damage to a community through wasting scarce capital on poor investments and inefficient spending.

Through imposition of inappropriate district rules they can slow down inward investment and accelerate outward migration of talented people. The inability to provide the necessary essential infrastructure just spirals a community into decline.

The three district councils in Northland have never been models of good performance. However, the last three years our confidence in their ability to perform has hit new lows. This term started with three new mayors and an optimism that things were about to improve. How wrong we were.

In our opinion the three mayors have all shown themselves to be inadequate for the role. They are destructive, manipulative, and fixated on breaking Northland apart with their poorly researched local government restructuring ideas. The last two years have been a missed opportunity in many ways.

We believe none of the current mayors deserve a second term and we will be actively involved in the forthcoming elections highlighting what we believe are the issues facing Northland and each individual district. However, the leadership and performance of the Kaipara District Council risks the viability of the Kaipara to such an extent we are taking the unprecedented step of actively becoming involved in the Kaipara elections.

In our opinion the current council has no real leadership and does not have the necessary skills to govern what has become a poorly performing management structure. We believe Kaipara has an excellent future and despite its small size can maintain its identity and viability as a district with a better performing council.

In our opinion the only way the Kaipara can survive is for the voters to elect a more competent council and mayor. We believe that at the very least Mayor Tiller and his deputy, long serving councillor Richard Alspach, must be retired from office along with a number of seat warmers.

Over the next weeks and months Farmers of New Zealand, along with significant support from business and other concerned community groups, will be provide a clear and better alternative to the current status quo.

We will present the voters with a group of people that demonstrate the necessary vision, leadership, and business acumen that the Kaipara needs to move forward. There will be a clear and well-researched plan of action. This campaign will also signal a warning to the other two district councils that Farmers of New Zealand will no longer stand on the sidelines and advocate — we will lead.

If you are a resident of the Kaipara district and wish to help or believe you are of candidate material contact us at [kdcelection@nzfarmers.com](mailto:kdcelection@nzfarmers.com). It's time the Kaipara stopped hoping for a better council. It's time to vote for one.