

LCQ9: Combating acts of overcharging tenants of subdivided units for water

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

It has been more than two years since the Waterworks (Waterworks Regulations) (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 (the Amendment Ordinance) came into effect on May 14, 2021. The amended regulation 47 of the Waterworks Regulations (Cap. 102A) stipulates that in respect of the supply of water, landlords may only recover from their tenants (including tenants of subdivided units (SDUs)) the water charges paid to the Water Supplies Department. However, it has been reported that currently the average water charge for SDU tenants is twice as high as that for ordinary households. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of complaint cases relating to SDU tenants being overcharged for water that the authorities have received and followed up since the Amendment Ordinance came into effect;

(2) among the cases mentioned in (1), of (i) the amount of water charge overcharged in each of the cases, (ii) the number of successful convictions and the penalties imposed, as well as (iii) the number of cases in which no prosecution was initiated and the reasons for that; and

(3) given that according to regulation 51 of Cap. 102A, a landlord who overcharges his or her tenants for water shall be liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$10,000, but in the seven convicted cases as at the end of February this year, the amounts of fines imposed on the convicted persons only ranged from \$1,000 to \$5,000, whether the authorities will study the introduction of measures with a greater deterrent effect to combat SDU landlords' illegal acts of overcharging for water; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Waterworks (Waterworks Regulations) (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 (the Amendment Ordinance) came into effect on May 14, 2021 which requires that the landlords can only recover from their tenants (including but not be limited to the tenants of subdivided units (SDUs)) the amount of water charge paid to the Water Supplies Department (WSD). The government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach including stepping up the inter-departmental joint inspections, streamlining the application process for installation of

separate water meters and enhancing publicity, etc., with a view to increasing the deterrent effect as well as reducing the risk of water overcharging.

The replies to various parts of the Hon Cheng's question are as follows:

(1) and (2) Since the enactment of the Amendment Ordinance, the WSD has received 92 complaint cases for suspected overcharging for water. Amongst these cases, eight of them were successfully brought for prosecution and conviction and those convicted were fined ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Another 15 cases are still under investigation. For the remaining 69 cases, there was insufficient evidence to institute prosecution as the complainants were not willing to be witness or unable to provide relevant information. The breakdown of the number of complaints received and the successful prosecution cases by year are tabulated below:

Year	No. of complaints received	No. of successful prosecution
2021 (May to Dec)	22	0
2022	47	4
2023 (up to May)	23	4
Total	92	8

The water charges (including charges for water consumption and sewage) involved in the above convicted cases ranged from \$13 to \$18 per cubic metre (Note), which exceeded the total of the highest tier of charge for fresh water for domestic purpose prescribed in the Waterworks Regulation (WWR) and the respective sewage charge, \$11.97 per cubic metre.

(3) The WSD and the Rating and Valuation Department have been conducting joint inspections to combat the illegal acts of overcharging for water. However, there is currently no provision in the Waterworks Ordinance (WVO) and WWR to empower the WSD to mandate the parties involved in regard to suspected water-overcharging cases to provide the relevant information to the WSD, which will usually cause difficulty in evidence collection and investigation. To solve the problem, we are preparing to further amend the relevant provisions under WVO and WWR to strengthen the power in evidence collection and increase the penalty, with a view to enhancing the enforcement efficiency. We will strive to formulate the relevant amendment proposal shortly and consult the Panel on Development of the Legislative Council.

In addition, the WSD has been actively encouraging the landlords and management agents of SDUs to install the WSD's separate water meters to avoid the risk of overcharging for water. The WSD has streamlined the application procedures and set up a dedicated team to process the applications. Since April 1 of this year, the government has also waived the payment of the water fee deposit (\$400) and the charge (\$120) for providing a meter for each separate water meter from the applicant. Every such water meter account will

have a separate water bill for paying the water charge, and the first 12 cubic metres of water consumed for each four-month period will be free of charge. The WSD will continue to carry out a series of publicity activities, including sending letters to the registered consumers of premises suspected with SDUs, meeting with concerned groups and property agencies for SDUs, producing leaflets and posters, and broadcasting Announcement of Public Interest (API) through television and other public media, so as to enhance the promotion to the landlords the method of the application for installing separate water meters and the points to note for collecting water charge from their tenants.

Note: For those convicted cases, the relevant evidence only indicated that the water charge per cubic metre (including charges for water consumption and sewage) was higher than the total of the highest tier of charge for fresh water for domestic purpose prescribed in the WWR and the respective sewage charge. Therefore, there is no need to estimate the actual overcharged amount to support the prosecution.

LCQ5: Developing tourism projects with aquatic features

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

There are views pointing out that Hong Kong should develop more tourism projects with aquatic features to, through diverse tourism, encourage members of the public to stay and spend in Hong Kong and attract more tourists to visit Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the displays of giant yellow rubber ducks in Hong Kong waters in 2013 and this year have roused two rounds of craze for "duck appreciation", whether the authorities will collaborate with local artists or arts groups to produce aquatic art installations with themes on local stories such as Old Master Q, McMug and Chocolate Rain as well as Chinese stories for regular display in Hong Kong waters, with a view to telling the stories of Hong Kong and China well; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will, by drawing reference from the mode of the Mainland's Qinhuai Lantern Festival, organise aquatic lantern festivals during festivals such as the Lunar New Year, Spring Lantern Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival with innovative features, such as dynamic lanterns complemented with smoke on water and lighting shows, so as to attract tourists to visit Hong Kong; if

so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will discuss with local shipping companies providing passenger services to convert some of the ferries into leisure boat restaurants, so as to divert tour groups dining in the Kowloon City District and promote aquatic tourism in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Tourism industry is one of the key economic pillars of Hong Kong. It accounted for 4.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and offered 260 000 job opportunities before the pandemic. Since the launch of large-scale "Hello Hong Kong" global promotional campaign in February, the tourism industry has been recovering progressively and orderly and the number of visitor arrivals has been increasing continuously. There were around 10.14 million visitor arrivals in the first five months of this year, and the total number of visitor arrivals exceeded 2.82 million in May, which was around 55 per cent of the pre-pandemic level. In addition to promotion work, we have also been striving to offer diversified tourism projects to provide tourists with different travel experience in order to attract them to visit Hong Kong.

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Yang Wing-kit, the reply is as follows:

(1) The Government has all along been actively promoting the development of arts and culture in Hong Kong, dedicating efforts to collaborate with local artists and organisations to launch various art projects for the enjoyment of and participation by the public and tourists. The "Art@Harbour", a large-scale outdoor art project organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) since 2022 is an example of how to bring brand new art experience to the public and tourists on both sides of the Victoria Harbour. This project is expected to be held once again in 2024 in collaboration with overseas and local artists as well as arts groups to set up an art installation on the waters of Victoria Harbour.

On comics, Create Hong Kong (CreateHK) provided funding support to the Hong Kong Comics and Animation Federation (HKCAF) in 2012 to establish the "Hong Kong Avenue of Comic Stars" in Kowloon Park to showcase the sculptures of classic comics characters (including Old Master Q, McDull, Cloud, Little Horse, etc) designed by more than 30 local comics artists. In 2021, the exhibition areas were refurbished and a "Comic Wall" co-created by local emerging comics artists was installed to promote Hong Kong comics to the public and tourists. In addition, CreateHK provided funding support to HKCAF to establish the "Ani-Com Park@HarbourFUN" (Ani-Com Park) from 2016 to 2021 in the Golden Bauhinia Square to showcase the sculptures of local original animation and comics characters of different generations (including Wind, Din-dong, Mandycat, etc).

Currently, CreateHK is discussing with the HKCAF a new project to

establish a new Ani-Com Park at the Wan Chai promenade. In tandem with the Olympic Games Paris next year, elements of different sports will be integrated into animation and comics characters, with a view to further promoting Hong Kong animation and comics, while encouraging sports activities and telling good stories of Hong Kong.

Another example is the "Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival 2022", an arts cum cultural, historical and green tourism project covering Yim Tin Tsai, Sharp Island, Kau Sai Chau and High Island, rolled out last year by the Tourism Commission (TC) following the "Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival" which was implemented from 2019 to 2021. Through a variety of local artworks, the islands were revitalised and the flow of people in the local community was improved. The TC is preparing for a new round of "Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival" to be held at the end of this year.

In addition, the TC, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Design Centre and HKCAF, through cross-sector collaboration, implemented the "Design District Hong Kong" (#ddHK) between 2018 and 2021 in Wan Chai and Sham Shui Po to promote local tourism and showcase local cultural lives through various place-making artworks and creative tourism events. A new phase of #ddHK is expected to commence in the third quarter of 2023.

In fact, collaborating with local artists and groups to promote tourism development through artistic creation is one of the strategies for Hong Kong's tourism development, and it is in line with the country's direction of "shaping tourism with cultural activities and promoting culture through tourism". The TC and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) have been working hard to support local and international mega public arts exhibitions to stage in Hong Kong by assisting the organisers to closely liaise and communicate with different government departments. The "Double Ducks" as mentioned in the question is one of the examples. We will continue to publicise and promote globally various international art exhibitions and events to be held in Hong Kong with a view to showcasing unique artistic charm of Hong Kong where East meets West and bringing brand new experience to the public and tourists.

(2) Different cities make use of their local unique scenery to attract tourists and organise special activities to enhance the attractiveness of these attractions. The Qinhuai Lantern Festival is a good example. The unique scenery of Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour filled with the dazzling city lights has presented vividly this "Pearl of the Orient". We organise large-scale events from time to time with the backdrop of Victoria Harbour, including "Art@Harbour", fireworks displays, New Year countdown, "A Symphony of Lights" and other large-scale events. The "Harbour Chill Carnival" is also a large-scale integrated performance event held against the backdrop of Victoria Harbour this summer. At the same time, the LCSD has been actively promoting traditional Chinese culture through organisation of the Lunar New Year Lantern Carnival and Mid-Autumn Lantern Carnival annually to promote traditional Chinese arts. The Mid-Autumn Lantern Carnival to be held at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza water pool this year will create myriads of lighting effects through the combination of interactive and technological elements and include new elements for citizens' and tourists' enjoyment in

festive occasions. The HKTB will also organise festive-themed mega events, including the "Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races" and "Chinese New Year Celebrations", to showcase Chinese cultural characteristics and provide tourists with rich and diversified experiences.

(3) At present, there are aquatic tourism projects and leisure boats available in the market for tour groups and independent visitors to enjoy the scenery of Victoria Harbour. As for the gathering of tourists in To Kwa Wan earlier, the Travel Industry Authority (TIA) has already strengthened management of Mainland inbound tour groups and urged the trade to make arrangements for diverging tourists. For the past Labour Day Golden Week, the TIA introduced special measures in response to the situation in Kowloon City and achieved remarkable result by improving the people flow problem caused by individual catering premises. In fact, in view of the situation in Kowloon City in the end of March, with the encouragement from the TIA and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, the trade voluntarily improved the meal arrangements of tour groups and arranged some to dine in the restaurant on a leisure boat roaming around Victoria Harbour, with a view to reducing the impact of tourism activities on the community in To Kwa Wan and Hung Hom. Tourists were satisfied with the relevant arrangements. We understand that some leisure boat operators are ready to strengthen services and we believe that other leisure boat operators would also consider joining according to market demand.

LCQ16: Provision of training for Administrative Officers

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

At present, the Government arranges for Administrative Officers (AOs) to pursue further studies in renowned universities on the Mainland and overseas to broaden their perspectives and enhance their leadership capabilities, so as to prepare them for taking up key roles at the upper echelons of the Government in the future. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Government (i) provides overseas short-term training for AOs passing probation and (ii) provides short-term executive development programmes for AOs promoted to the directorate rank, of the number of AOs who received such training in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by name of academic institution and title of programme; and

(2) as there are views pointing out that with Hong Kong being an international metropolis, in addition to having an in-depth understanding of national affairs, AOs should also be equipped with a certain degree of international perspectives, whether the Government will provide more overseas training opportunities for AOs in the future; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to training and development of Administrative Officers, and offers various types of training for Administrative Officers at different ranks in a sustained manner to enhance their knowledge, and leadership abilities for serving the public. In addition to acquiring exposure to different policies and gaining experiences in various Government work through job rotation, Administrative Officers also receive systematic training in Hong Kong and outside Hong Kong (including the Mainland and overseas). For overseas training, officers on completion of probation (after working for three years in most cases) will be arranged to study abroad; directorate officers with outstanding performance and potential may also be arranged to attend short-term executive development programmes (usually ranging from one to several weeks) run by overseas institutions. The selection of institutions is based on individual development needs.

In the past five years, the number of officers who received the above overseas training is sorted by institutions and listed as follows:

Year	Training Institution	Number of Trainees
2018	Post-probation Overseas Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Oxford • University of California, Berkeley • London School of Economics and Political Science 	1 5 4
	Short-term Overseas Executive Development Programme for Directorate Officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INSEAD • University of Oxford • Harvard University • International Institute for Management Development • London Business School • Others 	1 1 1 2 1 1

2019	Post-probation Overseas Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Oxford • University of California, Berkeley • London School of Economics and Political Science 	3 1 6
	Short-term Overseas Executive Development Programme for Directorate Officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INSEAD • Harvard University • International Institute for Management Development • Stanford University • University of Pennsylvania 	1 2 1 1 1

*Since 2020, arrangements for sending officers to attend the above overseas training programmes were suspended due to the epidemic.

In addition to short-term programmes, the Civil Service Bureau also arranges potential officers promoted to the directorate rank to study one-year master's degree programmes organised by overseas institutions (e.g. Harvard University, Stanford University). In the past five years, we sponsored seven directorate officers in total to attend the aforementioned courses. During the epidemic, individual course was conducted online. Moreover, starting from 2022, the Civil Service College has partnered with Peking University to organise the Master's Degree in Public Policy Programme. The target participants are civil servants with potential to reach the senior rank of their grade. The programme lasts for two years. In the first year, participants are required to stay full time in Peking University to study and visit different places in the Mainland for conducting social research and experiencing the development of country. In the second year, participants resume work in Hong Kong while completing the thesis for graduation. So far, there were three Administrative Officers in total selected for this programme. We plan to select suitable Administrative Officers to take this programme every year. Since 2021, we have also provided full sponsorship to senior civil servants to take the Executive Master in Public Administration Programme offered by Tsinghua University on a part-time basis. So far, among six senior civil servants being sponsored, three of them are Administrative Officers.

The Civil Service Bureau will continue to assess colleagues' training needs and timely arrange suitable training and development opportunities for them. With the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the rest of the world, we are resuming various overseas training courses in an orderly manner. We are also reviewing overseas programmes, with an aim to select the most suitable ones that can broaden the Administrative Officers' horizons nowadays and enhance their capabilities for them to study.

Transcript of remarks by DFS and SLW at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Deputy Financial Secretary, Mr Michael Wong, and the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, at a media session on importation of labour after attending a radio programme today (June 14):

Reporter: Secretary, some said the scheme is stripping the Labour Advisory Board of its vetting power, and that there wasn't enough consultation beforehand. How would you respond to that? And about the lifting of an import ban of 26 low-skilled job types, does it actually reflect where shortages are most pressing? And also, what measures will be in place to ensure that imported minibus drivers will be familiar with Hong Kong roads?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: I think throughout the time the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) plays a very important role when it comes to the importation of labour. Even for the sector-specific schemes, we have a regular arrangement under which we are going to report back to the LAB regularly. Right now, our plan is to report around every six months, so in this way we are going to keep the LAB informed of the latest development. This also allows us to listen to views and suggestions from members of the LAB.

As for the enhancement we are going to make to the Supplementary Labour Scheme, what we are proposing right now is to relax for two years the restrictions on 26 job categories. They are mainly low-skilled jobs. What we are allowing employers is to make an application, but for each and every application, they have to first of all prove that there is a shortage in recruiting locally. So, it is not for sure that their applications will be processed. What we are allowing them now is, for these 26 categories of jobs, at least they can make an application, but the prerequisite is they have to prove there is a local shortage.

Deputy Financial Secretary: For the drivers, all imported drivers will need to take and pass relevant licensing examinations. They will also have to attend courses which focus on politeness and also driving attitude. So there will be adequacy of guard in terms of safety.

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

Transport Department reminds vehicle owners to pay outstanding tolls and set up automatic payment means

The Transport Department (TD) today (June 14) reminded that the HKeToll has been implemented at the Tsing Sha Control Area (TSCA) (Eagle's Nest Tunnel, Sha Tin Heights Tunnel and Tai Wai Tunnel), Shing Mun Tunnels and Lion Rock Tunnel. Vehicle owners must pay the toll within 14 business days after the date of using these tunnels. Surcharge notices are progressively issued to impose a \$175 initial surcharge for each trip of late payment to vehicle owners who have not paid the outstanding tolls. If the vehicle owner does not pay the unpaid toll and the initial surcharge in full by the expiry of 21 calendar days after the date on which a surcharge notice is served, a further surcharge of \$350 will be imposed. The penalty for evading tolls is a fine of \$5,000 (per trip). The TD will also reject an application for licence renewal for the vehicle concerned.

Twelve vehicle owners who used the TSCA on the commissioning date of the HKeToll (May 7) without paying the toll still have not paid the unpaid toll and the initial surcharge after having received the initial surcharge notice. They must pay the unpaid toll and the initial surcharge in full on or before June 20. Otherwise, a further surcharge of \$350 will be imposed. As for the vehicle owners who used Lion Rock Tunnel on the commissioning date of the HKeToll (May 28), the last date to pay the tunnel toll is June 15.

The vehicle owner should immediately log on to the HKeToll website (hketoll.gov.hk) or mobile app to check and pay the outstanding toll. Payments of outstanding tolls can also be made at the four customer service centres and four service outlets. If vehicle owners need assistance, they can browse the HKeToll website, call the 24-hour customer service hotline 3853 7333, or visit the four customer service centres, four service outlets, two car park service counters, and consultation counters located at designated MTR stations and the Home Affairs Enquiry Centres in the New Territories District Offices. The locations and service hours of the above-mentioned facilities are shown at the Annex.

The TD reminds vehicles owners to pay attention to whether there is any outstanding toll in the HKeToll account and pay it immediately if a payment notification is received. With the progressive implementation of the HKeToll in government tolled tunnels, the TD once again appeals to vehicle owners to complete the three steps for HKeToll service as soon as possible: (1) install a vehicle tag, (2) open an HKeToll account and (3) set up an automatic payment means, so as to fully enjoy the convenience of the HKeToll.