

LCQ13: Development of Northern Metropolis

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Lo Wai-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

Regarding the development of the Northern Metropolis, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will set up a task force to be led by senior government management to remove red tape for handling matters relating to land resumption in the New Territories, and to formulate timetables and performance indicators for the relevant work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that the building of the Northern Metropolis involves massive expenditure, whether the Government has examined different financing options as well as their merits and demerits; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that the building of the Northern Metropolis involves the "Twin Cities, Three Circles" strategic development layout of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen boundary area, whether the Government will expeditiously discuss with the Shenzhen Municipal Government and the relevant Mainland authorities the various cross-boundary co-operation arrangements; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Chief Executive released the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy (the Development Strategy) in the Policy Address in October 2021, which proposed a number of land development, railway and conservation projects in the Northern Metropolis in response to the needs of Hong Kong's medium to long term land requirements and sustainable development. The Government is actively following up on the relevant proposals.

In response to the three parts of the question, having consulted the relevant bureaux, the reply is as follows:

(1) The Government is driving at high level the work to streamline and remove obstacles in the development process. Apart from streamlining and rationalising administrative processes, the Development Bureau is working closely with relevant bureaux and departments to give priority to reviewing development approval process under various legislations (such as the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131), the Lands Resumption Ordinance (Cap. 124) and

the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance (Cap. 370)), with a view to streamlining or shortening statutory procedures of town planning applications, gazettal of road works, land resumption, etc. We have briefed the Panel on Development of the Legislative Council (LegCo) on the initial idea of the legislative proposals in March this year (Note). These proposals, if approved and implemented, will be able to expedite various government development projects in the pipeline, including the development of the Northern Metropolis.

Concerning the proposal of setting up a high-level dedicated government institution in taking forward the development of the Northern Metropolis, the Chief Executive has indicated earlier that this matter involved government's organisation set up and should be considered by the next-term Government.

(2) The Development Strategy is a conceptual strategic plan. There are a number of land development projects in the Northern Metropolis and some of them have already been commenced. These projects will be implemented according to schedule and in phases with full regard to the consideration of financial viability and sustainability. We keep an open mind on the options of financial arrangements for future projects. In fact, the Financial Secretary announced in the 2022-23 Budget to set aside \$100 billion from the cumulative return of the Future Fund to set up a dedicated fund to ensure sufficient capitals to support the development needs under the Development Strategy and to expedite the projects in the Northern Metropolis. With the implementation of the land development projects in the Northern Metropolis, we can also generate income from private development projects within the districts.

(3) The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has exchanged views with the relevant authorities in Shenzhen following the release of the Development Strategy. We will continue to keep close communication with the relevant Mainland authorities in taking forward the proposals under the Development Strategy. For instance, the Planning Department holds regular meetings with the Planning and Natural Resources Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality to exchange views on planning matters of common interest. Furthermore, the Governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen have embarked on the studies on cross-boundary railway projects, with a view to improving connectivity between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

Note: Please refer to the paper submitted to the LegCo's Panel on Development (www.legco.gov.hk/yr2022/english/panels/dev/papers/dev20220322cb1-78-2-e.pdf) for details.