**Media Statement**
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# New Zealand Should Copy Three Nordic Rules to Break Its Infrastructure Boom-and-Bust Cyle

New Zealand's infrastructure problem isn't a money problem. It's a decision-making problem. That's the conclusion of a new Infrastructure New Zealand report, which says we could dramatically improve the way we deliver infrastructure by making better long-term decisions, rather than spending more.

After studying the infrastructure systems of Sweden and Norway on a recent delegation, Infrastructure New Zealand says three changes stand out above all others: remove infrastructure from the political cycle, maintain existing assets instead of announcing new projects, and tie every major infrastructure investment to a long-term national economic strategy.

Infrastructure New Zealand Chief Executive Nick Leggett says the biggest difference between New Zealand and the Nordics isn't engineering capability or wealth.

"It's the way they make decisions. What we saw wasn't a silver bullet project or some revolutionary technology. These are two countries that have deliberately built systems that force governments to think beyond the next election and take politicians out of choosing projects."

**The first lesson is to take infrastructure out of the political cycle.**

Sweden and Norway both operate funded 12-year infrastructure plans that survive changes of government, giving industry confidence to invest and allowing projects to proceed without continual political resets.

"The Nordic planning model would transform infrastructure delivery in New Zealand. Every election creates uncertainty, increases costs and discourages investment. Greater long-term certainty would benefit everyone."

**The second lesson is to maintain what we already own before building something new.**

Norway's national investment hierarchy requires governments to maintain and improve existing infrastructure before committing to new projects.

"New Zealand has developed a habit of celebrating ribbon-cuttings while quietly allowing existing assets to deteriorate. Just look at the condition of many of our bridges. Maintaining infrastructure isn't glamorous, but it delivers some of the highest economic returns. People can't get to work and businesses can't move their goods if they're dealing with broken bridges. Looking after what we already own should be treated as a national productivity priority."

**The third lesson is to tie infrastructure to a national economic ambition.**

"The Nordic countries don't build infrastructure because it's politically popular. They build it because it's the right thing to do. People there are safer, more prosperous and more productive because they can get to where they need to be. Before New Zealand debates individual projects, we should first agree on the kind of economy we're trying to build."

Nick Leggett says New Zealand's biggest infrastructure challenge is no longer a shortage of ideas, but a lack of alignment between economic strategy, politics, planning and funding. "If we can fix that, we'll build not just better infrastructure, but a stronger economy."

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*The findings are published in The Nordic Model: Infrastructure, Innovation and Inclusion, based on Infrastructure New Zealand's recent delegation of 36 leaders from central and local government, infrastructure owners, contractors, consultants and investors, who spent a week meeting transport agencies, city leaders, economists and infrastructure experts across Stockholm and Oslo.*

**You can read the report here.**

*Infrastructure New Zealand is the nation's leading infrastructure member association. Our core purpose is to advance best practice development of world-class transport, energy, water, telecommunications, and social infrastructure for all New Zealanders. We do this through research, advocacy, and public and private sector collaboration. Our membership is comprised of over 150 organisations, including central and local government agencies, consultants, contractors, financiers, utilities, and academics – collectively employing approximately 150,000 people in infrastructure-related roles. Together, we are committed to creating a better New Zealand through outstanding infrastructure.*

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