Office of Hon Chris Bishop

Minister of Housing
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for RMA Reform
Minister of Transport
Leader of the House
Associate Minister of Finance
Associate Minister for Sport and Recreation

CB-COR2156

Dear Regional Council Chairs and Chief Executives,

As you know, the Government is committed to unlocking economic growth and supporting the primary sector. Regional councils have a large impact on the operation of the primary sector through your administration of the planning system, particularly resource consenting.

We continue to hear reports that many resource consent processes are unduly complex, characterised by excessive information requests and conditions that impose unnecessary cost and administrative burden on applicants. These reports are concerning to us, particularly given our clear intention to replace the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and create a more simplified system.

We are writing to set clear expectations of you as the local authorities who oversee the use of land, water, and discharges. We expect you to be seeking opportunities to streamline consenting processes, reduce onerous requirements wherever possible, and ease the consenting burden while we get the system changes in place. Where appropriate, this will mean exercising discretion available to you under the RMA, which can include extending consenting timeframes and working with individual applicants to reach pragmatic solutions.

We are developing a detailed transition plan for the new planning system, and this will be provided to you shortly after the introduction of the legislation later this year. This will provide you with more certainty on how to manage consenting processes during the transition period to the new system. Until then, we expect you to exercise sensible judgement.

We have already taken steps to assist with the transition through key changes in the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Act 2025:

- we have removed the burden of extensive and costly planning from you and your communities by stopping plan changes, which allows you to prepare for the transition into the new planning system;
- we have changed the consent process requirements and clarified considerations for further information requests to ensure they are proportionate to the effects the activity may have. This is aimed at reducing long and unpredictable processing times; and

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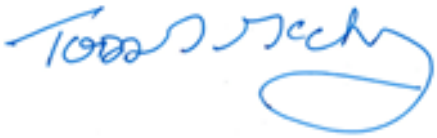
- we have also introduced a temporary regulation-making power which allows plan provisions to be modified or removed if they unjustifiably restrict development, employment, or economic capacity. This provides an opportunity to fix localised issues. We want to hear from you if you think this power could be used to assist growth and the transition to the new system in your region.

The Government regards the issues raised in this letter as important and we trust you do as well. We will continue to engage with you to support the implementation of, and alignment with, the future system.

Yours sincerely,

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister Responsible for RMA Reform



Hon Todd McClay
Minister of Agriculture

Hon Penny Simmonds
Minister for the Environment