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- Ir Thomas HO

We are now poised to embrace emerging opportunities and revive this vital element of Hong Kong's ambitious post-pandemic recovery aspirations. As the Chairman of the Construction Industry Council (CIC), when we celebrated the CIC's 15th anniversary in this extraordinary year, I remain extremely proud to witness how our internationally renowned industry has navigated these intensely difficult waters and worked diligently to advance technological innovation and development, sustainability, and the holistic development and well-being of our workforce. As Hong Kong's economy embarks on its journey to full recovery with the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, we are primed to enter a dynamic Golden Era of Construction, underpinned by the Government's investment in infrastructure and high-quality projects. Based on current forecasts, the industry is expected to reach HK\$300 billion annually over the next decade. With annual expenditures at an all-time high, the CIC has been spearheading new techniques to enhance productivity, efficiency, quality, sustainability and safety. In the first year of my chairmanship, my team and I engaged with the construction community to listen to, learn from, and speak with industry practitioners and their families – who represent the very foundation of Hong Kong's construction industry – building the best homes for our people and erecting the most advanced structures for our commerce. Nevertheless, attracting a new generation of workers remains a top priority.

Sharpening Our Strengths and Accelerating Growth through Innovation

The CIC is committed to transforming our construction industry's competitive strengths through digitalisation. Our focus is on increasing productivity and reducing costs by adopting technologies that make the building process faster, safer and higher in quality. To this end, we have introduced efficient and advanced construction technologies, such as Modular Integrated Construction (MiC), Multi-trade Integrated Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing (MiMEP), and Building Information Modelling (BIM), which are all part of Mi-Infinity. The smart, high-efficiency MiC approach overcomes traditional construction challenges, such as long completion times, high costs, and labour shortages. By taking construction offsite and completing labour-intensive and time-consuming processes on a factory floor and transporting completed components

to the site for assembly, MiC accelerates the construction process and significantly improves overall productivity, quality, and safety.

We are determined to galvanise the industry to embrace these new technologies and build an energetic and supportive culture around Mi-Infinity. As part of our career development path, we have also developed a series of master classes to educate the next generation of workers on the most efficient and safe construction techniques based on Mi-Infinity. These master classes cover a variety of advanced technologies and solutions, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), MiC, Common Data Environment (CDE), BIM, Design for Safety (DfS), and Temporary Works. Through our CDE webinar series, practitioners learn digital solution strategies for managing and storing shared information for any given project or asset. The master classes encourage project consultants to perform early-stage MiMEP design and for MEP Contractors to design and construct MiMEP modules to enhance productivity.

Last August, the CIC also launched the first Master Class on MiC Project Implementation. This year we are promoting our signature course Master Class on AI for Construction to equip industry practitioners with first-hand experience on modern techniques and facilitate the adoption of AI solutions for wider application. We believe that a well-educated workforce will result in the widespread use of these innovative technologies throughout Hong Kong in order to provide an ideal long-term solution for the industry's sustainable development.



Upholding Worker Safety is Our Pillar of Success

A critical responsibility of the CIC, and one that we take with utmost determination, is ensuring worker safety. While protecting our workers has always been a top priority for the CIC, we continuously strive to improve. Last year, we embarked on a multi-pronged strategy to reduce the number of accidents and injuries on construction sites by promoting design for safety, integrating safety management into temporary works, enforcing stakeholders' safety roles and responsibilities, and incorporating innovative technologies for a Smart Site Safety System (SSSS). Specifically, we aim to standardise and improve construction work by promoting the industry-wide adoption of the "Design for Safety" program, which greatly reduces the risks for workers, subcontractors and the public before construction work begins, thus minimising accidents. The programme is based on the concept that "safety starts from planning and design" and that by addressing potential risks proactively, they can be eliminated. The program also establishes the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in a project, from consultants to workers, to ensure everyone is accountable for safety. Additionally, the CIC has been advocating the use of SSSS that utilises various technologies, such as dynamic safety monitoring and project management software, motion sensors, CCTVs, computer vision and AI-powered cameras in the construction process to closely monitor construction sites, alert workers to potential dangers, hazards, or unsafe practices, and identify safety trends and areas for improvement.

In November, the CIC and Development Bureau (DevB) co-organised the Construction Safety Summit 2022, with over 100 industry representatives and experts participating in person and 10,000 members of the industry participating via live broadcast to discuss various construction safety issues. Participating industry representatives were from government departments, developer associations, professional organisations, chambers of commerce, trade unions and related statutory organisations. During the summit, over 40 industry organisations signed the "Safety Charter", pledging to foster a site safety culture and promote the spirit of caring for all; to prioritise construction safety; promote best practices for site safety; proactively use technology to enhance safety performance, and provide safety training to all stakeholders to ensure a safe working environment.

We understand that delivering our message on the paramount importance of safety with impact requires a personal touch. As such, we regularly conducted Safety Walks to promote new construction technologies and safety measures at over 50 sites to educate staff and workers in 2022. Moreover, we commemorate those who lost their lives in the industry by organising an annual industry-wide Silent Tribute, which serves as a reminder of the importance of building a strong safety culture.



Attracting Young Talents for Sustainable Growth

As we prepare for an increase in construction projects over the next decade, we recognise the importance of acquiring highly skilled and motivated workers to ensure success. To attract and cultivate the next generation of fresh, energetic talent, we launched the "Design for the Future, Build for Life" campaign, which promotes the local construction industry. Through this programme, we showcased the construction industry's role in building Hong Kong's future while also highlighting the brilliant prospects of the industry and the future it is creating for Hong Kong's younger generation.

We also established the CIC Youth Affairs Committee to spearhead youth development policy and ensure that we remain attractive as an industry to new generations of people and develop a skilled, motivated and dynamic workforce to take on the challenges of the future. We also invited young professionals to participate in the "Hong Kong Youth Development Blueprint Seminar", engaging them in consultations regarding the industry's development.

As Hong Kong accelerates its exploration and development in the Greater Bay Area, a wide variety of opportunities are emerging for the Hong Kong's construction sector in nurturing talents and broadening their career development in this upcoming world-class region. In 2022, we launched "Course on National Affairs for Construction Young Persons", in which mainland experts, government officials and renowned industry leaders shared with Hong Kong's young middle-level construction management to enhance their understanding of the development in Mainland and the opportunities this brings to Hong Kong and the industry.

Embark on the Enormous Success in 2022 for the Next Golden Era

I can think of nothing better to bring 2022 to an end than the enormously successful Construction Innovation Expo 2022 (CIExpo) jointly hosted in December by the CIC, the DevB, the Centre of Science and Technology Industrial Development of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People's Republic of China. Over 170 exhibitors from 15 countries and regions and 11,000 visitors participated in the five-day, world-class CIExpo, which showcased the latest construction technologies and Hong Kong's leadership in digitalisation and smart construction practices. The triennial event not only gathered industry professionals from around the world to share the latest breakthrough techniques and topics, such as MiC, construction digitalisation, construction safety and health, and green construction, and exchange ideas on how innovation and advanced technology improve safety, efficiency and sustainability, it also marked the beginning of a return to normalcy after COVID-19.

Looking to the future, we entered 2023 with a tremendous feeling of hope, strengthened spirit and a profound determination to revive our beloved construction industry after the ravages of the pandemic. From this year forward, it is estimated that Hong Kong's overall construction volume will increase to over HK\$300 billion a year with capital works expenditure from the HKSAR Government exceeding HK\$100 billion a year. As the Chairman of the CIC, I will spare no effort in seizing the promising future by fully embracing the opportunities ahead and leading the industry in meeting people's needs and aspirations for a better quality of life, creating a community that enhances people's well-being and environmental sustainability and transforming Hong Kong into a modern smart city. As in the past, technological innovation, workforce safety and well-being, sustainability, and talent development will continue to be our pillars of success and drivers of growth. With the trust and support of the DevB and the Hong Kong construction industry, I look forward to another fulfilling, productive year as we work together to create an industry focusing on safety, productivity and sustainability.

Ir HO On-shing, Thomas

Chairman, Construction Industry Council
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