

**Presentation by Secretary for Planning and Lands
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on Tuesday, 26 March 2002**

Mr Chairman,

I have responsibility for formulating and coordinating policies for programmes in the Buildings, Lands and Planning policy area. The delivery of services and enforcement of legislation under this policy area are undertaken by nine departments and they are : Agriculture, Fisheries & Conservation Department, Buildings Department, Civil Engineering Department, Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, Lands Department, Marine Department, Planning Department, Territory Development Department and Land Registry. I have with me this morning Ms S H Cheung, my deputy, who is responsible for buildings and urban renewal policies and the Controlling Officers of four departments. They are Mr C M Leung of Buildings Department, Mr R D Pope of Lands Department, Mr Bosco Fung of Planning Department and Mr H K Wong of Territory Development Department.

2. Our work in the coming year will focus on four priority areas –
 - (i) undertaking long-term strategic planning for Hong Kong;
 - (ii) ensuring an adequate supply of land;
 - (iii) enhancing the safety and promoting the timely maintenance of our buildings; and
 - (iv) implementing the urban renewal programme.

3. **On the planning front**, we are making good progress in the “Hong Kong 2030 : Planning Vision and Strategy” Study. The study, which aims to set out a long-term strategy for land use, transport, infrastructural and environmental development as well as the enhancement of synergy with the Pearl River Delta, will serve as our blueprint for the future. The Planning Department has just completed the Stage Two public consultation of the Study. In the next stage of the Study, we shall focus our efforts on the formulation of development scenarios and development options. Our target is to complete the Study by the end of this year.

4. Members may recall that we introduced the Town Planning Bill into the Council in 2000, but we were not able to complete consideration of the Bill after nine meetings of the Bills Committee. Whilst it was commonly agreed that we should seek to streamline the planning process, views on the more controversial proposals remained very diverse. We therefore intend to

table the easier issues first, and will put forward an Amendment Bill on issues that have already received general consensus. These proposals are related to streamlining planning approval procedures, expediting the plan-making process and enhancing user-friendliness of the overall planning system. We intend to put the Amendment Bill forward for examination around the end of this year. For the remaining proposals, we need to involve the stakeholders again in finding common grounds and in identifying innovative solutions. Thereafter, we shall deal with them in separate amendment bills for this Council's scrutiny.

5. We launched an open competition in April last year to invite conceptual proposals from all over the world for the development of the West Kowloon Reclamation into an integrated arts, cultural and entertainment district. The results of the competition were announced in February this year.

6. The next step is to produce a detailed masterplan for the area, based on the winning conceptual proposals. We hope to see at least the first of the new facilities built by 2008. When the new district is fully developed, we will have a world class cluster of facilities that will contain vibrant arts and cultural developments and a glittering landmark which will do Hong Kong proud.

7. Looking at **Land Administration**, we will continue with our objective of maintaining stability in the property market by ensuring an adequate supply of land to meet the long term needs of the community.

8. In the coming financial year, we will maintain our existing approach of making land available through land auctions, tenders and the Application List system which is market driven. Our Land Sale Programme has been well accepted by the community. The flexibility of the Application List system allows the market to decide on the amount and timing of land required to meet the demand. These arrangements have helped maintain stability in the property market.

9. Since April last year, we have adopted a comprehensive strategy to promote **building safety and timely maintenance**. We have made considerable progress in enforcement against unauthorized building works. The original target of clearing unauthorized building works in 1 000 buildings in 2002 is now increased to 1 500 buildings.

10. To enhance support for building owners, we have merged two loan funds into one building safety improvement loan scheme with simplified application procedures. The take up rate since the merger has been encouraging.

11. Separately, to further rationalize our building control regime and bring about more effective enforcement, we are preparing amendments to the Buildings Ordinance. The opportunity will also be taken to modernize our building design and construction code. At the same time, we are preparing draft legislation for a registration scheme for advertisement signboards. Our current plan is to introduce the draft legislation in the next legislative session.

12. The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) was set up last May to take forward a 20-year **urban renewal** programme. Our objective is to improve the living conditions of residents in old urban areas and to comprehensively rejuvenate these areas. To kick-start the urban renewal programme, the URA announced three “early launch” projects in January this year. Subsequently, in February, the URA submitted its first draft five-year corporate plan and annual business plan to the Financial Secretary. During the past two months, we have discussed with and sought clarification from the URA on a number of points set out in the drafts. Currently relevant colleagues of the Government Secretariat are carefully examining the revised drafts submitted by the URA in mid-March. Once the two drafts are approved, we will follow up regarding the Government’s financial support for the URA, and will seek the Finance Committee’s approval of the necessary funding.

13. My colleagues and I will be happy to answer any questions that Members may have.