

Transcript of remarks by SDEV

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, at a media session after attending a radio programme today (February 26):

Reporter: Secretary, could you explain why didn't the Government give back the ETV building to RTHK if the EDB (Education Bureau) no longer needs it? Secondly, could you explain how did you set the subsidy proportion for the old buildings to repair their drainage pipes?

Secretary for Development: On the first question, the Education Bureau has confirmed with us that they no longer need to use the building. ETV has ceased operation. If you look at the planning of the site, it is zoned as R(C) – Residential (Group C). It is our usual practice that when a piece of land reverts to the Government, in this case, the Lands Department, they will dispose of the land in accordance with the long term planning of the site. This is exactly what we are doing in this situation.

Your second question pertains to the level of subsidy. We will be going to the Legislative Council's Panel on Development to explain details (of the subsidy scheme) in late March. In terms of its framework, it will closely follow the framework for Operation Building Bright 2.0 (OBB 2.0). It will consist of two parts. One part will be subsidies for buildings with owners who can organise repair works by themselves in a joint effort. The other part will be for buildings with owners who cannot organise themselves to do the renovation works necessary. These works will be done for them by the Buildings Department. The subsidy under the proposed scheme will be available to cover part of the expenses for the works. What we are thinking now is we will cover up to 80 per cent of the costs involved. The reason is that, if we use public money to fully cover the costs involved, there might be risk of moral hazard, because owners might believe that even if they do not maintain the upkeep of the building, every time repair works will be covered by money from the public purse. We don't think it's a wise move. So owners will have to shoulder part of the costs, and at the moment, we are thinking about 20 per cent will be the right approach.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)