

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (September 21):

Reporter: Good morning. So when will we see a full and two-way border reopening with China? Are we expecting it will be after the Winter Olympics next year? Second, on top of the housing problem, is there any measure in the coming Policy Address to cool down the property market like the property tax or stamp duty? Thank you.

Chief Executive: I can answer the second question right away that I will not disclose any content in the 2021 Policy Address. You have to wait until October 6 to see whether the content contains any of the things that will interest you.

As far as the first question, this is a very serious matter because I think this is the first priority of Hong Kong people, whether they are doing business, whether they are ordinary people, they need to cross the border on a frequent basis to do their business or to visit relatives. How we could achieve quarantine-free travel by Hong Kong people into the Mainland of China is also my top priority. That's why last Saturday during my meeting with the Vice Premier Han Zheng in Shenzhen, I have also, on behalf of Hong Kong people, appealed to Vice Premier Han Zheng that we are very earnest about a meeting between the two sides, with government officials and health experts and so on, so as to iron out a scheme or the set of conditions that will allow Hong Kong people to travel into the Mainland without quarantine. The reason why you mentioned two-way is because at the moment there is one-way, that is south-bound, that we have already commenced for about a week on September 15, the Come2HK Scheme, and every day on average about 400 non-Hong Kong residents are coming into Hong Kong without being subject to 14-day quarantine under this Come2HK Scheme. The remaining question is for Hong Kong people to travel into the Mainland without being subject to quarantine requirement, and I hope we will shortly have this meeting that I have been talking about. I cannot speculate what will come out of the meeting, but the mere fact that Vice Premier Han Zheng has attached his personal attention to the matter, and we have received request for more information in order to prepare for that meeting, are, in my view, very good signs that we should be able to take the matter forward. Up till now I have heard nothing that this matter has to be linked to the Beijing Winter Olympics, which will only take place early next year. I think they are separate matters.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)