

(Translation)

Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Policy on Industrial Buildings

**Motion passed under agenda item II at the meeting on 6 June 2020
on "Receiving public views on policy issues related to industrial buildings"**

This Subcommittee requests the Government to conduct a study on relaxing non-industrial uses in industrial buildings and permitting the operation of trades that are subject to the regulation by the Government or statutory bodies or specific trades, operating on a membership basis with monthly subscription fees. The relevant companies or organizations will have to conduct emergency evacuation drills for their members on a regular basis.

Moved by: Hon SHIU Ka-chun

The Administration's response to the motion is as follows:

With a view to making better use of valuable land resources, and addressing more effectively the issues of fire safety and non-compliant uses, Government is encouraging private owners to pursue wholesale conversion or redevelopment of existing industrial buildings (IBs) to provide floor area to meet Hong Kong's changing social and economic needs.

We note that it may not be easy for some IB owners to secure consensus for pursuing redevelopment or wholesale conversion in the short term due to the multiple ownership concerning different units within an IB. Hence, to address the demand of the arts and cultural sectors, creative industries, and innovation and technology sectors for safe, lawful and affordable space in IBs, Government has relaxed the waiver application policy to permit five specified uses in individual units within existing IBs for a period of five years from 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2024, so long as the public safety is not compromised.

Industrial activities carry a much higher risk of fire and other accidents than commercial and other activities. In addition, industrial activities often involve loading and unloading, or storage and use, of dangerous goods. If non-industrial activities in IBs attract members of the public not being aware of potential risks therein and the route to evacuate in emergency, they are exposed to severe threats in case of fire or other dangerous situations. It is unacceptable from the fire safety point of view for uses involving direct provision of services or goods, such as exhibition space, education centres and performance venues, to take place in

IBs.

Government will continue to monitor the implementation of the aforesaid waiver application policy and review its effectiveness towards the end of the five-year period. As for any idea of extending the scope of this policy to cover more non-industrial uses, if a proposed use can fully address the public safety consideration, we are willing to keep an open mind in examining the feasibility of the proposal.

We understand that the subject motion is aimed at limiting the flow of people taking part in certain non-industrial activities to those familiar with the means of escape within an IB concerned, and confining the exception to certain organisations of more reliable governance. Government will examine the feasibility of this proposal from the risk management angle according to the prevailing circumstances. In particular, we would need to consider pertinent questions, including whether there is any effective mechanism in place to monitor the conduct of fire drills, whether the so-called "members" may be effectively distinguishable from the any member of the general public, and the feasibility of and difficulties in taking any enforcement action.