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Clerk of the Committee
Environment Select Committee
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Submission by BusinessNZ on the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Bill

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above Bill.

BusinessNZ notes that there was very little time to comment on this Bill and hence it has not been able to fully canvass its membership's views.

Notwithstanding, BusinessNZ is generally supportive of the Bill's intent which will enable acceleration of different-sized and located infrastructure and other development projects, providing certainty of ongoing employment and investment in New Zealand during this post-COVID-19 phase.

We also note fast-track consenting processes have been introduced after previous emergencies, such as the Canterbury and Hurunui/Kaikoura earthquakes, to facilitate redevelopment and reinstate infrastructure.

BusinessNZ understands the Bill is a relatively short-term response and will self-repeal after two years from enactment. It relates to difficulties associated with the Resource Management Act (RMA) of which a wider review is being undertaken by the Resource Management Review Panel, due to report back to the Minister by the end of this month. It is understood the review report will shortly be made public in order to allow for a broader discussion of its proposals.

We would like to record that while we support the underlying concept of trying to speed up shovel-ready projects, there are aspects of the Bill with the potential to cause concern.

First, BusinessNZ would question why the opportunity was not taken to be bold and fast track many other general developments i.e. extending the fast-tracking to all development in order to maximise employment and growth opportunities throughout NZ. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that under "referred projects" any person can apply to the Minister for the Environment to fast-track their consent or designation, with the Minister ultimately having a discretion whether to fast-track the consent or require it to go through the normal RMA processes.

Second, while the current Bill allows for a number of projects to be fast-tracked it will be important that the suppliers of required goods and services are able to deliver these in a timely manner. For example, if aggregate extraction is required locally there must be no unnecessary constraints placed on their delivery in terms of consents required or specialist labour requirements, with the later likely to involve importing specialist labour services from overseas.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Bill.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirk Hope', with a horizontal line underneath.

Kirk Hope
Chief Executive
BusinessNZ