

MAYORAL VISIT TO CHINA.

I wish to speak today on one particular aspect of Report 2, paras 5.4.1, namely the Travel Costs for the Mayor's proposed trip to China. Before I can decide whether this trip will be worthwhile, or just one more fiasco like the one to Copenhagen and the others, I need to know more about the ultimate costs to the Ratepayers. This is an election year, and Ratepayers will doubt another trip to the Orient will benefit us during these hard times, with undoubted Rates increases in the pipeline.

Concerning costs, I base my comments on the clear Guidelines concerning use of AirPoints set out by the Auditor General, and the State Services Commission, copies of which I have with me. Unlike even the Greater Wellington Regional Council, and the rest of the public sector, I believe the mayor has been in clear breach of these Guidelines.

I wish it to be recorded that none of my remarks are directed at any Council Officers, or to be taken as criticism of them. They have been exemplary in their cooperation. The problem has been the ongoing refusal by the mayor to account for her usage of many thousands of dollars of Council-funded AirPoints she has used/accumulated, and which had they been immediately released to Council to be used towards payment of future trips by her, could have saved the Ratepayers large sums of money, including this proposed

23/03/2010

Public Participation
Reference 042/100(A)

trip. The information will ultimately be disclosed, but until then, rumours run rife as to who has indeed been the beneficiary to date!

However, this Report 2, is a 180% turn-round from what has been the mayor's attitude as recently as last week, but raises further questions which the Officers may care to answer now, or later this week in writing. In any case, I will be referring this whole matter to the Office of the Auditor General, and to the Minister of Local Government seeking a thorough investigation.

1. The Report states (and I quote) "**subject to availability**" and "**if they are able to be used**"....."**they would reduce the mayor's air travel costs by approximately \$2,775**".

But we must be told how these figures are arrived at. The mayor has already admitted she had accumulated 5,140 AirPoints, but refuses to give further explanation, - for her use of a Council-funded asset!

2. How many Council-funded AirPoints has she received **in total since taking office**, and what has happened to them?

Before I and many other Ratepayers could even consider supporting such a trip, we need to be assured that all the mayor's accumulated Council-funded AirPoints have been used up on official Council trips.

All Council-funded AirPoints are Council/Ratepayer assets, just as cars, carpets, computers etc are, and they do not need special Regulations to make this clear. However, I believe new Rules and Procedures will apply as from July 1st.

We, the Ratepayers, are entitled to a full explanation of exactly what has been and is going on, and until we know the full costs and potential benefits of this proposed trip, it will be viewed as just another overseas jaunt for the mayor at Ratepayers' expense. No other mayor in the history of Wellington has indulged in so many overseas visits, and without any tangible

benefits to the long-suffering Ratepayers!

Would any of you spend this type of money if it was your own funds you were using?? Yeah right!!