

4. CANTERBURY REGIONAL COUNCIL: REVIEW OF MEMBERSHIP AND BASIS OF ELECTION

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Corporate Plan Output: Public Accountability	

The purpose of this report is to advise this Council of a recent decision made by the Canterbury Regional Council (now known as Environment Canterbury) regarding its membership and the basis of its election for 2001.

As with the City Council, the Regional Council is required to carry out a review of its membership and basis of election by 31 August 2000. The Regional Council has given public notice of its resolution of 6 April 2000 and the last date for objections to that notice is Monday 15 May 2000.

STATUTORY PROVISIONS GOVERNING REVIEWS OF MEMBERSHIP OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

The Local Government Act 1974 provides that every regional council shall consist of not fewer than six members nor more than 14. Each constituency of the regional council must elect at least one member and no more than four members.

The Act requires that in determining the number and boundaries of constituencies, the regional council must ensure that the number and boundaries of constituencies will provide effective representation of communities of interest within the region, that the boundaries coincide with mesh block areas and that the boundaries coincide with one or more territorial authority districts, or the boundaries of wards.

In determining the number of members to be elected by any constituency, the regional council must ensure that the electors of the constituency receive fair representation having regard to the population of every constituency within the region.

With the Regional Council having publicly notified its proposed basis of election for 2001, then any person may lodge a written objection to that proposal on or before 15 May 2000.

The Regional Council then must consider all such objections and can by resolution make such amendments as it thinks fit, or confirm its original proposal.

It must then subsequently publicly notify again its proposal and any person at that time may lodge a written appeal against the decision of the Regional Council to the Local Government Commission which would ultimately determine the matter.

DECISION MADE BY REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Regional Council considered this issue at its meeting on 6 April 2000 and resolved:

- That a Waitaki constituency, comprising one member and covering the area of the Mackenzie District, Waimate District and that part of Waitaki District in the Canterbury region, be created to apply from the date of the next triennial elections in 2001.
- That the South Canterbury constituency, comprising one member and covering the area of the Timaru District, be reconstituted to apply from the date of the next triennial elections in 2001.

The proposal is as follows:

Constituencies	District	Wards	Population	Members	Population/ Membership Ratio
North Canterbury	Kaikoura Hurunui Waimakariri		3,516 9,405 <u>32,345</u> 45,266	2	22,633:1
Christchurch North	Christchurch	Papanui Shirley Burwood	78,191	2	39,095:1
Christchurch East	Christchurch	Hagley Pegasus Ferrymead	75,346	2	37,673:1
Christchurch South	Christchurch	Spreydon Heathcote Wigram	77,018	2	38,509:1
Christchurch West	Christchurch	Waimairi Fendalton Riccarton	78,473	2	39,236:1
Selwyn-Banks Peninsula	Selwyn Banks Peninsula		24,783 <u>7,581</u> 32,364	1	32,364:1
Ashburton	Ashburton		25,177	1	25,177:1
South Canterbury	Timaru		42,631	1	42,631:1
Waitaki	Mackenzie Waimate Waitaki (pt)	Corriedale (pt) Ahuriru	4,076 7,620 <u>1,878</u> 13,574	1	13,574:1
			TOTALS	14	
				Overall Ratio	33,431:1

(Population is that which applied at the 1996 Census)

In support of this resolution the Regional Council advises:

The Council considers that the constituencies also recognise areas with common resource issues as they relate to the functions of the Council. In this way the constituencies, as far as practicable relate both to community of interest and the functions which the Council provides or carries out in each particular constituency.

In respect of the proposed Waitaki constituency, the Council noted that the present South Canterbury constituency covered a very large area of 18,000 square kilometres, and by splitting the constituency it would represent the best means of providing representation for individuals in the Waitaki Valley on the Regional Council.

The Council was of the view that the proposed Waitaki constituency had a common community of interest in the sustainable management and development of the Waitaki River water resources and that the electors of the proposed constituency would receive fairer representation having regard to population, rateable values and area.

BACKGROUND

As a consequence of appeals received as a result of the 1994 Regional Council election review, the Local Government Commission considered the issue of the number of members of a regional council and its constituencies. In 1994 the Regional Council comprised 13 members with seven being elected from within Christchurch City and six being elected from outside Christchurch City. At that time, the seven members elected by Christchurch City were elected across the city as a whole.

As a consequence of representations from a number of bodies and individuals, including this Council, the Local Government Commission concluded that there were several communities of interest within Christchurch City which would be more effectively represented if the then existing single constituency of Christchurch City were divided into four constituencies for Regional Council election purposes.

The Commission also concluded that to meet the legal requirements of the Local Government Act 1974, that the constituencies provide “*effective representation of communities of interest within the region*” that it was necessary to increase Christchurch City’s representation from seven to eight members.

The Commission also increased the membership of the Regional Council from 13 to the legal maximum of 14 and divided the former single constituency of Christchurch City into four separate constituencies.

CREATION OF SEPARATE WAITAKI CONSTITUENCY

The Regional Council’s current review has resulted in a proposal to split the present South Canterbury constituency (which currently elects two members) into a reformed South Canterbury constituency and a new Waitaki constituency, each electing one member. Therefore, the total membership of the Regional Council will remain unchanged at 14 members.

The proposal to create a separate Waitaki constituency stems from recent attempts by some residents of the Mackenzie District, Waimate District and part of Waitaki District to have the boundaries of the Regional Council’s area altered so that they could be included within the Otago region. Although the Local Government Commission declined to approve this proposal, the Regional Council’s decision to create a Waitaki constituency is a natural consequence of this recent move, and a means of recognising the distinct community of interest in the far south of the region. Because there is no increase in the total membership of the Regional Council, the creation of a separate Waitaki constituency should not in any way affect Christchurch as far as the election and administration of the Regional Council is concerned.

CONCLUSION

The current representation arrangements are considered to be reasonably equitable as far as Christchurch is concerned, in that Christchurch now has four distinct constituencies each electing two members, and with eight members elects more than 50% of the total membership of the Regional Council.

For these reasons, and in view of the review previously carried out by the Local Government Commission regarding Christchurch's membership, it is unlikely that the city would succeed in any attempt to further increase its present membership of the Regional Council.

Recommendation: That the decision of the Regional Council be received, and that the Christchurch City Council not lodge an objection to the Regional Council's proposal to create a separate Waitaki constituency for the 2001 elections.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.