

1. I write as a social scientist and investor with experience in international listed equity investment, New Zealand listed equity investment, venture capital and angel investment.
2. In my view, New Zealand's low population, both absolute and in terms of density, is an enormous source of competitive advantage for the nation. It is often expressed in subtle forms, but I believe has a great deal to do with our success on the world stage and multiple sport, cultural and commercial fields.
3. Consider the number of Olympic gold medal winners from New Zealand who come from small towns. I have discussed this with a number of experts in the field and concluded that quite a few of these young people probably had a great deal of personal/environmental freedom as youngsters, were at least mildly disruptive in classrooms, thought they were bullet-proof and believe that they could reach great heights. And they did.
4. Prof Paul Callaghan reflected our own family upbringing when he described his as "benign neglect". We made the most of our small town environments, made for the most part good decisions and to varying degrees of success, we were happy being big fish in small ponds.
5. Much of this gets lost in high density urban environments. Parents have become extremely risk averse and children have much reduced opportunities to express themselves in a manner that leverages the beautiful environment that is a critical part of New Zealand's competitive advantage.
6. My wife and I have been fortunate to travel internationally quite extensively. I was fortunate on one occasion to have a conversation with a doctor from Harvard University who had moved from Florida to Manhattan Island. Manhattan Island could be considered the epitome of Western urban civilisation. She said that she was horrified by the small apartments that dominated the Island, and concluded that residents had essentially succumbed to Third World living conditions. Is this the endpoint of population expansion and urbanisation? Try driving south of Seattle. It is a megalopolis that continues for a huge distance. To what end? To what level of citizen satisfaction? To what level of environmental degradation?
7. There are so many indices of environmental destruction in New Zealand that I won't even bother to quote them. Many important species of native animals and plants have either been lost or are under serious threat. Human population expansion has been a major cause of the environmental degradation.
8. I have come to the conclusion that "Dominion over the earth" is one of the most damaging principles for humanity, and that we have no alternative but to reduce it.
9. New Zealand has led the way internationally in many different respects, from climbing the highest mountain on the planet to splitting the atom to developing and commercialising all sorts of advanced technologies to introducing the 40 hour week.
10. Why should we not extend this leadership to population policy? Isn't it time to draw a line in the sand and show the world the value of a small, low density population? Why should we allow our population to simply "grow like Topsy" following the examples of other countries? We have an opportunity to consolidate and leverage our remarkable competitive advantage. It will help drive the integrity of our commercial New Zealand brand across all of our primary and other food related exports.
11. Of course, this approach may well incur the wrath of developers, conservative religions and others whose personal and commercial interests are associated with population growth. But it is my belief that it is time to stop dancing to their tune.
12. Our birth rate is low, and there is an opportunity is to structure our immigration policy to align with the above, while facilitating success of our health and education sectors and high technology and value-adding primary industries for example. This requires careful alignment

of immigration settings/criteria with industry and social, educational and health needs. In other words, quality rather than quantity should be the major determinant of immigration policy.