



MIN-CB-334/26-CORM-00534

[REDACTED]
Managing Director
Vermont Street Partners

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 11 February 2026 about the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA). I appreciate that your views are based on your experience of the process, which has been running for a little over a year now.

The FTAA provides a pathway for nationally and regionally significant projects to be decided more efficiently than under the standard Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) consenting process. The new regime's one-stop-shop aspect (where multiple approvals are needed under different Acts), third-party comments by invitation only, and no ability to appeal decisions to the Environment Court, are significant features of this. I acknowledge that each project is different, and that not all experiences under the fast-track regime will be the same. However, based on expert panel decisions emerging to date, I am satisfied that the system is delivering efficiency gains in consenting major projects while ensuring appropriate environmental safeguards.

The first project approved under the Act, the Ports of Auckland wharf extension, took just 111 days from when the application was assessed as complete and in scope by officials, to approval. Without the fast-track approvals process, the same project was expected to take around five years for a decision.

Fifteen projects have been approved so far, with another seven expected to receive decisions before the end of April 2026. The fifteen approved projects include a new wharf and cruise ship terminal in Auckland, seven housing developments across the country, three mining and quarrying projects, two renewable energy projects, a roading project and a steel manufacturing plant. In addition, we have another 22 projects currently before expert panels, with their decisions expected in the coming months.

Over their lifetimes, the projects approved so far are expected to deliver nearly 9,000 new homes, produce more than 260 million tonnes of aggregate, support thousands of jobs, and contribute billions to the economy.

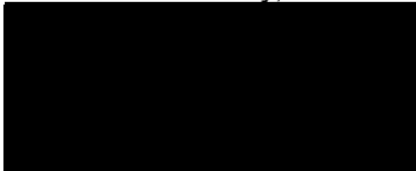
Regarding your points around information requirements, unlike the RMA, the FTAA has a distinct focus on project benefits. It is the Minister for Infrastructure who decides whether a project has significant regional or national benefits. However, part of the expert panel's role is to assess the extent of a project's specific benefits against its potential impacts, based on detailed information and evidence before them, and to ensure the best decision is made. There may be some scenarios where an expert panel finds a project's environmental impacts do outweigh its benefits, but this has not been the case in most decisions so far.

In terms of process improvements, the recently-passed Fast-track Approvals Amendment Act 2025, which responded to feedback from early applicants and other participants, introduced a suite of amendments to speed up the process. A number of changes to statutory timeframes within the referral and substantive stages will collectively reduce overall processing time by around six weeks. We have also clarified pre-lodgement engagement requirements, and the Ministry for the Environment will have a new statutory deadline to provide referral information to the Minister no later than 20 days after comments close.

Most of these changes will come into force on 31 March 2026 and will benefit applications lodged from that date onward (including substantive applications for projects already referred). Process guidance on the Fast-track website at <https://www.fasttrack.govt.nz> will be updated ahead of this date.

Thank you for your request for a meeting. My current focus is delivering the Government's wider commitment to repeal and replace the RMA by passing the Planning Bill and the Natural Environment Bill, so I am not looking to make further changes to the FTAA at this time. Unfortunately, I am unable to meet with you on this matter. However, the Ministry for the Environment is reviewing the FTAA's operation, and I have forwarded your correspondence for officials to consider in that work.

Yours sincerely,



Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure