

**2001 Policy Address**

**Briefing to LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works**

**on 2 November 2001**

**Opening Remarks by the Secretary for Works**

Mr Chairman,

In the past year, we were fully committed to delivering the initiatives and targets that we pledged in 2000 Policy Objectives. These initiatives and targets cover our policy areas in respect of the Public Works Programme, flood prevention, slope safety and water supply.

2. In the following paragraphs, I shall highlight some of our major achievements in the past year as well as key initiatives to be taken in the year ahead in the pursuit of our Policy Objectives.

**Public Works Programme**

3. Works Bureau will continue to oversee the implementation of infrastructure developments that will further improve our living environment and quality of life.

4. Despite the economic downturn, we have not cut back the investment on infrastructure. To the contrary, we continue to maintain a robust investment and this year, we have added 170 **new** projects in our Capital Works Programme, with a total **additional** investment of more than \$90 billion, thus increasing the total investment in the Programme to some \$400 billion. The newly added projects, which include the School Improvement Programme Final Phase and the 64 accelerated projects of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, will create a total of some 15,000 job opportunities.

5. For the year 2001/2002, we expect to spend about \$26 billion on capital works projects. In the coming two years, we are planning to inject an additional \$2 billion each year into minor works, generating an additional 5,000 jobs.

6. Apart from increasing our investment in capital works, we have carried out a review of the procedures governing the delivery of works projects under the Public Works Programme. We are introducing a number of measures to expedite the delivery process. They include simplifying the current procedure for approval of preliminary project feasibility studies, carrying out the various statutory and administration pre-construction procedures in parallel, etc. With the introduction of these measures, the lead time for a typical civil engineering project could be shortened from 6 years to less than 4 years.

### **Construction Industry Review Committee**

7. In January 2001, the Construction Industry Review Committee (CIRC) completed a review on the existing operations of the local construction industry and submitted a report recommending some 109 improvement measures. Works Bureau has been appointed as the lead agency within Government to co-ordinate on construction-related issues and the implementation of the CIRC recommendations.

8. At the end of September 2001, we set up a Provisional Construction Industry Co-ordination Board (Provisional CICB) with the Honourable Henry Tang as its Chairman. The Provisional CICB will advise Government on the formation of the future statutory industry co-ordinating body and serve as the main channel for Government to seek the industry's feedback on policy matters relating to local construction.

## **Flood Prevention**

9. To tackle the flooding problem, we have been actively implementing a series of major flood control projects, costing over \$7 billion for the New Territories and about \$4 billion for West Kowloon.

10. Upon completion of a series of major drainage improvements in the New Territories in 2003, the flooding situation there will be greatly improved.

11. In West Kowloon, construction of the Tai Hang Tung Playground Flood Storage Scheme and the Kai Tak Transfer Scheme started in early 2001 for completion in 2004. These two schemes will offer a fundamental solution to the flooding problem in Mong Kok.

12. Before the completion of these long-term drainage improvement projects, we will continue to implement local drainage improvements and preventive maintenance measures to help alleviate the flooding problem.

## **Slope Safety**

13. We strive to achieve a further reduction in landslide risks in Hong Kong by using every practical means. We will also make our slopes greener and better landscaped.

14. We have achieved good progress in the implementation of the 10-year extended Landslip Preventive Measures (LPM) Programme with some 250 substandard government slopes upgraded and over 300 private slopes safety-screened last year. We have completed the safety improvement works for some 200 slopes affecting public housing estates. Efforts have also been made in landscaping all the 250 slopes upgraded under the LPM Programme.

15. To assist private slope owners with financial difficulties to carry out their slope works, a "Comprehensive Building Safety Improvement Loan Scheme" was launched in July 2001.

## **Water Supply**

16. We are committed to ensuring a high quality of water supply to the community. We have maintained full compliance with the Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality of the World Health Organization (1993) for water supplied to customers at connection points.

17. To ensure an adequate supply of high quality Dongjiang water, we will liaise closely with the Guangdong Authorities for the smooth implementation of the current Dongjiang water supply agreement. The Guangdong Authorities have reaffirmed their utmost effort and commitment to improve the quality of Dongjiang water. In particular, good progress has been achieved in the construction of the Dongshen closed aqueduct project. When it is completed in August 2003, the problem of pollution along the existing open channel will be totally eliminated.

18. We will continue to enhance transparency in water quality monitoring and our communications with the public on water quality issues through continuing close co-operation with the Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies.

## **Closing Remarks**

19. Mr Chairman, this brings an end to my brief introduction. The Works Directors and I will be pleased to answer any questions Honourable Members may have.

Works Bureau

26 October 2001