

COI into the Diaphragm Wall and Platform Slab Construction Works at the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link Project conducts preliminary hearing today

The following is issued on behalf of the Commission of Inquiry into the Diaphragm Wall and Platform Slab Construction Works at the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link Project:

The Commission of Inquiry into the Diaphragm Wall and Platform Slab Construction Works at the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link Project conducted a preliminary hearing today (September 24) at the hearing room on 1/F of the former Tsuen Wan Law Courts Building, 70 Tai Ho Road, Tsuen Wan, New Territories, Hong Kong.

As revealed in the opening address by Counsel for the Commission, the Commission has issued letters requesting witness statements and other documentation from a number of involved parties. The Commission has also served "Salmon letters" (that is letters giving advance notice to entities that might be the subject of criticism) on the parties listed below.

1. Transport and Housing Bureau;
2. Highways Department;
3. Development Bureau;
4. Buildings Department;
5. MTR Corporation Limited;
6. Leighton Contractors (Asia) Limited;
7. Intrafor Hong Kong Limited;
8. Fang Sheung Construction Company; and
9. China Technology Corporation Limited.

These parties have been asked to consider participating in, and having separate legal representation at, the substantive hearing.

The above-mentioned parties have provided witness statements and documents to the Commission. More are expected to be provided as the Inquiry progresses. So far, the Commission has received witness statements from more than 40 individuals. Unless notified otherwise, all these individuals will be required to give evidence at the substantive hearing.

Counsel for the Commission has stated that the Commission has instructed two expert witnesses, namely, Professor Don McQuillan (Director of RPS

Consulting Engineers) and Mr Steve Rowsell (Director of Rowsell Wright Ltd) to assist the Commission in the Inquiry. They are expected to provide expert opinion on structural safety and integrity issues as well as project management issues. Professor McQuillan is a Vice President of the Institution of Structural Engineers and Mr Rowsell is a Past President of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation of the United Kingdom.

The Commission has also dealt with other procedural matters at the preliminary hearing, including default language of the hearing, access to documents and use of materials provided by the Commission, written witness statements and responsive statements, participation and legal representation of the parties, seating arrangements in the hearing room and hearing procedure.

The Commission will conduct the hearings in English, and will provide simultaneous interpretation services when appropriate. Unless otherwise directed, all hearings will be open to the public. No photography or audio/video recording is allowed at the hearing venue.

The Commission will commence the substantive hearing of the Inquiry on October 22 at the above-mentioned hearing room. The substantive hearing shall, subject to any adjournments that the Commission may consider necessary from time to time, continue until November 16 and shall resume from November 26 until December 21 (on a provisional basis). Unless otherwise directed by the Commission, the substantive hearing will be held from 10am to 1pm and from 2.30pm to 5pm on weekdays. The Commission may consider holding the substantive hearing on Saturday mornings during the said periods if necessary.