

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Ruapehu District Council**



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### **COUNCIL UNHAPPY WITH MISLEADING POPULATION ESTIMATES**

Ruapehu District Council (RDC) says the District is in great heart and with growing opportunities and they are unhappy with the latest suggestion from Statistics New Zealand that Ruapehu's population has declined.

RDC Chief Executive, David Hammond, said that due to the Christchurch earthquake the national census scheduled for earlier this year was cancelled.

"Who knows what the population of Ruapehu is? We haven't had a Census for years. To say it has declined is mischievous. All the statistics people do is a 'desktop projection' based on old information," he said.

"The reality is that this District is booming with people – residents, tourists and holiday home owners. We are struggling with issues of growth and who should pay for the huge visitor impact."

Mr Hammond added that besides the simplistic statistical technique used by Statistics New Zealand to estimate Ruapehu's current population it also only takes into account what is called the 'usual resident population' for the District.

"The 'usual resident population' counts only those people who claim Ruapehu as their usual place of residence. But in Ruapehu's case, around 45% of all properties (and growing) are owned by people who live outside Ruapehu. Our wider Ruapehu population who own property here and visit frequently is much higher."

Mr Hammond said that a better population measure is 'peak population' which takes in account the usual resident population plus non-residential property owners, tourists, seasonal workers and any other people who are in Ruapehu on any given day.

"We're making our decisions on 'peak population'. With over a million tourists visiting annually, as well as a high holiday home population, the notion that Ruapehu is somehow declining is laughable."

Mr Hammond noted that the government was well aware of the importance of the peak population measure in this regard.

"In 2006 the Ministry of Tourism granted Council \$500,000 to undertake capital improvements to Ohakune's wastewater system to better cope with the townships large visitor number growth."

"A 'usual resident population' count would have never recognised this need."

"Taking into account the growth in non-resident home owners, and the visitor industry, along with the declining 'usual resident population', the peak population for Ruapehu is forecast to grow at an overall rate of 1.25% per annum."

Mr Hammond said that this is a significantly better indicator of growth, potential market size and return for investors and others considering opportunities in Ruapehu.

DAVID HAMMOND  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

CJH : PRW