

Northport Resource Consent Hearing

- I want to talk to you about foresight. About the idea that decisions we make today have direct and very real implications for tomorrow
- It's easy to say "no". Just to stick with the status quo. It's a lot riskier to say "yes". But my point is that if a whole lot of people hadn't said "yes" over the course of this country's history, we wouldn't be where we are now. And, arguably, we'd be in an even better place if even more people had said "yes".
- I was a member of the original Northland Harbour Board and, following that, the Northland Port Company (now Marsden Maritime Holdings, a 50 percent owner of Northport Ltd). When the board members and I acquired the Northport land, the Whangārei and wider Northland business community thought we were nuts. But we persisted and the original investment has proved more than worthwhile.
- I am very envious about the certainties you face today, as you make your decision about Northport's future. Certainties we had no idea about when we were weighing both Northland's and Northport's potential some 45 years ago or so.
- Today we know without a shadow of doubt that there is existing, pent-up demand for the expanded container freight and logistics operation that Northport intends to create.
- Today we know that the population growth forecast for the upper North Island is going to demand far superior freight and logistics capabilities than we're currently able to field.
- And today port operators around the country already know that Auckland and Tauranga are approaching, or have reached, full capacity.
- This brings me back to foresight. 45 years or so ago we took the momentous decision to buy the land and build a port to service this region's need at the time. Now it's your turn – even those of you who do not call Northland home - to put your shoulders to the same wheel to join with those who are wanting to make Northland's port fit for purpose 50 years from now.
- While the Northport Board are the decision-makers here – you are the enablers. If you deny this application then the Board has absolutely no options. Northport will be locked out from playing the role that we all know it can play in driving economic development and creating infrastructural and supply-chain resilience for the entire upper North Island.
- Experience has shown us that in New Zealand the development of port facilities takes many decades, both in terms of planning and implementation. Therefore, it is essential that Northport continues to undertake long-term planning that will enable the port to meet the needs of the community and economy.
- By granting the consent Northport is asking for, you will give the company's Board, and any potential investors, the confidence they need to invest in Northport's growth. Consent will also give stakeholders confidence when looking to invest in Northland. Consent is an essential part of de-risking any potential future business plan.

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- Three compelling reasons for granting consent:

1. Economic development

Northport is a strategic asset for the Northland economy. With a growing region, constrained opportunities for Ports of Auckland, a large bank of physical space for long-term development, and a natural harbour resource capable of sustainably supporting growth and capacity, Northport is uniquely poised to be a significant contributor to the regional economy for many decades to come. This alone is reason to grant the consent, in my view.

2. Social development - employment in a jobs-scarce region

This project will doubtless result in both short-term and long-term employment growth through jobs linked directly to construction of the expanded port and its increased freight-handling capacity.

But expansion of the port will also stimulate the establishment of businesses in other sectors on surrounding land. With these will come even more jobs for locals in areas beyond shipping and marine services.

3. Impetus for other infrastructural development

Granting Northport consent to proceed with its project plans would give added impetus to wider infrastructure projects, such as four-laning State Highway 1 between Whangarei and Auckland and building the rail spur to Marsden Point. Both projects continue to be strongly advocated by community leaders for the betterment of both business and residents, and for giving longer-term capability to our region.

'Joined-up thinking' in these areas is vital to ensure that a cohesive, sustainable and future-proofed logistics and supply-chain strategy is put in place. By granting Northport the consent it needs to expand as needed, you will be giving the joined-up thinkers additional options to consider.