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Director of Bureau : Secretary for Transport and Housing

Session No. : 13

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**Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in
examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2008-09**

**Director of Bureau : Secretary for Transport and Housing
Session No. : 13**

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**Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in
examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2008-09**

**Director of Bureau : Secretary for Transport and Housing
Session No. : 13**

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)001

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Question Serial No.

0053

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the task to cope with any outbreak of communicable diseases in Hong Kong mentioned in the "Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2008-09" under this Programme, would the Administration inform us of the details of the specific work, the manpower and the expenditure involved?

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

In case of an outbreak or suspected outbreak of communicable diseases in buildings sold under the Home Ownership Scheme and the Tenants Purchase Scheme, the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department has the delegated authority from the Director of Buildings to implement a contingency measure to inspect the drainage systems of the buildings concerned in accordance with the guidelines issued, so that the Department of Health may take appropriate follow-up actions. As this is a contingency measure, the Independent Checking Unit will suitably deploy its existing manpower and financial resources to deal with the additional work, having regard to the situation and actual need.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)002

Question Serial No.

0054

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (3) Appeal Panel (Housing)

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the prompt hearing of appeal cases mentioned in the "Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2008-09" under this Programme, would the Administration inform us of:

- (1) the details of the specific work, manpower and expenditure involved; and
- (2) the current average waiting time for hearing from the submission of application to the determination of hearing date, the existing number of appellants/ cases pending hearing, and the measures, if any, to further expedite the hearing procedures?

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

- (1) We plan to strengthen the staffing support of the Secretariat by two executive officer grade, one assistant clerical officer grade and two clerical assistant grade posts in 2008-09. In addition, starting from April 2008, the number of Appeal Panel Members will be increased from 79 to 100. Upon implementation of these measures, it is expected that the number of hearing sessions can be increased from 294 in 2007 by 146 to 440 in 2008, which will accelerate the processing of appeal cases. These measures will involve an increase of \$2.6 million in the estimated expenditure as compared to that in 2007-08; and
- (2) According to the statistics in January 2008, the average waiting time for an appeal case to be heard is about ten months. As at the end of January 2008, 971 appeal cases are awaiting hearing. We anticipate that with the implementation of the measures mentioned in (1) above, the waiting time and the number of outstanding appeal cases awaiting hearing will be reduced in 2008.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

19 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)003

Question Serial No.

0055

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the target under this Programme, i.e. verification of domestic clearerees' rehousing eligibility within eight weeks after clearance announcement, would the Administration inform us of :

- (1) the details of the specific work, the manpower and the expenditure involved;
- (2) the average time required in the verification in 2007; and
- (3) whether consideration will be given to shorten the time required so as to provide a more efficient service?

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

- (1) The Housing Department (HD) is responsible for providing assistance in rehousing eligible clearerees affected by the Government's land clearances and victims of natural disasters and other emergencies. The work involves verifying their rehousing eligibility, screening rehousing applications referred by the Lands Department and allocating public rental housing or interim housing to eligible applicants, etc. In addition, the HD is responsible for providing assistance in rehousing occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department's enforcement actions. The work involves conducting on-site freezing surveys for registration of the affected households and subsequent investigations, assessing their eligibility and allocating public housing, etc. In 2008-09, it is estimated that the HD will require a total staff establishment of 29 non-directorate posts to discharge the above-mentioned duties. The related staff cost and other operating expenditure are estimated to be \$16.5 million.
- (2) In 2007, the HD took an average of about six weeks to verify the rehousing eligibility of the affected occupants. But the actual time required for each case depended on the degree of its complexity and the number of other cases required to be processed during the same period of time.
- (3) The time frame of eight weeks for verification of the affected occupants' rehousing eligibility is merely a general indicator. The actual time required for each case depends on the degree of its complexity and the number of other cases required to be processed during the same period of time. The HD will enhance work efficiency through flexible redeployment of staff so as to shorten the time required for processing the cases as far as possible.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)004

Question Serial No.

0056

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the indicator of programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances as planned for 2008 under this Programme, would the Administration inform us of:

- (1) the details of the work of clearance projects (including the schedule and clearance areas), manpower and expenditure involved; and
- (2) whether consideration will be given to the provision of public rental housing (PRH) flats for local rehousing?

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

- (1) The Housing Department (HD) is responsible for providing assistance in rehousing eligible clearances affected by the Government's land clearances and victims of natural disasters and other emergencies. The work involves verifying their rehousing eligibility, screening rehousing applications referred by the Lands Department (LandsD) and allocating PRH or interim housing to eligible applicants, etc.

In 2008, it is anticipated that the HD will process about 900 rehousing applications arising from different clearance programmes. The LandsD is responsible for the clearance programmes, the details of which would only be made public when conducting the pre-clearance registration, so as to ensure that the occupants rehoused are those who are genuinely affected by the programmes. As such, the LandsD is unable to provide the relevant information.

In 2008-09, it is estimated that the HD will require a staff establishment of 29 non-directorate posts to provide assistance to rehouse clearances affected by clearances, provide assistance in rehousing occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department's enforcement actions, and carry out other related work. The related staff cost and other operating expenditure are estimated to be \$16.5 million. We do not have a breakdown of the resources involved solely for carrying out the duties arising from programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances.

- (2) The HD will endeavour to provide PRH flats in the same localities for eligible occupants affected by squatter clearances and eligible victims of natural disasters if housing resources permit.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)005

Question Serial No.

0057

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Concerning the number of bedspaces provided in transit centres under this Programme, the indicator shows that there was a reduction of 292 bedspaces in the actual figure in 2007 and there will be a further reduction of 68 bedspaces in 2008. Please advise on the current utilization rate, the reasons for the gradual reduction of bedspaces and whether any impact assessment has been conducted.

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

The transit centre of the Housing Department is set up mainly to provide temporary shelter for those who are rendered homeless by natural disasters and emergency incidents, etc. This is to allow time for them to seek alternative accommodation or wait for further rehousing. The duration of stay is normally less than three months.

As the utilization rate of the transit centres in the past few years has been on the low side (the current utilization rate is only 28%), the Housing Department has adjusted the number of bedspaces in the light of the actual demand. The present provision of 340 bedspaces is expected to be adequate to meet the demand.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)006

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Question Serial No.

0304

Programme: (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the studies (including in-house studies or those entrusted to consultants) conducted by the Housing Department for the purposes of formulating and assessing policies, please provide the relevant information in the following format:

- (a) For the projects that have reserved funds for conducting consultancy studies in 2007-08, please provide information in the following format:

Name of Consultant (if any)	Content	Revised Estimate (\$)	Progress of Studies (under planning/ in progress/ completed)	The follow-ups taken by the Administration on the study reports and their progress (if any)	If completed, have they been released to the public? If yes, through which channels? If no, what are the reasons?

- (b) Is there any project that will reserve funds for conducting consultancy study in 2008-09? If yes, please provide the following information:

Name of Consultant (if any)	Content	Expenditure (\$)	Progress of Studies (under planning/ in progress/ completed)	Will the studies be released to the public if they are expected to be completed in the 2008-09 financial year? If yes, through which channels? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. EU Yuet-mee, Audrey

Reply:

- (a) We did not earmark any financial provision in 2007-08 for consultancy studies.
- (b) The relevant details of the consultancy study for which financial provision has been earmarked in 2008-09 are as follows:

Name of Consultant (if any)	Content	Expenditure (\$)	Progress of Studies (under planning/ in progress/ completed)	Will the studies be released to the public if they are expected to be completed in the 2008-09 financial year? If yes, through which channels? If no, what are the reasons?
Versitech Limited of The University of Hong Kong	Collection and analysis of statistics on the private residential market	Reserved allocation :\$2.1m	In progress	We have been regularly releasing statistics on private residential units. The study will help further strengthen our ability to collect and analyse statistics related to the private housing market.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)007

Question Serial No.

0331

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

As affected by the clearance projects of the Lands Department and the enforcement actions against illegal rooftop structures by the Buildings Department, the Administration estimates that the numbers of rehousing applications processed, offers made for public rental housing and offers made for interim housing will increase remarkably in 2008. How can the Administration ensure that the service quality is maintained? Will the above three surging figures have a significant bearing on the waiting time of public rental housing and interim housing? What is the staff implication and will the staffing requirement increase substantially in comparison with that of 2007 and involve a major internal redeployment?

Asked by: Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply:

The number of rehousing cases to be processed under Head 62 Programme (4) depends very much on the actual number of clearances and enforcement actions to be undertaken by the Lands Department and Buildings Department in a particular year. The approved staff establishment for discharging the duties concerned consists of 29 non-directorate posts. Although it is expected that the number of rehousing cases will increase in 2008, the Housing Department will flexibly deploy manpower as appropriate to cope with the workload to ensure that the quality of service will be maintained and the affected residents rehoused as soon as practicable.

In planning the public housing construction programme, we have taken into account the demand from various sources including eligible occupants affected by clearances and enforcement actions, to ensure that the objective of keeping the average waiting time for family applicants at about three years will be met.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)008

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Question Serial No.

0332

Programme: (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Under this programme, how much increased provision is set aside for studies on the private housing market?
Please give justifications.

Asked by: Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply:

The estimate for 2008-09 is \$17.2 million, which is \$2.1 million (13.9%) higher than the revised estimate for 2007-08. This is for conducting a consultancy study to further enhance the collection and analysis of statistics related to the private housing market.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)009

Question Serial No.

0446

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Please advise on the utilisation rate of and the situation of occupant overstaying in the transit centres under the purview of the Housing Department (HD) in 2006-07 and 2007-08. What will be the responsive measures in 2008-09?

Asked by: Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply:

In 2006-07 and 2007-08 (as at 29.2.2008), the utilisation rates of bedspaces in the transit centres of the Housing Department were 16.2% and 27.6% respectively.

Under normal circumstances, users of the transit centres will move out in three months' time. Some complicated cases, however, require more time to deal with and therefore the users may stay for a longer period of time. In the past two years, 32 and 55 people respectively stayed in the transit centres for more than three months. For these occupants, the HD will co-ordinate with relevant government departments to expedite follow-up actions and provide assistance as far as practicable. For those refusing to leave without reasonable grounds, the HD will first persuade them to move out and provide them with adequate time to seek alternative accommodation. However, where necessary, the HD may consider eviction action as a last resort.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)010

Question Serial No.

0447

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

What specific plans does the Government have to enhance the calibre and professionalism of local estate agents in 2008-09, and what are the estimated manpower and expenditure involved?

Asked by: Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply:

The Government has been working closely with the Estate Agents Authority ("the EAA") in enhancing the quality and professionalism of estate agents. As the implementation work is mainly carried out by the EAA, the Government does not need to incur any additional resources. The measures taken by the EAA include enhancing the standards of the qualifying examinations for estate agent's licence and salesperson's licence and implementing the Continuing Professional Development Scheme. In 2008-09, the EAA will launch intensive training programmes for new entrants and step up the relevant regulatory work with a view to further improving the quality of the practitioners.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)011

Question Serial No.

0448

Head: 62 Housing Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (3) Appeal Panel (Housing)

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the service of the Appeal Panel, how many additional staff will be required in 2008-09, and how much more provision is anticipated correspondingly? Why is it that the estimated number of appeals to be heard in 2008 is 914 more than the actual figure in 2007?

Asked by: Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply:

As the present average waiting time for an appeal case to be heard is about ten months, we plan to add two executive officer grade, one assistant clerical officer grade and two clerical assistant grade posts in 2008-09 in order to expedite the processing of appeal cases. The estimated expenditure is \$2.6 million higher than that in 2007-08. Moreover, the number of Appeal Panel Members will be increased from 79 to 100 starting from April 2008.

Upon implementation of the above measures, the number of hearing sessions is expected to increase from 294 in 2007 by 146 to 440 in 2008. This will, in turn, increase the estimated number of appeals to be heard in 2008 by 914 as compared with that in 2007.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

19 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)012

Question Serial No.

0449

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

The indicator shows that the actual number of removal orders issued in 2007 was 996, a drastic increase over the 238 removal orders issued in 2006. What are the reasons, and why the estimated number is reduced to 300 in 2008?

Asked by: Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply:

The Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department has completed the survey for 27 buildings in Home Ownership Scheme courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates in 2007. The survey is to identify unauthorised and dangerous building works and to inspect the conditions of internal common areas, external walls and drainage pipes. Upon completion of the comprehensive surveys, the ICU, under the delegated authority from the Director of Buildings, will carry out enforcement actions in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and issue advisory letters or statutory orders to require the owners or owners' corporations to demolish the unauthorised building works (UBW) or carry out repair works within a specified period of time (usually two months).

Since the courts and estates surveyed in different years are different, the number of removal orders issued in different years cannot be directly compared. The relatively higher number of removal orders issued in 2007 is an isolated case, largely due to the higher number of UBW identified in some courts than the number estimated during the preliminary survey.

With reference to the earlier assessment conducted during the preliminary survey on the courts and estates to be surveyed in 2008, we expect to issue 300 UBW removal orders in 2008.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)013

Question Serial No.

0635

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (5) Support Services

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

What is the progress of the assessment of the feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government? Which sites are expected to be returned and what are the manpower resources and the expenditure involved in the assessment?

Asked by: Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply:

The Government reviews regularly on a quarterly basis the land supply for public housing, the progress of public housing development projects and the amount of public housing flat production, with the objective to maintain the average waiting time of public rental housing (PRH) applicants at around three years, which is also the basic principle under which the feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government is to be assessed. During the planning process, the Housing Authority (HA) will work closely with the Government departments and locals concerned to ensure a smooth implementation of the public housing development programme and that district development needs could be met.

The HA has no intention at present to return any of its planned PRH sites to the Government. To meet the abovementioned objective concerning the average waiting time for PRH, cleared public housing sites will be retained for PRH development as far as possible. In 2008-09, a provision of \$1.81 million has been reserved for the abovementioned work (including the regular reviews of PRH's supply, land search and feasibility assessment of site return), which includes the salary and staff-on-cost of the equivalent of two officers.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 711 - Housing

Subhead B566CL

(No. & title) :

Programme :

Controlling Officer : Director of Civil Engineering and Development

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question :

Regarding the construction works for the development at Anderson Road under the Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2008-09, what are the progress of the works and the anticipated year of completion? What are the details of the works related to noise mitigation and the enhancement of local liaison in the nearby areas? How much provision is involved?

Asked by : Hon. CHAN Yuen-han

Reply :

Formation of land platforms and construction of associated infrastructural works for the development at Anderson Road commenced in January 2008. Land platforms will be formed in phases from 2011 to 2013 for handover to the Housing Department for public housing development. The remaining infrastructural works will be completed by end 2014.

To mitigate noise impact arising from the construction activities, we have included provisions in the works contract requiring the use of silenced construction plant and temporary noise barriers. Our site supervisory staff will closely monitor the construction noise to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements and the environmental monitoring and audit programme for the works.

On local community liaison front, we have set up a Resident Liaison Group for liaison with local residents, District Council members and local schools. The first meeting was held on 28 February 2008. We have set up a 24-hour hotline for public enquiries.

The estimated expenditure on the above mitigating measures and liaison work under this project is around \$20 million.

Signature _____

Name in block letters JOHN S V CHAI

Post Title Director of Civil Engineering and Development

Date 18.3.2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)015

Question Serial No.

1386

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the target of “responding to emergencies during and outside office hours”, would the Administration inform us of:

- (a) the details of the work, the manpower and the expenditure;
- (b) the average time required for responding to emergencies during and outside office hours in 2007; and
- (c) whether it will consider shortening the response time, and also shortening the response time for cases during office hours in the New Territories (N.T.) to that as in urban areas as well as shortening the response time for cases outside office hours in other areas in N.T. to that as in urban areas and the new towns in N.T.?

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

- (a) Under the delegated authority from the Director of Buildings, the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department exercises building control over Home Ownership Scheme buildings, Tenants Purchase Scheme buildings and retail and carparking facilities divested by the Housing Authority. Currently, any building safety incidents occurring in the above buildings or facilities during office hours that may cause immediate danger to life and property will be handled by the ICU, whereas the Buildings Department (BD) deals with such cases outside office hours. Tentatively, the ICU is scheduled to take over the task from BD with effect from the second quarter of 2008.

Responding to emergencies forms part of the normal duties of the ICU. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure and manpower involved in carrying out this particular duty.

- (b) In 2007, we dealt with 11 emergency cases during office hours. All these cases were responded to within the pledged time (within 1.5 hours for cases in urban areas and two hours for cases in new towns in the N.T.). The BD dealt with emergency cases outside office hours.
- (c) The ICU exercises building control over the abovementioned buildings and facilities under the delegated authority from the Director of Buildings. The ICU adopts the same procedures, service standards and pledges as the BD. The present service pledges were set by BD after a comprehensive review of its service standards in 2005.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)016

Question Serial No.

1387

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Concerning the indicator of resubmitted alteration and addition plans received and processed within 30 days, the actual figure in 2007 doubles that in 2006. Please advise on:

- (a) the reasons for the increase of the actual figure in 2007, the details of the work, the expenditure and manpower involved; and
- (b) the measures to be implemented to achieve the indicator for 2008 and whether additional manpower is considered.

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

- (a) In considering new submissions of proposed alteration or addition works, the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department would require applicants to resubmit the proposals if the proposals do not fully comply with the requirements under the Building Ordinance. Applicants may also resubmit if they intend to amend their proposals. Therefore, the number of re-submissions of proposed alteration and addition works is related to the number of new submissions of proposed alteration and addition works received previously. Since the number of new submission cases in 2006 was greater than that of the previous year, the number of re-submission cases in 2007 has increased as compared with the number in 2006. The processing of re-submissions of alteration and addition works forms part of the duties of the ICU. We do not have a breakdown of the manpower and expenditure involved.
- (b) The estimate for 2008 is formulated based on the number of new submissions of alteration and addition works received previously and operational experience. The workload will be absorbed by the existing staff. The staffing requirement will be reviewed if there is a substantial increase in the number of cases.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)017

Question Serial No.

1388

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the indicator of removal orders issued against unauthorised buildings works, the actual figure in 2007 was more than four times as compared with that in 2006. Would the Administration inform us of:

- (a) the reasons for the higher actual figure in 2007 and the details of the work, the manpower and the expenditure involved?
- (b) the reasons for the lower estimated figure in 2008 as compared with the actual figure in 2007, and any measures to be taken to ensure sufficient manpower to meet the needs?

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

- (a) The Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department has completed the survey for 27 buildings in Home Ownership Scheme courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates in 2007. The survey is to identify unauthorised and dangerous building works and to inspect the conditions of internal common areas, external walls and drainage pipes. Upon completion of the comprehensive surveys, the ICU, under the delegated authority from the Director of Buildings, will carry out enforcement actions in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and issue advisory letters or statutory orders to require the owners or owners' corporations to demolish the unauthorised building works (UBW) or carry out repair works within a specified period of time (usually two months).

Since the courts and estates surveyed in different years are different, the number of removal orders issued in different years cannot be directly compared. The relatively higher number of removal orders issued in 2007 is an isolated case, largely due to the higher number of UBW identified in some courts than the number estimated during the preliminary survey. The surveying work forms part of the normal duties of the ICU. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure and manpower involved in carrying out this particular duty.

- (b) As mentioned above, since the courts and estates surveyed in different years are different, the number of removal orders issued in different years cannot be directly compared. With reference to the earlier assessment conducted during the preliminary survey on the courts and estates to be surveyed in 2008, we expect to issue 300 UBW removal orders in 2008. If the actual number of UBW identified is higher than this estimate, we will internally redeploy manpower and resources to cope with the workload as appropriate.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)018

Question Serial No.

1601

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

The estimated expenditure for 2008-09 is 13.9% higher than the revised expenditure for 2007-08. This is mainly due to the increased provision for studies on the private housing market. Please provide the following details:

- (a) Will additional staff be employed? If yes, please set out the ranks, salaries and specific job duties of the new recruits.

Asked by: Hon. LEONG Kah-kit, Alan

Reply:

The estimate for 2008-09 is \$17.2 million, which is \$2.1 million (13.9%) higher than the revised estimate for 2007-08. This is for conducting a consultancy study to further enhance the collection and analysis of statistics related to the private housing market. No additional manpower will be involved.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)019

Question Serial No.

1602

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (3) Appeal Panel (Housing)

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Under the indicator for the “number of appeals received”, the estimated number of cases for 2008 is 2 520, representing a 13% drop comparing to the actual number of 2 903 cases in 2007. Why then that the financial provision for the Appeal Panel (Housing) for 2008-09 does not fall but increases by 28% as compared to that in 2007-08? What are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. LEONG Kah-kit, Alan

Reply:

As a result of the upsurge in appeal cases, the number of backlog cases rose sharply in the past few years. As at the end of January 2008, 971 appeal cases were awaiting hearing and the average waiting time for an appeal case to be heard was about ten months. Although the estimated number of appeals to be received in 2008 is lower than that in 2007, we need to increase the number of hearing sessions to deal with the backlog cases and shorten the waiting time for scheduled hearings in the future. We therefore plan to strengthen the staffing support of the Secretariat in 2008-09 by creating two additional executive officer grade, one additional assistant clerical officer grade, and two additional clerical assistant grade posts. The estimated expenditure will increase by \$2.6 million as compared with that of 2007-08. In addition, starting from April 2008, the number of Appeal Panel Members will be increased from 79 to 100. Upon implementation of these initiatives, we estimate that the number of hearing sessions can be increased from 294 in 2007 by 146 to 440 in 2008.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

19 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)020

Question Serial No.

1604

Head: 62 Housing Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the indicator of “programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances”, the estimated numbers of rehousing applications processed, offers made for public rental housing and interim housing, and households receiving other housing benefits for 2008 show a significant increase as compared to the actual figures in 2007. Would the Administration inform us of :

- (a) the details of the work, the expenditure and manpower involved; and
- (b) the reasons for the substantial increase in the estimated figures and the details of the programmed clearance exercises and government actions?

Asked by: Hon. LEONG Kah-kit, Alan

Reply:

- (a) The Housing Department (HD) is responsible for providing assistance in rehousing eligible clearances affected by the Government’s land clearances and victims of natural disasters and other emergencies. The work involves verifying their rehousing eligibility, screening rehousing applications referred by the Lands Department (LandsD) and allocating public rental housing or interim housing to eligible applicants, etc.

In 2008-09, it is estimated that the HD will require a staff establishment of 29 non-directorate posts to provide assistance to rehouse clearances affected by clearances, provide assistance to rehouse the occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department’s enforcement actions, and carry out other related work. The related staff cost and other operating expenditure are estimated to be \$16.5 million. We do not have a breakdown of the resources involved solely for carrying out the duties arising from programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances.

- (b) The number of rehousing cases arising from programmed squatter clearances and emergency clearances that require to be processed under Head 62 Programme (4) depends on the actual number of planned clearances undertaken by the LandsD in a particular year. As such, the actual number of rehousing cases in 2007 cannot be compared directly with the estimated number of rehousing cases in 2008. The LandsD is responsible for the clearance programmes, the details of which would only be made public when conducting the pre-clearance registration, so as to ensure that the occupants rehoused are those who are genuinely affected by the programmes. As such, the LandsD is unable to provide the concerned information.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)021

Question Serial No.

1603

Head: 62 Housing Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Has the Government reserved any financial resources to study the resumption of Home Ownership Scheme flats production and the introduction of home ownership loan? If yes, what are the financial resources involved? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. LEONG Kah-kit, Alan

Reply:

Since the repositioning of the housing policy in 2002, the Transport and Housing Bureau (the former Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau) has been closely monitoring the development of the private property market, the turnover of public rental housing and related developments to ensure that the current housing policy is appropriate for present day circumstances. The work does not involve the provision of dedicated financial resources as it forms part of our ongoing duties. If circumstances suggest that there is a need to review the existing housing policy and various subsidised housing schemes (such as the Home Ownership Scheme and the home ownership loans), we will deploy necessary resources for such purposes as appropriate.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)022

Question Serial No.

0982

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

The Housing Department has indicated that it will monitor the regime of self-regulation undertaken by the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong to increase the transparency of sale of uncompleted residential units. How much resources will be deployed by the Department in the monitoring work? What are the manpower and expenditure involved?

Asked by: Hon. CHAN Kam-lam

Reply:

We have been monitoring the operation of developers' self-regulatory regime and paying close attention to the public's views on the sales arrangements for uncompleted residential units. This is to ensure that the existing regime suits the changing market situation and operates effectively. The work involved is ongoing in nature and forms part of the duties of one Principal Assistant Secretary and one Administrative Officer. We do not have a further breakdown of the expenditure involved in this particular duty. We also work together with the Estate Agents Authority and the Consumer Council to monitor sales arrangements for uncompleted residential flats.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)023

Question Serial No.

0983

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (5) Support Services

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

- a) The Housing Department (HD) expects to re-assess the feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government having regard to the need to maintain the average waiting time for family applicants at about three years in 2008-09. On what criteria will HD assess whether it is feasible to return such sites to the Government?
- b) How much manpower and expenditure will the assessment work involve?

Asked by: Hon. CHAN Kam-lam

Reply:

- a) The Government reviews regularly on a quarterly basis the land supply for public housing, the progress of public housing development projects and the amount of public housing flat production, with the objective to maintain the average waiting time of public rental housing (PRH) applicants at around three years, which is also the basic principle under which the feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government is to be assessed. During the planning process, the Housing Authority (HA) will work closely with the Government departments and locals concerned to ensure a smooth implementation of the public housing development programme and that district development needs could be met.

The HA has no intention at present to return any of its planned PRH sites to the Government. To meet the abovementioned objective concerning the average waiting time for PRH, cleared public housing sites will be retained for PRH development as far as possible.

- b) In 2008-09, a provision of \$1.81 million has been reserved for the related work (including the regular reviews of PRH's supply, land search and feasibility assessment of site return), which includes the salary and staff-on-cost of the equivalent of two officers.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)024

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead:

Question Serial No.

1035

Programme: (5) Support Services

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Funding approval for two infrastructure projects are expected to be obtained from the Legislative Council in 2008. What are these projects? What projects are included in the 39 infrastructure projects under construction in 2008?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply:

The two projects for which we expect to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council in 2008 are –

- (a) District and local open spaces adjoining Choi Wan Road public housing development (funding approval obtained from FC on 22 February 2008); and
- (b) Road improvement works in association with the proposed re-alignment of Ngau Tau Kok Fourth Street and Fifth Street and other associated works.

The 39 infrastructure projects which are under construction (including those in the final account stage) in 2008 are listed on the attached sheets.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

The 39 infrastructure projects which are under construction (including those in the final account stage) in 2008 are listed below:

1. Feasibility study for intensification and extension of Tseung Kwan O New Town
2. Planning and development studies on North West New Territories: consultants' fees and site investigation
3. Planning and development studies on North East New Territories: consultants' fees and site investigation
4. Tin Shui Wai further development – remaining engineering infrastructure and site formation works
5. Tin Shui Wai further development – engineering infrastructure and remaining site formation works: consultants' fees and site investigation
6. Tin Shui Wai further development – road junction improvement, site formation and main engineering infrastructure
7. Development near Choi Wan Road and Jordan Valley
8. Development at Anderson Road – consultants' fees and site investigation
9. Development near Choi Wan Road and Jordan Valley – consultants' fees and site investigation
10. Site formation at Lung Wah Street
11. Demolition of buildings, structures and chimneys above ground at Kennedy Town incineration plant and abattoir
12. District open space adjoining Kwai Chung Estate
13. Local open space adjoining Tseung Kwan O Area 73B public housing development
14. District open space adjoining Sau Mau Ping public housing development
15. Trunk Road T7 in Ma On Shan
16. Public transport interchange at Area 3A, Tung Chung
17. District and local open spaces adjoining Choi Wan Road public housing development
18. Development at Anderson Road
19. Demolition of buildings at Cheung Sha Wan police married quarters, a school and a medical clinic
20. Primary school in Area 110, Tin Shui Wai
21. First primary school in Area 105, Tin Shui Wai
22. First primary school in Area 102, Tin Shui Wai
23. Second primary school in Area 102, Tin Shui Wai
24. Third primary school in Area 102, Tin Shui Wai
25. Primary school in Area 101, Tin Shui Wai
26. Secondary school in Area 110, Tin Shui Wai
27. First secondary school in Area 102, Tin Shui Wai
28. Second secondary school in Area 102, Tin Shui Wai
29. Secondary school in Area 101, Tin Shui Wai
30. Reprovisioning of Civil Aid Service and Fire Services Department facilities at Site 17, West Kowloon Reclamation, Yau Ma Tei

31. Re-provisioning of the Police Dog Unit and Force Search Unit from the Burma Lines Site to Sha Ling
32. Construction of a footbridge at Ap Lei Chau Bridge Road and improvements to Ap Lei Chau Bridge Road and Ap Lei Chau Drive
33. Sai Sha Road widening between Kam Ying Road and future Trunk Road T7 junction
34. Fresh and flushing water reticulation systems for Tin Shui Wai Reserve Zone, stage 1
35. Mainlaying within development near Choi Wan Road and Jordan Valley
36. Remaining waterworks for development near Choi Wan Road and Jordan Valley
37. Additional treatment and water transfer facilities for the metropolitan area and north-eastern New Territories – stage 1, construction of Tai Po treatment works and pumping station
38. Ngau Tam Mei treatment works – construction
39. Mainlaying within development at Anderson Road

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)025

Question Serial No.

1036

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (5) Support Services

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Considering that non-elderly one-person applicants have to wait longer and longer for public housing, will the Administration deploy resources to study the additional supply of public housing required to shorten their current waiting time while upholding the principle of maintaining the average waiting time for family applicants at three years?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply:

Since 2005, there has been an upsurge in the number of non-elderly one-person applicants for public rental housing (PRH), with many of them being very young and/or living in PRH flats with their families. The Housing Authority (HA) has introduced the "Quota and Points System" (QPS) to rationalise and re-prioritise the allocation of PRH to non-elderly one-person applicants so that those with greater housing needs are accorded priority in the allocation of PRH flats.

Under the QPS, the rehousing priority of non-elderly one-person PRH applicants on the waiting list depends on a number of factors, including their ages when they submit their applications, their waiting time and whether they already have PRH tenancies. As such, the waiting time of these applicants may vary. Non-elderly one-person applicants with pressing housing needs may seek earlier allocation of PRH flats under the Express Flat Allocation Scheme or Compassionate Rehousing.

The HA reviewed the operation of the QPS in 2007 and considered that the existing arrangements had contributed to a better utilisation of public housing resources and can provide assistance to non-elderly one-person applicants in accordance with the degrees of urgency of their need for housing assistance.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)026

Question Serial No.

1037

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

For the sale of uncompleted residential units, please give the numbers of enquiries and complaints processed annually from 2004-05 to 2006-07. Regarding the monitoring of the compliance with the relevant guidelines of the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong (REDA), how many developments are checked and inspected in a year? How many non-compliance cases have been detected and how many appeal cases have been processed under the Estate Agents Ordinance?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply:

In 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07, we handled 15, 18 and 16 enquiries and complaints respectively related to the sale of first-hand residential properties, including uncompleted residential properties.

To monitor developers' implementation of REDA's guidelines, we arrange inspections of the sale sites of first-hand residential properties from time to time. The number of inspections arranged varies from one year to another according to the number of developments put up for sale and the sale situation. In the past year, we have not received any report on developers' non-compliance with REDA's guidelines.

In 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07, the Appeal Panel (Estate Agents Ordinance) handled 47, 57 and 62 appeal cases respectively.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)027

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Question Serial No.

1038

Programme: (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

As the financial resources will increase by nearly 14% in the estimates for 2008-09, how much manpower will be increased and which areas of work will be enhanced by the Administration to monitor the sale of uncompleted residential units?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply:

The increase in the financial provision for 2008-09 is for conducting a consultancy study to further enhance the collection and analysis of statistics related to the private housing market. No additional manpower will be involved.

Signature	_____
Name in block letters	Thomas C Y CHAN
Post Title	Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
Date	27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)028

Question Serial No.

1039

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

With the substantial increase in the rehousing work that requires to be dealt with and in the number of offers that requires to be made for public rental housing or interim housing as a result of the programmed squatter/emergency clearances or illegal rooftop structure clearances, it is estimated that in 2008 the number of applications in relation to programmed squatter/emergency clearances will increase by eight to nine times as compared to that in 2007 and that the number of applications in relation to illegal rooftop structure clearances will double. What are the reasons? With the expenditure estimated to increase by nearly 14%, how much manpower will be increased to cope with the work?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply:

The number of rehousing cases to be processed under Head 62 Programme (4) depends on the actual number of planned clearances and enforcement actions undertaken by the Lands Department and Buildings Department in a particular year. As such, the actual number of rehousing cases in 2007 cannot be compared directly with the estimated number of rehousing cases in 2008.

In 2008-09, it is estimated that a staff establishment of 29 non-directorate posts in the Housing Department (HD) is required to discharge the rehousing related duties. The related staff cost and other operating expenditure are estimated to be \$16.5 million. Although it is expected that the number of rehousing cases will increase in 2008, the HD will flexibly deploy its manpower resources as appropriate to cope with the workload to ensure that the quality of service will be maintained and the affected residents rehoused as soon as practicable.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)029

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Question Serial No.

1040

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

The revised estimate for 2007-08 is 6.8% higher than the original estimate for 2007-08 under this Programme. What are the reasons, and how much manpower has been increased?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply:

Under the Programme of Building Control, the 2007-08 Revised Estimate is higher than the 2007-08 Original Estimate by about \$4 million (i.e. 6.8%). The increase is mainly due to the 2007 civil service pay rise and adjustment of the provision for staff on-cost.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)030

Question Serial No.

1041

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

In 2007, the Independent Checking Unit issued 996 removal orders against unauthorised building works in Home Ownership Scheme/Tenant Purchase Scheme buildings, which is an increase by more than three times compared with the figure of 2006. What types of unauthorised building works are they and which regions are involved?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply:

The Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department issued 996 statutory orders under the Planned Survey Programme in 2007. This is a territory-wide programme applicable to all Home Ownership Scheme courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates. The unauthorised building works removed are mainly canopies and flower racks erected on the external wall of the building.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)031

Question Serial No.

2136

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

It has been stated that due to the clearance of illegal rooftop structures, the number of rehousing applications and offers made for public rental housing and interim housing are expected to increase significantly in 2008. Would the Government inform us of the measures which can ensure the prompt rehousing of the clearers without affecting the waiting time of other Waiting List applicants?

Asked by: Hon. CHAN Wai-yip, Albert

Reply:

The number of rehousing cases arising from clearances of illegal rooftop structures to be processed under Head 62 Programme (4) depends very much on the actual number of enforcement actions undertaken by the Buildings Department in a particular year. Although it is expected that the number of rehousing cases will increase in 2008, the Housing Department will flexibly deploy manpower as appropriate to cope with the workload to ensure that the quality of service will be maintained and the affected residents rehoused as soon as practicable.

In planning the public housing construction programme, we have taken into account the demand from various sources including eligible occupants affected by enforcement actions by the Buildings Department, to ensure that the objective of keeping the average waiting time for family applicants at about three years will be met.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)032

Question Serial No.

2320

Head: 62 Housing Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (3) Appeal Panel (Housing)

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

The Housing Department will increase the manpower and the number of hearing sessions of the Appeal Panel (Housing) in 2008-09. Please advise on the following:

- a. Are there any outstanding appeal cases? If yes, what are the number and the average outstanding time of such cases?
- b. Concerning the indicator of the "number of hearings arranged", 2 640 hearings will be arranged in 2008-09, an increase of 120 cases over the indicator of the "number of appeals received" of 2 520 for the same period. In other words, the number of outstanding cases that can be heard by the Appeal Panel (Housing) per year is only 120. Are there any plans to further enhance the support to the Panel so that the outstanding cases can be heard as soon as possible?
- c. Although more hearing sessions have been arranged, the actual number of appeals heard is less than that scheduled. What are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

- a. As at the end of January 2008, 971 appeal cases were awaiting hearing and the average waiting time for an appeal case to be heard is about ten months.
- b. To expedite the processing of appeal cases and to shorten the waiting time for scheduled hearings, we plan to create two additional executive officer grade, one additional assistant clerical officer grade and two additional clerical assistant grade posts in 2008-09. The estimated expenditure will increase by \$2.6 million as compared with that of 2007-08. In addition, starting from April 2008, the number of Appeal Panel Members will be increased from 79 to 100. We will closely monitor the number of cases pending hearing and review the staffing support of the Secretariat having regard to the actual situation.
- c. The reason for the lower number of appeals actually heard compared with the number of hearings arranged is that hearings may be deferred (for reasons such as absence of appellants owing to illness or on job-related grounds) or cancelled (for reasons such as withdrawal of appeals by appellants before hearings). As it is a statutory requirement for the Secretary of the Appeal Panel to issue a notice of hearing to the appellant 14 days before the hearing date, even if the scheduled hearing is not held, we would not be able to make arrangements for other cases to be heard in the session vacated.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

19 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)033

Question Serial No.

2410

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

With the divestment of the Housing Authority (HA)'s retail and car-parking premises, what impact does it have on the short-term and long-term estimates and staff establishments in regard to the building control duties of the Housing Department?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply:

Upon the divestment of the majority of the retail and carparking premises of the HA in November 2005, the premises concerned has come under the control of the Buildings Ordinance. The Director of Buildings had delegated the powers to the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department for carrying out building control duties for such premises under the Buildings Ordinance. Before the HA's retail and carparking premises were divested, we have prepared the expenditure and manpower estimates and redeploy staff resources to undertake the building control duties, to ensure both the short term and long term operational needs would be met. These statutory duties have been funded under Head 62 since 2006.

We would review the resources requirement should any new statutory duties or new initiatives under this programme arise in the future.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)034

Question Serial No.

2411

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding the Planned Survey of buildings under the Home Ownership Scheme and Tenants Purchase Scheme, please provide the details of the survey schedule and the estimates of expenditure. When will the entire programme be completed?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply:

In mid-2004, the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department formulated a five-year survey programme for all Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) estates. Under the programme, the ICU would identify unauthorised and dangerous building works and inspect the condition of common areas, external walls and drainage pipes.

We have completed the preliminary surveys to assess the general conditions of all buildings concerned for identifying serious cases for subsequent comprehensive surveys. Upon completion of the comprehensive surveys, the ICU, under the delegated authority from the Director of Buildings, will carry out enforcement actions in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and issue advisory letters or statutory orders to require the owners or owners' corporations to demolish the unauthorised building works or carry out repair works within a specified period of time (usually two months). The comprehensive surveys for the courts and estates concerned are expected to be completed in mid-2009.

Upon completion of the abovementioned five-year programme, we will continue the survey for other courts and estates under a rolling programme, in line with BD's annual large scale operation programme to tackle unauthorised building and maintenance works. The surveys will be conducted following the existing guidelines of the BD.

The abovementioned surveys form part of the duties of the ICU. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure involved in carrying out this particular duty.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)035

Question Serial No.

2412

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

The actual figure of removal orders issued in 2007 by the Housing Department against unauthorised building works was 996 while the estimated figure for 2008 is reduced to 300. What are the reasons for such a substantial decrease?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply:

The Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department has completed the survey for 27 buildings in Home Ownership Scheme courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates in 2007. The survey is to identify unauthorised and dangerous building works and to inspect the conditions of internal common areas, external walls and drainage pipes. Upon completion of the comprehensive surveys, the ICU, under the delegated authority from the Director of Buildings, will carry out enforcement actions in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and issue advisory letters or statutory orders to require the owners or owners' corporations to demolish the unauthorised building works (UBW) or carry out repair works within a specified period of time (usually two months).

The relatively higher number of removal orders issued in 2007 is an isolated case, largely due to the higher number of UBW identified in some courts than the number estimated during the preliminary survey. With reference to the earlier assessment conducted during the preliminary survey on the courts and estates to be surveyed in 2008, we expect to issue 300 UBW removal orders in 2008. Since the courts and estates surveyed in different years are different, the number of removal orders issued in different years cannot be directly compared.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)036

Question Serial No.

2413

Head: 62 Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Has the Housing Department worked out an arrangement with the Hong Kong Housing Society for the sale of the latter's unsold subsidised sale flats? If yes, please inform us of the sales programme and the basis for pricing.

Asked by: Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply:

The Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) is now selling its last batch of 582 surplus Flat-For-Sale Scheme flats concurrently with the Hong Kong Housing Authority's Phase 3 sale of its Surplus Home Ownership Scheme flats. In determining the prices of the flats, the HKHS has taken into account the prices of comparable flats in the market and the affordability of eligible applicants. The HKHS also holds some 1 000 surplus Sandwich Class Housing Scheme flats, the sales arrangements of which are yet to be decided.

Signature

Name in block letters

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

Date

27 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)037

Question Serial No.

2414

Head: 62 Housing Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (3) Appeal Panel (Housing)

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

The Housing Department has indicated that the staffing support of the Appeal Panel (Housing) Secretariat will be strengthened in order to expedite the hearing of appeals. Please advise us of the newly-increased staff establishment and the estimated expenditure.

Asked by: Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply:

We plan to create two additional executive officer grade, one additional assistant clerical officer grade, and two additional clerical assistants grade posts in 2008-09 in order to expedite the processing of appeals. The estimated expenditure will increase by \$2.6 million as compared with that of 2007-08. In addition, starting from April 2008, the number of Appeal Panel Members will be increased from 79 to 100.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

19 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)038

Question Serial No.

2415

Head: 62 Housing Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

It is estimated that there will be a substantial increase in the number of applications that the Housing Department needs to process in relation to programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances in 2008. Please provide the details as to how much resources will be allocated for this purpose?

Asked by: Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply:

In 2008-09, it is estimated that the Housing Department (HD) will require a staff establishment of 29 non-directorate posts to discharge the duties in providing assistance to rehouse clearances affected by clearances, providing assistance to rehouse the occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department's enforcement actions, and carrying out other related work. The related staff cost and other operating expenditure are estimated to be \$16.5 million. We do not have a breakdown of the resources involved solely for carrying out the duties arising from programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances.

Signature

Name in block letters

Post Title

Date

Thomas C Y CHAN

Permanent Secretary for
Transport and Housing (Housing)

26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)039

Question Serial No.

2416

Head: 62 Housing Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Please advise on the utilisation rates of bedspaces in the transit centres under the purview of the Housing Department in 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08.

Asked by: Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply:

In 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08 (as at 29.2.2008), the utilisation rates of the bedspaces in the transit centres of the Housing Department were 15.2%, 16.2% and 27.6% respectively.

Signature	_____
Name in block letters	Thomas C Y CHAN
Post Title	Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
Date	26 March 2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)040

Question Serial No.

2018

Head: 162 Rating and Valuation Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Landlord and Tenant Services

Controlling Officer: Commissioner of Rating and Valuation

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

In order to reveal the effect of removal of rent control and security of tenure on premises occupied by the low-income group (e.g. cubicle apartment, bedspace apartment, etc.), will the Government allocate any resources in 2008-09 to conduct a rental survey on these premises so that corresponding rent control policy can be drawn up?

Asked by: Hon. TO Kun-sun, James

Reply:

Various rent control measures imposed on the private residential rental markets were removed after the 2004 Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) (Amendment) Ordinance was passed by the Legislative Council in June 2004 with a view to promoting the free operation and healthy development of the market. Changes in private residential rentals are influenced by a number of factors, including the overall economic conditions, sentiments of the property market as well as the development of the district concerned.

At present, Rating and Valuation Department compiles rental statistics of the private domestic units by floor area range. We have no plan to conduct a survey on the rental rates of a particular type of premises, such as bedspace apartment and cubicle apartment. Hence, no resources are earmarked in 2008-09 for the purpose.

Signature _____

Name in block letters MRS. MIMI BROWN

Post Title Commissioner of Rating and Valuation

Date 28.3.2008

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

THB(H)041

Question Serial No.

2019

Head: 162 Rating and Valuation Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (4) Landlord and Tenant Services

Controlling Officer: Commissioner of Rating and Valuation

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Please inform the Committee on the following issues:

- the number of cases of mediatory services provided on tenancy matters in 2006-07 and 2007-08 and the result; and
- the estimated number of cases of mediatory services required in 2008-09.

Asked by: Hon. TO Kun-sun, James

Reply:

Rating and Valuation Department (RVD) handled 296 and around 300 mediation cases on tenancy matters in 2006-07 and 2007-08 respectively. We anticipate a similar number of mediation cases in 2008-09.

The results of the cases depend on individual circumstances. In some cases, the landlord and tenant concerned reached agreement upon receipt of mediation services provided by RVD. In other cases, the landlord and/or tenant concerned may, upon considering RVD's advice on their respective rights and obligations under the tenancy, decide to resort to legal actions for resolving the dispute.

Signature _____

Name in block letters MRS. MIMI BROWN

Post Title Commissioner of Rating and Valuation

Date 26.3.2008