**A regional watchdog view**

**By Andrew von Dadelszen 11th November 2016**

**Plenty of challenges face our Regional Council**

We have now been sworn in as Regional Councillors, so please be clear that my editorials reflect my personal thoughts, and in no way are intended to represent those as a Councillor of the Bay of Plenty Regional Council. That said I am excited to being back on the Regional Council, and really want to ensure that our Council is a great organisation that we can all be very proud of. My aim is to move us as an organisation, from “Good” to “Great”, and I have confidence that with the calibre of councillors on board, we can do just that. I will be looking for measurable outcomes, with staff being asked to focus on this, and not just more report writing. I recognise that Central Government continues to burden local government with ever more responsibilities (without the appropriate funding mechanisms to go with it), but my aim it to get accountability for our ratepayers. We need to ensure that we conduct our business in a transparent and understandable way.

I recognise that our territorial councils (both city and district) seem to see BOP Regional Council as a “pot of gold”, with our Port shares (and the income that derives from that). However your Regional Council isn't Father Christmas, and any distributions will need to be carefully managed to ensure that they are in the best interest of our region. Regional Development is a cornerstone activity for us, and I undertake to champion for wise decision making in that respect.

Bay of Plenty Regional Council currently owns 54.14% of the Port of Tauranga (through its 100% owned and NZX listed Quayside Holdings), and many within the region see this $1.5 billion asset as “fair game”. While the controlling Port interest is a magnificent regional asset, your Regional Council needs to be careful not to just “empire build”. There is a huge opportunity, in my opinion, to leverage it, for the benefit of our entire region. This huge asset base is both a huge opportunity, and a risk. Wise heads are needed to ensure that this is managed to grow our region’s economic wealth; as it is with a strong balance sheet that your Regional Council can make a real difference to ensure sustainable environmental outcomes.

If you have a view on these or any other local government issues, I invite you to email me at [andrew@vond.co.nz](mailto:andrew@vond.co.nz), visit [www.vond.co.nz](http://www.vond.co.nz), or just give me a call.