

表演藝術委員會
COMMITTEE ON PERFORMING ARTS

WKCD-525

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The Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Chairman,
Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development

Dear *Alan*,

The Committee on Performing Arts was established in 2004 to advise the Government on promotion and development of performing arts and performing arts facilities in Hong Kong, and on ways to encourage community-driven, cross-sector partnerships in arts education, cultural exchanges and other issues pertaining to the promotion of performing arts. The membership of the Committee comprises a wide spectrum of people in the arts and culture sector, as well as young and emerging artists, educators, business people, and members active in district and community service.

We have followed developments in the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) with great interest. Indeed, several Members of my Committee are also members of the previous Consultative Committee on Core Arts and Cultural Facilities for WKCD. We welcome the Government's recent announcement of the decision to adopt the recommendations of the Consultative Committee on the WKCD project, and to introduce legislation for the establishment of the WKCD Authority in February. While the Committee is much encouraged by supportive responses in the community regarding the proposals, we should like to write to express our views on how to realize the WKCD vision, and more specifically, on funding for the project.

The WKCD project is an important strategic investment in culture and the arts for the future of Hong Kong. In a modern knowledge-based economy in the 21st century, investment in culture and the arts is as important as investment in education, and in science and technology. It brings forth a host of tangible and intangible values and benefits, which cannot and should not be evaluated solely on the basis of economic and financial returns. WKCD project carries a clear vision of making Hong Kong into a cultural and creative metropolis, a counterpart to its acknowledged business and financial excellence.

The proposal to make a one-off capital endowment for the project represents a firm and clear commitment on the part of the Hong Kong Government and indeed the community in the long-term development of culture and the arts in Hong Kong. We sincerely hope that the Legislative Council would support this commitment, such that the WKCD project would have the much-needed funding stability and certainty, and flexibility required for its long-term development. Competition among venues for popular programmes and prominent artists is extremely keen all year round. It is the norm for the internationally-acclaimed artists and major performing arts companies to plan their tours 2-3 years ahead, and any commitment in contract, if it is to be made, is expected to have the full back-up of a secured venue. So, unlike other public facilities, the planning and design of any new arts and cultural facility has to be undertaken concurrently with that of the major programmes, management and operation. It is crucial that funding security and certainty be assured well in advance of the construction work.

The Committee on Performing Arts urges the Legislative Council to support wholeheartedly the proposal of granting a one-off upfront capital endowment of around \$21 billion for the WKCD project. A one-off funding approval is essential to ensure funding stability and certainty for the long-term development of culture and the arts, rather than subjecting it to the economic fluctuations and changing political and social conditions.

We understand that there has been considerable debate on the composition of the Board of Directors of the WKCD Authority, as well as the need for adequate safeguards to ensure proper use of public funding. But this should not undermine the importance of funding assurance and stability for the WKCD project. To ensure the success of WKCD, a vital and healthy development of the arts and culture sector in Hong Kong, we would urge that the WKCD Authority puts in place measures to facilitate adequate community participation in the building and operation of the proposed new venues, and explores as widely and innovatively new modes

of governance for its various arts and cultural facilities.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr Darwin Chen)
Chairman, Committee on Performing Arts