

LCQ16: Vetting and approval of applications for construction or redevelopment of small houses

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

Quite a number of villagers have relayed to me that the time taken for vetting and approval of their applications for construction or redevelopment of small houses, which they submitted to the Government in accordance with the New Territories Small House Policy, is rather long, taking seven to 10 years in general and in some cases even 20-odd years. As the construction costs have risen incessantly during the period when the applications are awaiting vetting and approval, the financial burden on those villagers has become increasingly heavy. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of applications for (i) construction and (ii) redevelopment of small houses which were (a) received, (b) approved, (c) being processed and (d) rejected by various District Lands Offices of the Lands Department in each of the past five years (set out in tables of the same format as the table below);

District Lands Office: _____

Year	(a)		(b)		(c)		(d)	
	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)
2014								
2015								
2016								
2017								
2018								

(2) of the respective average, shortest and longest time taken to vet and approve those applications which were approved in each of the past five years; if such figures are not available, of the reasons for that, and whether it will consider compiling such statistics; and

(3) whether the Government conducted in the past five years any study on streamlining the relevant vetting and approval procedure with a view to shortening the vetting and approval time needed; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Small House Policy (the Policy) has been implemented since 1972. Under the Policy, in general, a male indigenous villager aged 18 years old or above who is descended through the male line from a resident of a recognised village in the New Territories in 1898 may apply to the authority once during his lifetime for permission to build for himself a small house on a suitable site within his own village.

My reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) A breakdown in the number of applications for building and for rebuilding small houses received, approved, rejected and being processed respectively by the New Territories District Lands Offices and the Rebuilding Team of the Lands Department (LandsD) in the past five years is set out at the Annex.

(2) The LandsD does not keep statistics of the time taken to process each application for building and rebuilding small houses.

As the complexity of each application varies, the processing time will depend on the nature and complexity of issues involved. For example, some cases may be met with local objections, land title or boundary problems, or there may be requirements imposed under other regulatory frameworks which will need to be satisfied first.

(3) There are established communication channels between the LandsD and Heung Yee Kuk to discuss matters concerning land administration in rural areas regularly, which includes examination of streamlining the procedures for vetting and approval of small house applications. For example, LandsD has earlier agreed to the arrangement that, starting from January 2019, applicants may be exempted from submission of survey reports if their rebuilding applications have no land boundary problems. This arrangement can speed up processing.

The LandsD will continue to engage in dialogue with Heung Yee Kuk through the existing communication channels.

LCQ17: Management of water resources

Following is a question by the Hon Dennis Kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

At present, around 70 to 80 per cent of Hong Kong's fresh water supply comes from Dongjiang while the remainder comes from local catchments. In reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on June 27 last year, the Government said that the first stage of Tseung Kwan O (TKO) Desalination Plant under construction was expected to be completed by 2022. The fresh water production capacity of the desalination plant will be 135 000 cubic metres per day (equivalent to around 5 per cent of the fresh water consumption of Hong Kong) and can ultimately be increased to 270 000 cubic metres per day. However, the Government indicated that it had no plan to set a target percentage of the fresh water production capacity of desalination plants at 30 per cent of Hong Kong's water consumption. Regarding the management of water resources, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views that pollution of water sources that may be caused and the additional demand for fresh water generated by the rapid development of the Mainland economy and climate change may lead to an unstable Dongjiang water supply, but seawater desalination as a sustainable source of water supply will not be affected by such problems, of the reasons why the Government has no plan to set a target percentage of the fresh water production capacity of desalination plants at 30% of Hong Kong's water consumption;

(2) apart from TKO Desalination Plant, whether the Government has studied the implementation of other seawater desalination projects; if so, of the outcome (including fresh water production capacity); if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as the Government indicated last year that it would supply in phases reclaimed water for toilet flushing in the northeast New Territories, and that it planned to launch a public consultation and commence the legislative amendment work on the supply of reclaimed water, of the progress of such work; whether it has studied the supply of reclaimed water to other districts; if so, of the outcome (including the timetable); if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as the Government is taking forward the Inter-reservoirs Transfer Scheme, under which a tunnel connecting the Kowloon Byewash Reservoir and the Lower Shing Mun Reservoir is to be built to reduce overflow from the Kowloon Group of Reservoirs and increase water resources, of the progress of the Scheme; and

(5) of the number of government buildings currently installed with a grey water reuse system or rainwater harvesting system, and set out by building name the volume of grey water used and rainwater harvested last year; if such statistics are unavailable, of the reasons for that; whether it has plans to install such systems in all government buildings; if so, of the details (including the timetable); if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To cope with the impact of climate change, increase of water demand

brought about by population and economic growth, and keen demand for water resources due to development of the Pearl River Delta region, etc., the Water Supplies Department (WSD) promulgated the Total Water Management Strategy (the Strategy) in 2008 to ensure a sustainable and reliable water supply in Hong Kong. The Strategy puts an emphasis on containing the growth of water demand through promoting water conservation and exploiting new water resources. On water conservation, we have installed flow controllers and water saving devices for public housing, government buildings and schools; promulgated "Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme"; implemented education programmes such as "Cherish Water Campus" and "Cherish Water Ambassador"; launched measures to reduce water leakage, which include establishing the "Water Intelligent Network" (WIN) in government water mains, as well as promoting and assisting leakage detection and maintenance of private water mains; extended the use of seawater for flushing, etc. On exploiting new water resources, apart from rainwater from local catchments, imported water from Dongjiang and seawater for toilet flushing, the WSD is striving to explore water sources which are not susceptible to climate change, including desalinated seawater and recycled water (including reclaimed water, recycled grey water and harvested rainwater) for non-potable use.

The reply to the Hon Kwok's question is as follows:

(1) In the future, water sources in Hong Kong would be more diversified. Apart from the three existing water sources, namely rainwater from local catchments, imported water from Dongjiang and seawater for toilet flushing, desalinated seawater and recycled water would be introduced to allow more flexibility, as well as to ensure security in Hong Kong's water supply. At present, the energy consumption and cost of drinking water produced by desalination are still relatively high. It is mainly used to cope with the impact of climate change on water resources. In the future, the proportion of water sources would vary according to a host of factors, including water demand (subject to effectiveness of various water conservation measures, and population and economic growth), local rainfall (can be affected by annual rainfall fluctuations and climate change), cost-effectiveness, as well as technological development of the various water sources, their reliability, impacts to the environment, etc. We will review proportions of the different water sources from time to time according to the latest circumstances.

(2) We do not have any study to implement other desalination projects at this stage. When planning for water supply in individual development areas, we will investigate whether desalination would be more suitable than other water sources. The water supply arrangements in individual development areas would be affected by various factors, including the distance between the development areas and the coast, as well as the existing water supply network and facilities. The arrangements would also be affected by the capacities of the corresponding water supply networks and facilities, etc.

(3) As the Shek Wu Hui Sewage Treatment Works will be upgraded into an Effluent Polishing Plant by adopting tertiary treatment, we plan to further process the tertiary treated effluent to become reclaimed water. We plan to supply, in phases from 2022 onwards, reclaimed water for non-potable use,

such as flushing, to users in the northeast New Territories who are currently being supplied with temporary mains water for flushing. We will first supply reclaimed water to Sheung Shui and Fanling and extend the supply to Kwu Tung North and Fanling North New Development Areas in accordance with their development programmes.

We are currently implementing the associated infrastructure works for the supply of reclaimed water in Sheung Shui and Fanling, including the construction of a service reservoir and the laying of trunk water mains and local distribution mains. In addition, we are designing the remaining works, including the water reclamation facilities, a pumping system and the remaining local distribution mains in Sheung Shui and Fanling.

Following the completion of the public consultation on the proposals for the supply of recycled water (including reclaimed water) in December 2018, we are now preparing works for the relevant legislative amendments. While we are still analysing in detail the public opinions collected during the consultation, the preliminary results indicate that the public are generally supportive of the proposal to supply recycled water by the WSD. With a view to further reducing the use of fresh water, we will continue to review the extension of supply of reclaimed water to other new development areas and areas still being supplied with temporary mains water for flushing, wherever it is technically feasible and cost-effective to do so.

(4) The Drainage Services Department has commenced the works contract for the "Inter-reservoirs Transfer Scheme" in February 2019, with the anticipated completion in the fourth quarter of 2022.

(5) In line with the Government's policy on green buildings, works departments would as far as practicable, install on-site rainwater harvesting or grey water recycling systems in government buildings in public works projects. By the end of 2018, new buildings of about 90 government projects have been installed with rainwater harvesting or grey water recycling systems. However, as the water collected for reuse by these systems is rather limited, we have not measured or collected statistics on the relevant water volumes. On the other hand, we are actively pursuing the implementation of a centralised grey water recycling system at the Development of Anderson Road Quarry Site. The system comprises of a grey water treatment plant with a daily capacity of 3 300 cubic metres. It will treat grey water collected within the development, and then distribute the treated grey water back to the development for non-potable use such as flushing.

LCQ8: Noise emitted by motor vehicles

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

At present, the Noise Control (Motor Vehicles) Regulation (Cap. 400 sub. leg. I) requires that every vehicle first registered must conform to the noise emission standards prescribed under the Regulation. Also, the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374 sub. leg. A) require that every vehicle propelled by an internal combustion engine must be fitted with a silencer maintained in good and efficient working order, and must not be altered or replaced in such a way that makes the noise greater. However, quite a number of members of the public have relayed that they often find vehicles, suspected of having been modified illegally, running on the expressways near their residences and emitting annoying noise. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it will amend the legislation to empower the Police, where they suspect that the noise emitted by a moving vehicle has exceeded the prescribed standards, to stop the vehicle and have the vehicle towed to a vehicle examination centre for a noise test and, upon confirmation that the noise has exceeded the prescribed standards, to institute prosecution against, and issue a vehicle repair order to, the vehicle owner concerned; if so, of the work schedule; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Reply to the question raised by the Hon Michael Tien is as follows:

In accordance with the Road Traffic Ordinance (Ordinance), motor vehicles for first registration have to comply with the noise emission standards stipulated in the Noise Control (Motor Vehicles) Regulation. In addition, vehicles are required to be fitted with silencers under the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations. To prevent a small number of vehicles from emitting excessive noise due to illegal alteration after first registration, the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations also require the silencers to be maintained in good and efficient working order, and not to be altered or replaced leading to emanation of greater noise from the escape of the exhaust gases.

If excessive noise was found emanating from silencer and the police officer reasonably suspected that the silencer has been altered or replaced, the Police are empowered under Section 80 of the current Ordinance to direct the vehicle to be driven to vehicle examination centres and to arrange a vehicle examiner to examine the vehicle. If contravention of the relevant legislation is confirmed, the Police will initiate prosecution.

To combat illegal activities including alteration and replacement of vehicle silencers, the Police would conduct territory-wide and district-based enforcement operations from time to time. Members of the public may also report vehicles suspected of emanating excessive noise due to silencer alteration through the government hotline 1823 or the Transport Department (TD)'s Defective Vehicle Report Form. Under Section 79 of the Ordinance, the

TD may serve the registered vehicle owner an examination order requiring production of the vehicle for examination at a vehicle examination centre.

LCQ22: Capability of children and youths to exercise self-control in using mobile phones and browsing social media

Following is a question by the Hon Charles Peter Mok and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

The findings of some surveys indicate that children and youths generally have lower self-control over the use of mobile phones, and they are prone to developing depression and anxiety once they have become addicted to browsing the Internet. Some concern groups have pointed out that prolonged use of mobile phones and browsing social media by children and youths may affect their work and rest routines, physical and mental health as well as interpersonal relationships, and they also have a higher chance of encountering cyber frauds and bullying as well as being exposed to harmful and false information. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of requests for assistance received in the past three years by the Education Bureau and subvented social welfare organisations concerning the addiction of children and youths to browsing the Internet or social media, with a breakdown by the age group to which they belonged;

(2) whether, in the past three years, it (i) conducted statistical surveys on the habits of children and youths on using mobile phones and browsing social media as well as the impacts of such habits on their physical and mental well-being, and (ii) formulated, in collaboration with the various stakeholders, guidelines to assist parents in strengthening their children's capability to exercise self-control in using mobile phones and browsing social media; and

(3) whether it will allocate additional resources to (i) offer counselling to children and youths and (ii) provide support to teachers, parents and community organisations in order to help children and youths strengthen their capability to exercise self-control in using mobile phones and browsing social media; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the relevant bureaux, our consolidated reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The Education Bureau (EDB) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) do not have the relevant statistics and information.

(2) The Department of Health (DH) conducted a survey on "Use of Internet and Electronic Screen Products" in 2017 targeting pre-school children, primary and secondary school students with the aim to understand their practice in using Internet and the electronic screen products as well as the effects exerted on their daily lives. Similar survey was also conducted in 2014.

The Government set up an Advisory Group on Health Effects of Use of Internet and Electronic Screen Products (Advisory Group) in 2013 comprising of members from the EDB, the SWD, the DH, representatives from the social welfare sector and relevant Colleges of medical specialties, etc. The Advisory Group published the Report of Advisory Group on Health Effects of Use of Internet and Electronic Screen Products (the Report) in 2014 with recommendations for children, adolescents, parents and teachers on healthy use of the Internet and electronic screen products. The Report has been uploaded to the DH's website. The DH also produced a set of four modules of health tips for parents, teachers, primary and secondary students respectively and set up a designated web page www.studenthealth.gov.hk/english/internet/health_effects.html for the public to search, browse and download related health information and resources.

Separately, the EDB attaches importance to helping students exercise self-discipline and prudence so that they can use information technology and social media properly and lead a healthy lifestyle. Relevant learning elements, including ethical use of the Internet as well as prevention of Internet addiction and cyberbullying, have been incorporated into the related subjects at the primary and secondary levels as well as the curriculum framework of moral and civic education. Schools also plan their school-based curricula and activities accordingly.

The EDB continuously provides support for schools such as producing various learning and teaching resources based on life events to help teachers raise students' awareness of cyber security and the proper attitude and cultivate in them a proper habit of using smart phones safely. Besides, professional training programmes are organised for principals and teachers to better equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills.

(3) The SWD has been subventing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide young people with a range of preventive, developmental and remedial services to help them deal with their academic, social and emotional difficulties, as well as educate them on the proper use of mobile phones and

social media on a needs basis. The services concerned include those provided through integrated children and youth services centres, school social work, youth outreach service and the Community Support Service Scheme to offer appropriate support to young people in need. Besides, starting from December 1, 2018, the SWD has subvented NGOs to set up five Cyber Youth Support Teams (the Teams), which reach out to at-risk and hidden youth on the online platforms commonly used by young people. The Teams provide advisory and counselling services with regard to their problems in social, emotion, personal growth and development areas as well as deviant behaviours relating to the use of the Internet. Where necessary, with the consent of the young people, the social workers will meet with them for in-depth discussions and provide suitable follow-up services, including referring them and their family members to relevant mainstream services.

Besides, to assist schools in preventing and handling the problem of Internet addiction among students, a set of teaching materials entitled Prevention of Internet Addiction for Personal Growth Education lessons and other relevant information are provided for schools by the EDB. Relevant training is also offered for teachers and social workers on a need basis so that they can help and refer students with the problem of Internet addiction to receive necessary professional services. The EDB has co-organised school recognition scheme with professional bodies to encourage schools to promote healthy use of the Internet among students. For parent education, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation and schools organise various activities such as seminars, to foster parents' understanding of healthy use of the Internet and ways to prevent the problem of Internet addiction among their children, and remind them of the need to care more about and pay heed to their children's habit of using the Internet, while seeking help from school social workers and guidance personnel whenever necessary. Furthermore, videos and articles on how to help children use electronic products properly and handle the problem of Internet addiction among children are also available on Smart Parent Net, the parent education website launched by the EDB, for parents' reference. Besides, a telephone hotline has been set up through a NGO to provide individual support for parents, teachers and students in need.

Transcript of remarks by STH

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, at a media session in the Legislative Council Complex today (March 20):

Reporter: Would the Government impose any penalty on the MTR? Are you going to stick to the current penalty mechanism?

Secretary for Transport and Housing: Certainly, we have to observe the existing mechanism in terms of penalty for the incident. At the same time I

have to say, in those days when this mechanism was being devised, they might not have considered such a case. Therefore, we need to look into the seriousness of the incident and appropriateness of penalty in due course.

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