

*Flexibility & Efficiency in a Rapidly
Changing Industry*

Hon. Paul Swain
Minister of Commerce & Network Facilities

Minister welcomes co-ordinated approach from utilities

The Minister of Communications Paul Swain has welcomed the co-ordinated approach being taken by utility companies and road owners towards resolving the issue of utility access to the road corridor.

Speaking at the NZ Utilities Conference in Wellington this morning, Mr Swain indicated the Government was willing to work in partnership with utilities, local authorities and Transit NZ on road access for utilities.

Mr Swain said he would welcome an approach from the recently formed Utilities Advisory Group, once they had resolved differences amongst themselves.

It is a question of balancing the need to roll-out sophisticated telecommunications infrastructure, of critical importance to New Zealand's economic development, while taking into account the wishes of the community. "If New Zealand is to lift itself back into the top half of the OECD again it needs to make sure it has world class infrastructure in place," he said.

The Government would like to see the stakeholders develop voluntary codes – to co ordinate utility access to the roads and minimise disruption to the public themselves, as this is a quicker and less complicated solution said Mr Swain. "But the government will not shirk its responsibility to get involved if the stakeholders consider that Government involvement is necessary."

Mr Swain committed the time of officials at the Ministry of Economic Development to work with the Utilities Advisory Group on the issue.

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