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The Policy Address 2000

Briefing to LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

On 18 October 2000

Opening Remarks by the Secretary for Works

Mr Chairman,

In the past year, we were fully committed to deliver the initiatives and targets that we pledged in 1999 and in previous years. These initiatives cover various aspects of our policy areas on public works programme, flood prevention, slope safety and water supply.

2. I am pleased to report that in the past year, we have attained the following achievements-

- We have set up a multi-level system to closely monitor the progress of the Public Works Programme to ensure that public works projects, in particular those with high impact, are planned and implemented on schedule and within budget in a cost-effective manner.

- We have reduced the landslide risk arising from old substandard man-made slopes to less than 50% of the level which existed in 1977, and completed the upgrading of 200 government slopes affecting schools.
- We have maintained the quality of treated water in full compliance with the Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality of the World Health Organization (1993), and set up the Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies to address public demand on enhancing the transparency on water quality.

Public Works Programme

3. The Works Bureau will continue to oversee the implementation of infrastructure developments that will further improve our quality of life and living environment. Construction of major works projects, such as the Penny's Bay Reclamation; Infrastructure at Cyberport; Island Eastern Corridor Improvement and the Science Park, are now in full swing.

4. In the next five years (2000/2001 to 2004/2005), we will spend around \$130 billion on the Public Works Programme. We

anticipate that the growth of government capital works expenditure each year will be commensurate with economic growth. We anticipate that around 24 000 new jobs will have been generated by new works in the Public Works Programme throughout 2000, and that a similar number of new jobs will be created in 2001 by the implementation of public works projects.

Construction Industry Review Committee

5. The Construction Industry Review Committee, which was appointed by the Chief Executive in April this year to comprehensively review the existing operation of the local construction industry, has made good progress with its deliberations. In carrying out its task, the Committee has consulted widely and has taken into account views put forward by key stakeholders in the industry, including major clients, professional bodies, trade associations, construction training institutes and academia. It has also made reference to best practices overseas in drawing up recommended measures to uplift the performance of the local construction industry. The Committee is expected to complete its review by the end of this year.

Flood Prevention

6. On flood prevention, we are actively implementing a series of major flood control projects in the New Territories and in West Kowloon, costing about \$12 billion. In addition, planning for further drainage improvement projects, valued at \$5 billion, in the various flood prone areas in the territory is also underway.

7. Upon completion of the on-going major drainage improvements in 2002, the flooding situation in New Territories will be significantly improved. In addition, when Stage III works of the Shenzhen River Regulation Project are completed in 2005, both sides of the trained Shenzhen River will be safeguarded to the required flood protection level.

8. In West Kowloon, upgrading of critical sections of the local drainage system has already commenced, and is in good progress. The current flooding problem in Mong Kok has been contained, and will be effectively resolved upon the completion of the Tai Hang Tung Playground Flood Storage Scheme and Kai Tak Transfer Scheme in 2004.

9. Before completion of the major storm-water drainage systems for the whole territory, we will continue to carry out short-term measures to protect the community from flooding.

Slope Safety

10. We are committed to achieving the highest standards in slope safety and will exercise constant vigilance on maintaining slopes, especially those adjacent to residential developments. We will ensure that all sizeable government slopes are properly maintained.

11. We have launched a 10-year extended Landslip Preventive Measures Programme in April this year. Under the extended Programme, 250 substandard government slopes will be upgraded each year. We will complete the necessary improvement works for 220 slopes affecting public housing estates in September 2001. Inspection and necessary maintenance works on all sizeable government man-made slopes (about 37 000) will be completed in March 2002. On the aesthetics of slopes, every government slope upgraded under the Landslip Preventive Measures Programme in 2001 and thereafter will be landscaped. We will also improve the appearance of existing slopes as part of the maintenance work.

12. As part of our efforts to assist private owners to maintain their slopes, we will revise the existing loan scheme on building safety improvement in 2001 to provide financial assistance to owners with financial difficulties for their slope works.

Water Supply

13. We are committed to ensuring a high quality of water supply to our consumers. We will continue to supply treated water that is safe for consumption and in full compliance with the World Health Organization standards.

14. We will continue to maintain close liaison with the Guangdong authorities for the supply of raw water of good quality. The Guangdong authorities have reaffirmed their efforts and commitments to strengthen the environmental protection measures and engineering projects to improve the quality of Dongjiang water. Upon the completion of the bio-nitrification plant in Shenzhen Reservoir, the quality of Dongjiang water has shown marked improvement. The construction of the Dongshen closed aqueduct project commenced on 28 August this year, and when it is completed in 2003, the quality of raw water from Dongjiang will be further improved. We will negotiate with the Guangdong authorities for more flexible supply of Dongjiang water to reduce overflow from our reservoirs.

15. To further enhance transparency on water quality, we have set up the Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies in April this year. With a wide representation from the community, the Committee advises the Administration, and enhances the communication with the public, on matter relating to the quality of water

supplies. We will also publish and update water quality data annually to enable the public to know more about the quality of Dongjiang water and the treated water.

Closing Remarks

16. Mr Chairman, the Directors and I will be pleased to answer Honourable Members' questions.

Works Bureau

17 October 2000