

Chairman's Message

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The theme of the Annual Report for 2012/13 is “Public Housing – Growing from Strength to Strength”.

The nature of the work and responsibilities of the Housing Authority (HA) have grown and become more complex with each year that passes. Not only have we constantly had to adjust to Government policies and the expectations of the community, we have also regularly found ourselves facing new challenges and unexpected events. These experiences have prompted us to approach our work in a highly focused and flexible manner, while always being ready to embrace new technologies and sustainability initiatives.

Our mission is to meet the needs of the population by providing quality public housing in the form of both Public Rental Housing (PRH) and subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) units. Our original target involves a production of approximately 15 000 new PRH flats a year, along with about 17 000 HOS units over the four years starting from 2016/17. This is a considerable task given the complexities involved in acquiring land and gaining support and approval from District Councils, the Town Planning Board and Government regulators. Beyond these preliminaries, we also must carry out detailed design and planning work for each site, according to stringent regulations and guidelines. I am pleased to report that in 2012/13 we were able to maintain the average waiting time for general PRH applicants within the target, which is below three years.

We are fully aware of the demand from the community for an increase in the supply of public housing. As announced by the Chief Executive in his 2013 Policy Address, the coming 10-year Public Housing Programme has been extended to address the housing needs of those on low incomes. For the first five years, from 2012/13 to 2016/17, we have been able to increase our PRH production target from around 75 000 flats to around 79 000 flats by advancing the completion of two PRH projects. For the second five years, from 2017/18 to 2021/22, land has been secured to produce at least 100 000 flats. Despite these advances, I must say frankly that this is not enough. We will continue to work with other departments and bodies to increase our production.

The urgent need for public housing means that we must look closely at ways to streamline and fast-track the development process wherever possible. So far, we have been able to refine our processes so that certain projects that once took seven years can now be completed in five, without compromising quality or safety. We will continue to further streamline the flat production process as far as possible, while of course maintaining the quality and safety of our construction work at the highest standards.

Apart from expediting the development of new PRH programmes, we are also exploring ways of increasing the plot ratio of existing PRH projects without compromising their living environments. In 2012, we announced plans to redevelop the older portion of Pak Tin Estate in Sham Shui Po; once the project is completed, we anticipate a net gain of 2 150 flats. In the future, the HA will continue to critically review the redevelopment potential of aged PRH estates for the purpose of increasing the overall housing supply.

In late 2011, the Government announced the resumption of the HOS, and asked the HA to take over responsibility for constructing the new HOS blocks and handling the application and sales processes. “Growing from Strength to Strength” is particularly relevant here, as taking on HOS responsibilities has required the HA to step up several notches in terms of efficiency, resource planning and manpower management. Thanks to the professionalism and commitment of HA staff, we expect the first batch of 2 100 new HOS units to be completed in 2016/17, and pre-sales to take place by the end of 2014. Work is also progressing well on the remaining 15 000 units to be completed by 2017, and further sites are currently being identified with the aim of producing an average of around 5 000 HOS units each year thereafter.

The emphasis so far has inevitably been on construction, but we have not overlooked community expectations for enhancements to the existing living environment. The HA has continued to work hard in this aspect. For example, we have implemented new initiatives to enhance the levels of service we

provide in existing PRH estates. Our barrier-free initiatives have continued, whereby we are opening up access to every part of our PRH estates, some of which are built on steep hillsides and prove challenging to the elderly and those who are not fully able-bodied. Through our \$250 million campaign to add new lifts and escalators, modernise old ones, install new pedestrian walkways and handrails, and remove obstacles to mobility, we are working to make our PRH estates user-friendly for people of all ages and abilities.

The HA does far more than just construct and manage housing. We build communities, which involves providing all the services and amenities they require to function well. A major example of this, and an achievement highlighted in this report, was the official opening in December 2012 of the HA’s newest and biggest retail shopping mall, Domain. Built as a community hub in Yau Tong, Domain not only provides an excellent array of retail facilities for the many local PRH residents and others living in the vicinity, it also incorporates valuable community facilities and offers special arrangements to encourage local small businesses. To top it all, Domain has been built to exceptional standards of sustainability and environmental friendliness; it is indeed a showcase of the strengths of today’s HA.

In fact, “Growing from Strength to Strength” applies equally to the steady progress we have been making over an entire generation and more. Let me mention two very significant anniversaries in this context: the 60th anniversary of the launch of Hong Kong’s public housing programme, and the establishment of the HA 40 years ago. We see this as an ideal time to

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take stock and appropriately recognise the progress made over more than half a century of innovation and development in public housing. To do this, we have arranged an array of activities in 2013/14 that will bring many opportunities for the Hong Kong public to better understand our functions and gain a clearer sense of the sheer scale and commitment involved. My hope is that our public education and engagement activities over the coming year will bring home the scope and the value of the work we do to every resident of Hong Kong. The Government will formulate a Long Term Housing Strategy, bringing new tasks and new challenges to us. We are fully ready for these.

As Chairman, I have been privileged to work with a group of remarkably dedicated people over the past year. There is not enough space here to thank each one individually, but I would like to record my sincere thanks to the HA members who have helped us grow from strength to strength on so many fronts. I especially wish to thank those members recently retired for their valuable efforts. They include Ms Lam Chui-lin, the Hon Kenneth Leung Kai-cheong, the Hon Chan Kin-por, and Mr Peter Lee Kai-kwong. At the same time we have welcomed a number of new members who will bring in new vitality. They are Ms Serena Lau Sze-wan, Mr Wan Man-yee, Dr Stephen Ching Tang-foon, Prof Kuang Jun-shang, and Ms So Ching.

Much of the success at the HA is achieved by groups of dedicated individuals sitting on HA Committees and Sub-committees, and thanks are due in particular to the able Chairpersons of these bodies. They are Prof Bernard Vincent Lim Wan-fung, Chairman of the Building Committee; Mr Michael Choi Ngai-min, Chairman of the Commercial Properties Committee; Prof Raymond So Wai-man, Chairman of the Finance

Committee and Funds Management Sub-committee; Mr Stanley Wong Yuen-fai, Chairman of the Subsidised Housing Committee; Ms Angela Lee Wai-yin, Chairman of the Tender Committee; and Mr Winfield Wong Wing-cheung, Chairman of the Audit Sub-committee.

Finally, I must also thank the management and staff of the HA's executive arm, the Housing Department. In a year where much public attention has been focused on the work of the HA, they have demonstrated impeccable service standards in implementing our work plans. As we enter this significant milestone year, I am sure the commitment shown by the HA as a whole will continue to reassure the Hong Kong public that the mission passed to us 40 years ago remains in safe hands.



Professor Anthony Cheung Bing-leung
Chairman