

Government-led assistance and loan schemes relating to building safety and rehabilitation

Operation Building Bright 2.0 (OBB 2.0)

OBB 2.0 was launched in mid-2018 at a budget of \$3 billion to provide assistance to owner-occupiers of eligible buildings that aged 50 or above for carrying out the prescribed inspection and repair works under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (MBIS). First round of applications closed in October 2018 was generally warmly received by the target buildings. The Government therefore plans to double the financial commitment of OBB2.0 to \$6 billion by injecting an additional funding of \$3 billion. It is expected that the number of buildings to benefit will increase from around 2 500 to around 5 000. Having regard to public opinions, the Government also plans to relax the eligibility criteria of buildings in the second round of applications scheduled in the third quarter of this year by accepting eligible buildings that aged between 40 to 49 to apply, on the condition that they have outstanding MBIS notice(s) for the common parts of the buildings not yet complied with.

Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme (FSWS)

FSWS aims to subsidise owners of target composite buildings (TCBs) in complying with the requirements on enhancing the fire safety standards of common areas of the buildings concerned pursuant to the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572). The first round of application ended in October 2018. The response from the public was positive, welcoming the scheme. The Government plans to inject an additional funding of \$3.5 billion, increasing the total amount of funding for the scheme to \$5.5 billion. The Government's latest estimate is that the whole FSWS could benefit around 6 000 to 6 500 TCBs in total.

Lift Modernisation Subsidy Scheme

The Government has partnered with the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) to launch a \$2.5 billion LIMSS to facilitate lift modernisation through provision of financial subsidy to eligible owners of domestic or composite buildings, thereby assisting them to enhance the safety of their aged lifts. The application exercise is implemented in two rounds. In the first round application, which was closed on August 1, 2019, a total of around 1 200 applications involving about 5 000 lifts were received and about 1 400 lifts were selected for granting subsidy. In view of the encouraging responses of the first round application, the Government planned to inject additional funding of about \$2 billion with a view to subsidising modernisation works from the original 5 000 aged lifts to 8 000 aged lifts. The second round application commenced on January 6, 2020 for closing on 30 June 2020, and the related results will be announced in around the fourth quarter of 2020.

In addition, the URA plans to engage non-governmental organisations to provide outreach social services to the needy residents, such as those requiring assistance due to difficulties in mobility, in order to minimise inconvenience caused to them by the lift modernisation works.

Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Elderly Owners (BMGSEO)

The original scheme was launched by the Government in partnership with the Hong Kong Housing Society in 2008 at a commitment of \$1 billion. The scheme provides subsidies to elderly owner-occupiers aged 60 or above who satisfy the prescribed means test to undertake specified building repair and maintenance works. The Government plans to inject an additional \$2 billion into the scheme with a view to benefitting around 25 000 owners in need. Besides, the Government also plans to implement the following enhancement measures:

- (a) expand the scope of beneficiaries to include owner-occupiers who are Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients and those who are Disability Allowance recipients (subject to income and asset tests);

- (b) raise the asset limit for elderly applicants, from the current two times to three times that of the asset limit of the Normal Old Age Living Allowance; and
- (c) increase the subsidy cap, from \$40,000 to \$80,000 per case.

The scheme will be rechristened as “Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Needy Owners”; the URA in partnership with the Government will take over the new scheme. It is estimated that more owner-occupiers in need will benefit with its launch in the third quarter of 2020.