

**Discussion Note for**  
**The HKIE-EF Joint Forum on 2014 Policy Address and 2014-15 Budget**

“The HKIE-EF Joint Forum on the 2014 Policy Address and 2014-15 Budget” jointly chaired by the President of the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) and the First Vice-chairperson of the Engineering Forum (EF) held at the HKIE on 7.3.2014. The Forum began with an introductory presentation by the HKIE President on four recent HKIE submissions, namely (1) “Views from the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers to the Chief Executive for Formulating 2014 Policy Address” submitted on 31.12.2013, (2) “Views from the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers on the 2014 Policy Address” submitted on 4.2.2014, (3) “Views from the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers for the Formulation of the 2014-15 Budget” submitted on 13.2.2014, and (4) “Views on 2014-15 Budget” submitted on 5.3.2014, followed by a discussion on selected topics, including manpower development, sustainable development in infrastructures, innovation and enhancing competitiveness of Hong Kong, environmental protection, and land/housing supply and urban development planning. A summary of the participants’ views are listed below.

**Manpower Development**

2. A member expressed that, in addition to the current working permit arrangement for university graduates who are mainly professionals, similar policy should be extended to vocational education/ training for skilled labour and supervisory staff. Various forms of subsidies would enhance occupational incentives and assist in attracting, developing and retaining talents. The Government should promote the positive image of technicians who, when trained to possess non-replaceable proficiency in their area of expertise, should be as respectable as any other professionals.

3. There were views that accelerating skilled labour import could ease the worsening occupational segregation in the construction industry, particularly for the ten major infrastructure projects as the Government’s spending on them will peak in the coming years.

**Sustainable Development in Infrastructures**

4. Participants were of the view that the large difference in Government expenditure in 2004 and 2014 should not be overstressed as a stand-alone issue.

The amount of spending should be correlated with economic growth, job opportunities and the number of infrastructure projects in progress.

### **Innovation and Enhancing Competitiveness of Hong Kong**

5. It was in general agreed that sole competition on cost is unhealthy. Competitiveness should come from technology enhancement. To achieve this, the Government should take lead to promote research and development and encourage commercialisation of innovative products, with tax relief being one of the most direct means. For example, with existing facilities in the Science Park, it might be worthwhile to develop Hong Kong into an international primary and secondary calibration centre.

6. The Government's assistance to small business is inseparable from encouraging creativity and innovation. A member recognised that the Government could further explore areas for streamlining, such as having fast-tracked approach in selected statutory procedures, so as to allow more flexibility to pioneers of innovation.

### **Environmental Protection**

7. Members support on the timely development of integrated waste management facilities was undeniable. The importance and urgency of advocating a series of measures including recycling, treatment, reduction and education were reiterated. It was agreed that professional engineers should re-stress the technical aspects, such as proven solutions, incineration as potential source of energy, successful overseas experience in turning these facilities into a landmark, etc.

### **Land/Housing Supply and Urban Development Planning**

8. General consensus was obtained among members regarding producing land reserve for longer term of foreseeable development (i.e. 20 years). With sufficient statistics and justified needs by preliminary planning, it was advisable to embark on land creation which could take form of reclamations/ cavern development/ urban renewal/ relaxation in plot ratios/ etc. Given the pressed need of land/ housing, this would allow parallel processing of detailed planning and land creation.