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**REPORT 2**  
(1215/11/IM)

## **COUNCILLOR WAIN: SAKAI/MINOH TRIP OCTOBER 2009 – REPORT BACK**

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

To report back on my travel to Sakai and Minoh cities in Japan in October 2009.

### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Council:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Request that Officers investigate potential export opportunities to Minoh and Sakai using the Sister City Relationship as a lever.*

### **3. Background**

In early 2009 I attended a Hutt Minoh Friendship Trust meeting for which I have been the Wellington City Council representative since 2004. At that meeting Hutt City Mayor and Chairperson of the Hutt Minoh Friendship Trust David Ogden suggested that the Trust consider sending me to Japan. Mayor Ogden believed it would provide me with an opportunity to further understand the differing cultures between the Sister Cities, which would aid in my ability to contribute further to the Trust, as I was the only Trustee who had not visited Japan.

Mayor Ogden made the trust aware of a proposed joint trip to Sakai and Minoh scheduled for October 2009. The Trust committed to funding my trip up to \$1500 and Mayor Ogden approached Mayor Prendergast to seek Wellington City Council support.

In June 2009 the Wellington City Council passed a resolution which saw the Council contributing up to \$1260 from the International Relations budget.

The delegation from Wellington was made up of members from the Wellington Sakai Association (including President Jimmy Barnes), and members of the Hutt Minoh Friendship Club. The trip had been organised to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wellington's relationship with Sakai and Hutt Cities relationship with Minoh. This was the first time a combined trip of the two organisations (Wellington Sakai Association and Hutt Minoh Friendship Club) had been undertaken.

## **Sakai**

The Sister City relationship between Wellington and Sakai was established on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1994. The Wellington Sakai Association was subsequently established in 1995 with the aim of supporting Wellington City Council in developing its relationship with Sakai.

President of Wellington Sakai Association, Jimmy Barnes and I were invited to participate in the Sakai Festival Grand Parade opening ceremony. The Sakai Festival is an annual event which has been held since 1974, it is a way for residents to show pride in their city. Over 7000 participants perform in the parade, which attracts more than 400,000 people.

Jimmy Barnes and I were introduced to the crowd and were invited to open the festival with other Japanese Officials. Once the parade was open Jimmy Barnes and I were taken to a welcome lunch reception with Consuls in Kansai. Once lunch had concluded we were all taken to the Vietnamese Embassy to watch some of the Grand Parade.

The Sakai City Mayoral election had been held in September 2009, this saw the election of new Mayor Osami Takeyama. All members of the Wellington delegation attended a meeting with Mayor Takeyama, with Jimmy Barnes making the opening speech in Japanese. I addressed Mayor Takeyama and congratulated him on his recent election victory and presented him with a letter from Mayor Prendergast. Mayor Takeyama said that he was looking forward to seeing the strong relationship between Sakai and Wellington develop further in the future.



At the conclusion of the meeting with Mayor Takeyama the Wellington delegation met with the Sakai Council Chairman and Vice Chairman. The Chairman and Vice Chairman were introduced and provided the delegation with some information about Sakai City and its Council, however their focus then turned to how I had got involved and elected to Council at a young age. They

were fascinated with the idea that someone of my age could get elected, as in Japan anyone elected who is in their 50's is considered young.

That evening the Sakai Wellington Association which is the equivalent to the Wellington Sakai Association, held a welcome party for us at the Rihga Hotel. The party provided the opportunity for the Wellington Sakai Association to inform the Sakai Wellington Association of the work that they had been involved with such as the Sakai Cherry Tree Walk which was opened on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2007 at Katherine Mansfield Park as well as the Japan Festival of Wellington held in July 2009.



It was evident talking to members of the Sakai Wellington Association that they are passionate about developing the relationship between the Sister Cities further. The welcome party doubled as a celebration as it had been 15 years since the Sister Cities agreement was signed.

### **Minoh**

Minoh is part of the Osaka prefecture and has a population 120,000 people. In 1995 a Sister City relationship was established between Hutt City and Minoh. Rosemary McLennan the Chairperson of the Hutt Minoh Friendship Club and I met with former Mayor of Hutt City Glen Evans and his wife Barbara.

The Minoh Association organised a welcome function which was attended by up to 60 people. We were all asked to make a short speech and address the Mayor of Minoh during this function. The function was a great opportunity to meet with people who had an interest in New Zealand. Many members of the Association had visited Wellington and the Hutt for different reasons. I was surprised at the range of people who were part of the Association some members included university students, young parents, a fire fighter and a translator. I found the members of the Association to be very enthusiastic about looking in to other ways that the relationship could be strengthened.

A meeting with Minoh City Council Deputy Mayor and City Councillors highlighted the need to provide more frequent information about what the Hutt

Minoh Friendship Club was undertaking to promote Japanese Culture. The Councillors were surprised by the range of activities that the Hutt Minoh Friendship Club provided at Minoh House in Normandale, Lower Hutt. The Councillors appeared to leave the meeting with a better understanding of the value of the relationship between Hutt City and Minoh City.



#### **4. Discussion**

It was evident from discussions with Japanese Officials and members of the Sakai Wellington and Minoh Associations that there are a number of opportunities that we could capitalise on in the future to strengthen the relationships.

One of the areas that I believe we should focus on is promoting the Osaka prefecture as a tourism destination, as the majority of tourism promotion in New Zealand focuses on Tokyo and Hiroshima. To ensure Wellington can capitalise on tourism opportunities from Japan we need to take the lead and begin to promote the Osaka prefecture as a tourist destination.

Developing business relationships could be a great way to leverage support for New Zealand products in to Japan. The Minoh Association are keen to trial a New Zealand products corner in one of their tourist shops located near the famous Minoh Waterfall. This arrangement could be reciprocated in Wellington, as well as introducing New Zealand products and testing the Japanese market it will also raise the awareness of the link between the cities.

These ideas require a lot more work, however I believe it is important that the Hutt Minoh Friendship Trust and Club work together with the Wellington Sakai Association to develop these ideas further. The two organisations have already worked together on a number of projects however to ensure that the Sister City relationships continue to strengthen it is important for the organisations to

undertake planning work together that will map out where and how they will optimise and leverage upon these opportunities.

## 5. Conclusion

I appreciated the opportunity to be a part of the delegation that visited the cities of Sakai and Minoh in October 2009. I feel that I have a clearer understanding of the cultural differences between Japan and New Zealand and how our sister city relationships can be strengthened in the future.

I think it will be vital for Wellington with its relationship with Sakai, and Hutt City with its relationship with Minoh, to work together and develop a long term vision which will explore potential opportunities between the sister cities in the future.

The trip has given me a greater understanding of the historic reasons for the development of sister cities, as well as highlighted the need to leverage on economic opportunities in the future.

## 6. Costs

The Council estimated and approved up to \$1260. As can be seen from the breakdown below the trip came in below budget at \$1123.57.

Flights - domestic and international*:	\$493.80
Accommodation, (only Auckland)**:	\$139.00
Gifts for Mayor and 2 Home-stay families:	\$291.77
Currency for incidentals, transport and meals:	<u>\$199.00</u>
Total	\$1,123,57

\* Hutt Minoh Friendship Trust paid \$1557.40 towards airfares.

\*\* One night's accommodation was required in Auckland, whilst in Japan the Wellington delegation were hosted at home stays.

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<b>Supporting Information</b>	
<b>1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome</b>	<i>The travel supported Council's overall vision of Creative Wellington-Innovation Capital and the International Relations Strategy</i>
<b>2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact</b>	<i>The travel was funded out of the International Relations Budget (COST01 and C145)</i>
<b>3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations</b>	<i>There were no Treaty of Waitangi considerations</i>
<b>4) Decision-Making</b>	<i>This was not a significant decision in terms of the Local Government Act 2002</i>
<b>5) Consultation</b>	<i>No consultation was needed</i>
<b>6) Legal Implications</b>	<i>There were no legal implications</i>
<b>7) Consistency with existing policy</b>	<i>The trip was consistent with the Council's International Relations and travel policies</i>