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# PORIRUA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2020 ELECTION BRIEFING

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**The 2020 General Election is arguably the most crucial election in a generation. The world has descended into simultaneous health and financial crises, and whilst New Zealand has had early success in containing the virus, we have no immunity from fiscal contagion. For business, the next three years are about recovery, the growth of business confidence, and returning to an economy where people freely consume and invest.**

**Porirua face some new challenges and opportunities – such as a fast-changing future of work and a COVID-era economy – as well as the challenges and opportunities of old, such as the cost of doing business and infrastructure development.**

**The government that leads New Zealand after September 19 must provide the right platform for business recovery and growth. Because it is not a government that will rebuild our economy, it is you, the business community. Porirua needs a government that gives its businesses the confidence to invest in themselves, their people, and their growth.**

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## THE FUTURE OF WORK

COVID has accelerated the growth of flexible working, digital technology use, and work from home arrangements. Staying and buying local has had a positive impact for Porirua businesses, shown by increased local spending. With proximity to the workplace becoming less important, Porirua's popularity as a place to live has the potential to only grow faster. However, physical jobs do not have this luxury and a skills pipeline remains crucial for the region. The Government has announced fees free industry training, and apprenticeship support programmes like Mana in Mahi, that aim to incentivise trades and reduce the cost of taking on apprentices. As school leavers and those made redundant face uncertain futures, it is vital that government policy supports jobs and industry training in the next term. Pre-Covid, Porirua's fastest growing industry was construction – and with shovel ready plans in the making we must make sure Porirua is ready. With Porirua's young population we need Government to focus on Porirua. We must ensure our young people are earning or learning. A great deal of policy and pipeline planning has already been done – Government support is needed to turbo charge the work Council, Porirua Partners, and the Chamber have undertaken already.

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## PROTECTING NEW ZEALAND FROM COVID-19

New Zealand has kept COVID at the border for now, but 'fortress NZ' is an unviable long-term strategy. International tourism provides \$17 billion for the economy and international education \$5 billion – we will soon realise the full impact of this not circulating through Kiwis' pockets. Over the past decade Porirua's tourism numbers have been growing – tourism makes up around 2.4% of our total GDP and 3.2% of Porirua jobs. Supporting domestic and regional tourism is a good medium term solution – but we need longer term solutions. Returning to lockdown scenarios is equally unviable, therefore, an incoming Government must find a path forward that keeps the economy open without demolishing industries that we have spent decades evolving.

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## COST OF DOING BUSINESS

Over the last six months, the Government has spent tens of billions of dollars propping up the economy through the likes of the Wage Subsidy, Small Business Cashflow Loans, and Regional Business Partner vouchers. This level of support has been crucial for SMEs in New Zealand, but it is unsustainable in the long-run.

To support recovery, the cost of doing business must be kept as low as possible. Compliance cost and tax conditions need to favour business growth and give employers the confidence to hire and invest, not scale down or disband operations.

Government agencies and our own Porirua Council have been responsive to acknowledge the costs impact on business, introducing rates deferral assistance to support the business community – we need to ensure this is continued.

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## REBUILDING & INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

Porirua faces several infrastructure challenges. Billions of dollars must be spent to get its water infrastructure up to standard and protect the area from flooding, Transmission Gully has been calamitous and must be completed to unlock opportunities and drive growth, and opportunities for greenfield development must be provided to increase housing stock.

In the next term, Porirua needs the government to support such endeavours and growth. It remains to be seen whether Porirua will receive funding for its 'shovel-ready' projects, though we know that the Wellington region has been allocated just \$185 million of the \$2.6 billion announced already. The Resource Management Act must also be reformed as soon as possible. The legislation makes processes slow and costly and will only hamper economic recovery in the next few years.