

LCQ20: Facilitating construction professionals to practise in Greater Bay Area

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (December 4):

Question:

On the sixth of last month, the Central Government announced, after a meeting of the Leading Group for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, 16 policy measures benefiting members of the public and facilitating the development of Hong Kong's professional sectors in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. These include Measure 1: further extending the scope of mutual recognition of qualifications for construction professionals, and Measure 2: expanding the scope of application of the liberalisation policy for the construction professionals from Hong Kong and Macao to practise in the Mainland. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of Measure 1, including (i) the construction and related engineering professions to be covered, (ii) whether such professions include any profession that has never been allowed to have mutual recognition of qualifications with the Mainland, and (iii) whether the work on mutual recognition of qualifications will be carried out in a constant and regular manner;

(2) given that the scope of application of the current liberalisation policy, formulated for the practice of Hong Kong professionals who have acquired, through mutual recognition or examinations, the Mainland's professional qualifications in areas such as construction and related engineering in Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian, will be extended to the entire Mainland according to Measure 2, of the details of such liberalisation policy;

(3) when the two Measures are expected to come into effect, and whether the Government will consult the trade and professional bodies on the relevant implementation details; and

(4) whether the Government will, when discussing with the Mainland authorities other policies and measures relating to the practice of Hong Kong's construction professionals in the Mainland, enhance its communication with the trade and professional bodies and invite them to participate in the relevant discussion?

Reply:

President,

The Development Bureau has always been actively promoting exchanges and co-operation in the aspects of technical expertise and management between the construction and engineering related industries of the Mainland and Hong Kong. In order to facilitate the development of related enterprises of both places and to help local companies to grasp the opportunities arising from the rapid economic growth and continual market liberalisation in the Mainland, we have been maintaining close communication and collaboration with relevant Mainland authorities over the years to promote mutual recognition of professional qualifications and implement a number of preferential policies and liberalisation measures. We have also signed co-operation agreements with the three pilot free trade zones (FTZs) in the Guangdong Province including Qianhai of Shenzhen, Hengqin of Zhuhai and Nansha of Guangzhou with a view to creating more business opportunities for Hong Kong enterprises and professionals of the construction and engineering sectors. Moreover, with the launch of the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, we have been actively discussing with relevant Mainland authorities to explore suitable measures that could help Hong Kong's construction and engineering sectors to develop business in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area). We believe Hong Kong professionals could serve as an important momentum to assist in forging the Greater Bay Area into a world-class bay area.

In response to the four parts of the Hon Tony Tse's enquiry, our reply is as follows:

(1) The measure related to mutual recognition of qualifications for construction professionals mainly cover four professions for which mutual recognition agreements have been signed, including architects, structural engineers, planners and building surveyors. The new measure will allow these professionals to complete continuing professional development courses in Hong Kong so as to extend their registered professional qualifications in the Mainland. Moreover, the new measure will cover work to promote the extension of the scope of mutual recognition for architects, structural engineers and building surveyors, from practising qualifications to membership qualifications of the relevant professional institutions.

As for mutual recognition of qualifications for other new professional disciplines, we are keeping regular communication with the related Mainland authorities through the platform of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) and will assist the relevant professional institutions of both places to initiate discussions at an appropriate time.

(2) At present, Hong Kong professionals who have obtained construction and engineering related professional qualifications in the Mainland through either mutual recognition or examination can enjoy benefits from the following preferential measures in Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian:

(i) Hong Kong professionals, who have obtained Mainland's class 1 registered

architect qualification through mutual recognition, are allowed to register and practise in the above provinces regardless of whether they are registered practitioners in Hong Kong. They are recognised as registered practitioners for the purpose of declaration of engineering design enterprise qualifications in the above provinces in accordance with the relevant Mainland regulations;

(ii) Hong Kong professionals, who have obtained Mainland's registered architect qualification through examination, are allowed to register and practise in the above provinces regardless of whether they are registered practitioners in Hong Kong. They are recognised as registered practitioners for the purpose of declaration of engineering design enterprise qualifications in the above provinces in accordance with the relevant Mainland regulations;

(iii) Hong Kong professionals, who have obtained Mainland's supervision engineer qualification, are allowed to register and practise in the above provinces regardless of whether they are registered practitioners in Hong Kong. They are recognised as registered practitioners for the purpose of declaration of supervision enterprise qualifications in the above provinces in accordance with the relevant Mainland regulations;

(iv) Hong Kong professionals, who have obtained Mainland's class 1 registered structural engineer qualification through mutual recognition, are allowed to register and practise in the above provinces regardless of whether they are registered practitioners in Hong Kong. They are recognised as registered practitioners for the purpose of declaration of engineering design enterprise qualifications in the above provinces in accordance with the relevant Mainland regulations;

(v) Hong Kong professionals, who have obtained Mainland's registered urban planner qualification, are allowed to register in the above provinces regardless of whether they are registered in Hong Kong or not; and

(vi) Hong Kong professionals, who have obtained Mainland's registered structural engineer, registered civil engineer (harbour and waterway), registered public facility engineer, registered chemical engineer or registered electrical engineer qualification through examination, are allowed to register and practise in the above provinces regardless of whether they are registered practitioners in Hong Kong. They are recognised as registered practitioners for the purpose of declaration of engineering design enterprise qualifications in the above provinces in accordance with the relevant Mainland regulations.

Through the new measure, the areas of application of the above preferential measures will be extended to all provinces of the Mainland.

(3) The new measures mentioned in (1) and (2) are those additional preferential measures opened to Hong Kong through the Agreement Concerning Amendment to the CEPA Agreement on Trade in Services in 2019, which will take effect from June 1, 2020. The Agreement also include another new measure

which allows professionals who have obtained the qualification of General Practice Surveyors in Hong Kong to directly register, practise and provide property valuation services in Qianhai of Shenzhen, Hengqin of Zhuhai and Nansha of Guangzhou. We are now planning to meet with relevant professional bodies and construction associations early next year to brief them on the contents of the new measures.

(4) The Development Bureau has been keeping close contact with professional bodies in the construction sector and consults them on different measures from time to time. Take 2019 as an example, we have met with the professional institutions and construction associations to discuss about proposed measures that could help the industry develop in the Greater Bay Area and the FTZs. In conjunction with the industry, we have also organised various events to foster our connection with the Mainland, such as the 2018 Mainland and Hong Kong Construction Forum held in Guiyang in July 2018, the "Nanhai of Foshan & Hong Kong – Innovation Forum-cum-Business Matching Meeting on Construction Engineering and Management Services in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao High-end Services Demonstration Zone" held in Foshan in August 2019 and the study mission held in Nansha in September 2019. We will continue to keep close communication with the industry and help local enterprises and professionals to provide services in the Mainland as well as enhance their business opportunities.