



## Transition Town Movement Gains Traction in New Zealand

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[Energy Bulletin](#) has a pointer to this article in the [Motueka Guardian](#) on the [Transition Town movement in New Zealand](#).

### Navigating the Future by Transition Town Motueka, New Zealand

... From the oil decline projections outlined above, we see tourism contracting severely and permanently. Although right now tourism is doing okay, the unemployment crisis will soon be a world wide front page topic. We are calling a heads up reality check for all tourist-based businesses here in Motueka and throughout the region. We will see discretionary spending dry up, and a domino effect as we all tighten our belts and spend less. All retail businesses except those supplying basic necessities will be affected.

In this realistic crystal ball, we see little need for new housing tracts, as buyers will be scarce in the Depression we are facing. The whole business of loans will change also. Many baches will become year-round homes. We see more and more families living with grandparents, or even sharing housing with other families. We see no need for new industrial zones, because many businesses will fail, leaving empty commercial property available for new transition enterprises. We do not see a steady 1.3% growth rate at all, but something much more unpredictable, with Australians fleeing from drought, Europeans leaving over populated cities, and especially, suburban Kiwis spreading out from every city and relocating to rural farms. Some areas will depopulate and others get more settled.

While there is presently an exodus of young people seeking employment overseas, world wide Depression could bring back many in droves. Will Motueka contract down to the need for agriculture and horticultural workers? Or will it explode with desperate families crowding every sleep-out? Many in Transition Town movement see these and other possibilities all happening much sooner than 25 years.

All Transition Town thinkers agree that the present status quo is not sustainable.

We do not see endless growth. We see a reversal. Then we see transformation. We see people learning to produce the necessities for their families and trading surplus with their neighbours. Necessities, not luxuries. Lawns will become potato patches. Knitting will come back. We will learn to compost everything, including our own 'soil inputs'. Over time mechanized work will go back to manual work. And there will be new opportunities. All houses may be insulated and solarized. Fiber processing. Clothing. Horse power.

Cycle shops. Shoe makers.... And some industries shipped overseas will return to service New Zealand.

We see hard times ahead, but are not depressed about this, because we have had time to accept it. For some readers, these conclusions are new and difficult to read and will take some time to accept. When one really understands what this all means, it may feel like the party is over. It is. The 'cheap oil' consumption party of the last 60 years is over. Though it is unpopular to be party poopers, we, as intelligent caring people feel that now we must blow the whistle, the realistic whistle. That our crystal ball is backed by very legitimate counsel, gives us some courage in this 'against the grain' message.

Adversity is a challenge, not depressing. Changing lifestyles is difficult, not scary. We humans are smart and strong and will adapt using a combination of old time traditional skills and newer technology while we still can afford it. Necessity is the mother of invention. Young people are fearless. This is the vision of Transition Towns, and is why over 50 towns and cities in New Zealand have groups preparing for the realistic future, all signing up in the last 12 months.

So what does Transition Town Movement propose exactly? If the status quo is not sustainable, what's next?

Our main message is that globalization will contract, and localization, the return of self sufficient communities, must emerge. This transition will be very difficult, because the unemployed will need their neighbours to give them some form of occupation before the reorganization comes about, or they will be forced towards crime. We don't want that. We want a transition to a new self-reliant community, not chaos. There will be a period of haves and have nots. This is the dangerous time. Only compassion will ease this period. The gap between global retailing and healthy local production is tough because presently almost all our clothing, 60% of NZ food, and even our toilet paper comes from overseas.

How will we navigate this? Council has no mandate to aid this transition, and national government is aligned with World Trade Organization policies which have a blind disregard for local producers. Because of this vacuum of leadership to protect local communities, the grassroots Transition Town Movement, starting in UK just a couple years ago, has come forth quickly worldwide. Forward looking people know the status quo won't last, are anxious, and are now grouping up and starting to talk. We are facing a Depression! How it works is small groups of people sharing areas of interest or expertise form project goals. We are just beginning this formation.

Let's have a realistic 2009. New Zealand will harvest this year while the northern countries are beginning to face huge problems. When their summer comes in 6 months, this Depression will be in full swing and we, in our coming winter, have a period of planning to be shouldered. By next October we need to start taking care of each other in new ways. Neighbour will need to help neighbour. As soon as we can, we need to map how this transition might occur because no one but ourselves is creating a plan. As things get tense, who will be cool? We will.



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