



Monday 13 November 2006

MEDIA STATEMENT

400 submissions on regional strategy

370 submissions had been received on the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) just prior the conclusion of an extended six week public consultation period. It is expected this number will increase slightly as final submissions come in.

The WRS is a sustainable economic growth strategy that has been developed over the last two years by the region's local authorities in partnership with central government and the business, education, research and voluntary sectors.

Chairman of the interim WRS committee, Ian Buchanan said the number of submissions was consistent with volumes received when the public's view was sought halfway through the WRS development, when a growth framework document was released. 420 submissions were received at that stage

"The media profile at this later stage has been much higher and we might have expected submission volumes to be higher. However, the level of response is in keeping with similar exercises elsewhere in New Zealand," says Mr Buchanan.

Mr Buchanan said the impact on rates - an annual increase of between \$0.6 and \$1.7 million per year in a total rates bill (from all councils) of more than \$400 million - was probably another factor. "The amount spent on economic development, including

the increase, is still only 1 percent of rates so the sums are modest and I suspect there's a fair bit of 'just get on and do it' feeling out there," he says.

"Although the investment is modest, the economic problems facing the region are not and we need to take action. The WRS is an excellent start and will only get better as a result of the submissions," he says.

Mr Buchanan said he hoped the last few days would show a spike in submissions from the business sector, especially in relation to funding options. "We've engaged with hundreds of businesses over the last two years and I'm confident the WRS is a good reflection of that engagement. However we would like to know what the sector thinks of the four funding options we have proposed," he says.

Submissions will be consolidated and the information provided to a hearings committee. The hearings committee comprises Ian Buchanan, Sir John Anderson, Bob Francis (Mayor of Masterton), Wayne Guppy (Mayor of Upper Hutt) and Alan Milne (Mayor of Kapiti).

The committee will hear verbal submissions on 4, 5 and 6 December. This information will be combined with the written submissions and the hearings committee will make a recommendation to the full WRS committee on 19 December 2006.

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