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KEP:LIS

28 May 2010

Local Government Options for Northland  
Freepost Authority Number 92166  
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Whangarei 0148

To whom it may concern

**SUBMISSION - MCKINLAY DOUGLAS REPORT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
OPTIONS FOR NORTHLAND**

The Northland Regional Council wishes to be heard in support of this submission and would prefer to attend a hearing in Whangarei.

In the absence of robust analysis to identify what the problems in Northland currently are, the Regional Council has no fixed preference on which form of local government would be best placed to resolve such issues. It is this Council's view that if any or all of the Northland territorial authorities wish to engage with the community on proposed changes to the form of local government, then the information supplied to support such engagement should be well researched, honest and provide the community with all the facts and options in order to make an informed decision.

The initiative currently being promoted by the Whangarei and Far North District Councils is not well researched. No analysis of the costs and benefits of any reorganisation of local government have been done, and yet the District Councils make unsubstantiated claims that the proposed changes will be either cost neutral or cheaper. Transition costs would be additional.

While the contractor may be independent, the report is not independent and the district councils have actively directed the outcome of the report from very early on in the process. The public have not been provided with the facts upon which to make an informed decision and information provided has often been very misleading.

The call for change is not ratepayer driven, nor has it been signalled previously in Long Term Council Community Plans.

The Regional Council strongly objects to a process which has resulted in substantial amounts of public money being spent in an attempt to create ratepayer demand to achieve a predetermined political outcome.

This Council is on public record as saying that it is not opposed to change, even if this change spells the end of this Council in its current form. Any reorganisation process should be driven by the ratepayer and focused on what is best for Northland – ideally to unite and harness the full potential of the region – not to divide it at the ratepayers' expense. If, after the appropriate financial analysis and due diligence, it can be demonstrated that Northland will be better placed to thrive and grow under a different structure of local government, then the Regional Council will support change.

The Regional Council reserves the right to table evidence and examples to substantiate the above claims at the hearing.

Yours sincerely

Mark Farnsworth  
Chairman

cc. Ken Paterson