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WHO WILL REPLACE McCULLY?

Next week will see the beginning of the end for Foreign Minister Murray McCully. He has a speech looking back at his time as Foreign Minister lined up for the Institute of International Affairs and a discrete celebration planned for some of his colleagues and old mates. But in the best traditions of politics and the way he liked to play it, the talk in the Beehive is not of what McCully has achieved – and he has achieved a lot – but of who will replace him. [TAP TO EXPAND](#)

THE US EMBASSY IN WELLINGTON ON PHIL GOFF

An excerpt from a despatch from the US Embassy in Wellington in 2006 (courtesy of Wikileaks): “Minister Goff: Defense Minister Phil Goff is a Helen Clark loyalist and Labour Party stalwart. He makes constant references to his two nephews serving as officers in the U.S. Army pretending to completely understand the American point of view but then, when convenient for political purposes, trashes U.S. policy or decision making.”

CRUSHER GOES TO TEXAS

Energy and Resources Minister Judith “Crusher” Collins is leading a petroleum sector trade delegation to Texas and an electricity sector trade delegation to Silicon Valley next week. Ms Collins will be accompanied by a petroleum sector delegation, which includes representatives from New Zealand Oil and Gas, Todd Energy and the Petroleum Exploration & Production Association of New Zealand, to Texas.

In Texas, Ms Collins will be attending the American Association of Petroleum

Geologists' Annual Convention & Exhibition in Houston, as well as meeting with exploration and service companies to discuss investment opportunities in New Zealand. She will then lead an electricity sector delegation, which includes representatives from Mercury, Contact Energy, Vector, Power Systems Consultants and Genesis Energy, to California's Silicon Valley.

A DIGITAL BRIDGE

Communications Minister Simon Bridges has welcomed the announcement that the Tasman Global Access cable is up and running, enhancing New Zealand's telecommunications resilience and global connectivity. Running between Raglan and Sydney, the new standalone cable will provide an alternative to the trans-Tasman section of the Southern Cross Cable, which is the main international cable that currently carries the majority of internet traffic to and from New Zealand.

BUSINESS NZ HAPPY

After slightly lower growth in the last quarter, the economy appears back on track for solid growth in the 2017 March quarter, according to the BusinessNZ Planning Forecast. BusinessNZ Chief Executive Kirk Hope says mediocre weather during spring and summer had meant lower dairy production, and the November earthquakes also contributed to mixed results for the economy. But he said domestic conditions were improving.

"Tourism is going from strength to strength, and strong migration is contributing to our domestic building boom. The international economy is showing some signs of improvement, although the long-term impact of Brexit and the 'Trump effect' will bring some uncertainty. Overall, the New Zealand economy is on track for sustained solid growth."

The Economic Conditions Index tracks 33 economic indicators including GDP, export volumes, commodity prices, inflation, debt and business and consumer confidence.

The BusinessNZ Economic Conditions Index sits at 13 for the March 2017 quarter, up one on the last quarter, and up 12 on a year ago.

CHARGING AHEAD

Z Energy and ChargeNet NZ are installing three more rapid-charge electric vehicles (EV) charging stations by the end of April to help extend the country's EV charging network. The new charging stations, supplied by ChargeNet NZ, will shortly join the other six rapid-charge stations Z has already installed for public use in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The locations of the new charging stations in Warkworth, Turangi and Taupo at Z Tauhara, have been selected to help plug gaps in New Zealand's network of electric highways.

STUDENT LOAN DEFAULTERS PAY UP

Since the overseas-based borrower compliance initiative was established in 2010, borrowers have made an estimated \$361 million in additional repayments, as of December 2016, with more than \$100 million of that in the last financial year," says Tertiary Education Minister, Paul Goldsmith.

REGIONAL ECONOMIES

Twelve of the 15 regional economies in New Zealand recorded nominal GDP increases in the year ended March 2016, says Stats NZ. Provisional estimates show the largest percentage increases were in the Bay of Plenty (7.7 percent), Auckland (6.0 percent), and Otago (4.8 percent). The national increase was 4.1 percent.

"The Bay of Plenty's increase was underpinned by strong performances across the professional and administrative services, and agriculture, primarily kiwifruit," senior national accounts manager Gary Dunnet said.

Decreases were recorded in Taranaki (8.5 percent), the West Coast (2.8 percent), and Southland (1.0 percent). Despite a fall in the region's GDP, Taranaki retained the highest GDP per capita (\$71,297), followed by Wellington (\$67,888) and Auckland (\$58,717). The Northland region had the lowest GDP per capita (\$36,531). The national average was \$54,178.

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