Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
香港總商會1861

香港總商會
香港金鐘道統一中心廿二樓
Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
22/F United Centre,
95 Queensway, Hong Kong
Tel (852) 2529 9229
Fax (852) 2527 9843
Email chamber@chamber.org.hk
www.chamber.org.hk

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27 February 2025

Ms Bernadette Linn, JP
Secretary for Development
Development Bureau
18/F, West Wing, Central Government Offices
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Linn,

Re: Development Bureau's Proposed Amendments to Buildings Ordinance

The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to respond to the captioned consultation.

We are generally supportive of the proposed amendments to the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) ("CP"), which is a timely and significant step towards addressing societal concerns for the need to strengthen building safety and building works safety, as the last amendments were made in 2012[1]. The Chamber has all along advocated for sustainable and innovative solutions to address the longstanding issues of building neglect, where building owners take proactive actions to maintain building upkeep, and the Government provides adequate support and balanced enforcement intervention.

We also wish to highlight our general views on the following matters as raised in the CP:

1) Scope and Degree of Government Intervention:

1.1. We note that incidents involving dilapidated old buildings, unauthorized building works (UBWs), and a series of safety incidents at construction sites have raised pressing concerns about the quality of and regulatory system for building works. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a balanced enforcement approach that is both adequate and pragmatic to facilitate industry compliance, considering the present economic challenges faced by Hong Kong, is recommended.

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[1] CP para 1.1

2) Supporting Measures for Enhancing Building Works Safety:

2.1. As relates to point 1.1 above, Government intervention should also be accompanied with clear guidance and sufficient supporting resources to avoid imposing undue burdens on the industry (including building professionals and contractors who deliver relevant building inspection and repair services). We advocate for the development of practical implementation guidelines, building safety awareness programs, and training resources which are essential to helping industry compliance. Universities and tertiary institutions should be encouraged to include subjects on building handling safety as part of their professional training curricula. Additionally, on-the-job training, as well as talks and seminars supported by the Buildings Department, should be made available to practicing professionals to ensure they are well-equipped to adhere to the new regulations.

2.2. The introduction of such measures will not only enhance building safety but also foster a culture of continuous improvement within the industry. Such measures would also be crucial to upholding the high-quality standards and reputation of the construction, as well as real estate and infrastructure sectors, and preserve Hong Kong's positive image and competitiveness as an international city, which is crucial to the attraction and retaining of relevant talents. These measures, we believe, would be more effective in achieving compliance than increasing the level of penalties[2]. The latter step should, in the interests of proportionality, be avoided, in the absence of any evidence that doing so would increase compliance.

The Chamber looks forward to working continuously with the Government to support the ongoing development of Hong Kong's built environment.

We hope you will find our comments useful.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Yeung
CEO

[2] CP para 1.4 (b)