

Proactive Release

Published on or before: 09/11/2026

The following Cabinet papers and related Cabinet minutes have been proactively released by the Minister of Climate Change

Title	Reference
Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts (on behalf of Hon Simeon Brown) – September / October 2026	CAB-26-MIN-0317
Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts (on behalf of Hon Simeon Brown) – 29 September – 2 October 2026	



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts (on behalf of Hon Simeon Brown) – September / October 2026

Portfolio Climate Change

On 28 September 2026, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Simon Watts from New Zealand, from 29 September to 2 October 2026, to travel to Ulsan and Seoul, South Korea on behalf of the Minister of Energy to undertake bilateral meetings to support New Zealand's fuel response to the conflict in the Middle East;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by one member of staff;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$39,571 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party as a charge to Vote Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4 **noted** that he will also be accompanied by an official from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, whose travel costs will be met by their agency;
- 5 **agreed** that in his absence:
 - 5.1 Hon Chris Bishop act as Minister of Local Government;
 - 5.2 Hon Simeon Brown act as Minister for Auckland;
 - 5.3 Hon Nicola Grigg act as Minister of Climate Change;
 - 5.4 Hon Cameron Brewer act as Minister for Building and Construction and Minister of Revenue;
- 6 **noted** that the House is not sitting during his absence.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Climate Change

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts (on behalf of Hon Simeon Brown) – 29 September – 2 October 2026

1. I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Ulsan and Seoul, Korea from 29 September to 2 October 2026 to support New Zealand's fuel response to the conflict in the Middle East, on behalf of the Minister of Energy.
2. The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle, and House leave has been approved by the Party Whip.

Purpose of Travel

3. The conflict in Iran has disrupted global oil markets and fuel supply chains, contributing to higher prices and increased uncertainty about the reliability of international fuel supplies. In the year ending July 2026, Korea accounted for approximately 46 percent of New Zealand's refined fuel imports. Continued supply from Korea during the recent disruption has been important to New Zealand's ability to manage these pressures. Strengthening relationships with Korean refiners and government decision-makers is therefore important to supporting New Zealand's fuel security.
4. The primary objective of the Korea leg of my visit is to establish a direct ministerial-level relationship with refiners, including SK Energy and Hyundai Oilbank, and GS Caltex, recognising the important role they have played in supporting New Zealand's fuel supply during the recent crisis, and their ongoing importance to New Zealand's fuel security. I propose to meet senior leadership from the refining companies, and to visit an SK Energy refinery in Ulsan to gain a first-hand understanding of its operations and role in New Zealand's fuel supply.
5. I will also seek meetings with Korean ministers and senior representatives who have important roles in Korea's fuel response, to establish Ministerial-level relationships and emphasise the importance to New Zealand of Korea's fuel supply.

Ministerial Party

6. I will be accompanied by one staff member from my office – the seconded Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Private Secretary. Travel costs for this delegation would be a charge to Vote Internal Affairs: Members of the Executive – Travel.

7. One senior official from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) will support my travel. All costs for MBIE staff will be covered from within the Ministry's baseline budget.

Travel Costs

8. Indicative costs two people (myself and one Ministerial staffer) are:

Airfares:	\$33,146
Accommodation:	\$1,700
Gifts:	\$500
Hospitality:	\$1000
Ground transport	\$880
Per diems:	\$460
Contingency (5%):	\$1,885
Total:	\$39,571

Acting Ministers

9. If my travel is approved, I propose that the following colleagues act in my portfolios.
10. Minister Brown – Auckland
11. Minister Brewer – Building and Construction
12. Minister Grigg – Climate Change
13. Minister Bishop – Local Government
14. Minister Brewer – Revenue

Proactive release

15. I propose to release the paper proactively in part within 30 business days of decisions being confirmed by Cabinet. All redactions will be made in line with the *Official Information Act 1982*.

Recommendations

16. I recommend that Cabinet:
- 1 authorise my absence from New Zealand from 29 September to 2 October to travel to Ulsan and Seoul, South Korea to support New Zealand's fuel response to the conflict in the Middle East.
 - 2 agree that I be accompanied by one member of staff;

- 3 approve the estimated expenditure of \$39,571 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
- 4 note that I will be accompanied by an official from MBIE, whose travel costs will be met by the Ministry.
- 5 agree that in my absence:
 - 5.1.1 Hon Simeon Brown will act as Minister for Auckland.
 - 5.1.2 Hon Cameron Brewer will act as Minister for Building and Construction
 - 5.1.3 Hon Nicola Grigg will act as Minister of Climate Change
 - 5.1.4 Hon Chris Bishop will act as Minister of Local Government.
 - 5.1.5 Hon Cameron Brewer will act as Minister of Revenue
- 6 note that the House is not sitting during my absence;
- 7 note that leave from Parliament has been approved by the Party Whip.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Simon Watts

Minister of Climate Change