

CE Employment

I have asked for a late item for this meeting to confirm the appointment of Kevin Ross as our Chief Executive following the appointment committee's recommendation. Kevin was employed as an Interim Chief Executive on the basis that he wasn't interested in a long term position. As the appointment process rolled on I saw the possibility of asking Kevin if he could be interested in an extension of time as a Chief Executive not as an Interim.

Kevin's appointment will be for a period up to 2 years which suits him and from our point of view gives us time to understand what the future of Local Government is in respect of things like the RMA and Three Water reforms and gives him the time and authority to make any significant changes that the organisation needs.

Kevin has brought a change to the organisation in the time he has been with us - his honesty, commitment and skill has been a revelation. I believe that relationships between staff, the community and governors have improved significantly. I know that his appointment will be received well by all. It is a pleasure to welcome him here. I know that Kevin would prefer to just quietly slip into the organisation but it is important that some time soon we welcome him more formally.

New Government

Finally Government has been formed and we know now at least who the respective ministers are. I list some of those that are of particular importance to us in the Rangitikei –

1. Chris Luxon – Prime Minister
2. Winston Peters - Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Affairs
3. David Seymour - Deputy Prime Minister (in waiting)/Regulation Minister (noting the separation from Climate Change). He may well see taking the Deputy Prime Minister role in the last 18 months to be a win meaning he would be Deputy Prime Minister leading into the next election
4. Nicola Willis – Finance
5. Simeon Brown – Transport/Local Government/Energy
6. Chris Bishop – RMA Reform/Housing & Infrastructure
7. Louise Upton – Social Development
8. Mark Mitchell – Civil Defence/Police
9. Simon Watts – Climate Change (outside of cabinet)
10. Shane Jones – Regional Development
11. Judith Collins – Defence
12. Todd McLeay – Forestry/Agriculture/Trade
13. Dr Shane Reti – Health
14. Erica Stanford – Education
15. Paul Goldsmith – Treaty of Waitangi negotiations/State Owned Enterprises
16. Andrew Bayly – Small Business/Manufacturing

Some points that are notable for us –

1. Shane Jones – Regional Development
He controls once again a fund, this time of \$1.2b and we have a number of connections and relationships with him. This is a huge plus for our industrial developments.
2. Todd McLeay – Forestry/Agriculture/Trade

Seen as a good operator. The advantage to us may well be that Andrew Hoggard, our List MP for ACT, is also his Associate Minister which may enable a Rangitikei focussed lens or at the least a portal to Todd.

3. Mark Mitchell – Civil Defence/Police
Has spent time in our district to understand our needs and we have a relationship with him.
4. It is interesting that Simon Watts (Climate Change Minister) was the previous spokesperson on Local Government and sits outside of Cabinet. Maybe this reinforces the fact that Three Waters Reform and Climate Change is not considered to be a key Government initiative.
5. I know a number of these Ministers, however there are some that I will have to make a connection with such as Simeon Brown (Transport/Local Government/Energy). Hopefully I can use my roles within LGNZ to establish this relationship because roading is critical for us.

While we have these Ministers, it is noted that we still do not have clear direction. We need to realise that the National caucus has been light on numbers. Essentially they will have spent little time on policy work. They will need to establish their own relationships with officials in particular the DIA and MBIE, so progress in my opinion will take time. There has been a lot of work done by Local Government on the Future of Local Government saying that the funding model is broken. The solution being trumpeted is that a percentage of GST should be returned to the districts that generate it. I agree – a great direction in principle, but the reality is that for at least the next 3 years the Government purse strings can't be opened. As the cheese add says "Great things take time!!".

Mayor Andy Watson
30 November 2023