

**Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in
examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07**

**Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
Session No. : 12**

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Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)001

Question Serial No.

0120

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Please provide the details of the work, the expenditure and the manpower involved in “ensuring necessary Multi-Disciplinary Response Team measures are in readiness for any outbreak of communicable diseases in Hong Kong” under matters requiring special attention in 2006-07.

Asked by : Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply :

“Ensuring necessary Multi-Disciplinary Response Team measures are in readiness for any outbreak of communicable diseases in Hong Kong” is a contingency measure. With delegated authority from the Director of Buildings, in case of such outbreak or suspected outbreak in buildings sold under the Home Ownership Scheme and the Tenants Purchase Scheme, the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department will work with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Department of Health to inspect the drainage system of the building(s) concerned in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Multi-Disciplinary Response Team. The Department of Health will then take appropriate follow-up actions. As this is a contingency measure, the Independent Checking Unit will deploy its existing resources to cope with the additional workload, having regard to the situation and the scale of drainage inspections required. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure and manpower involved in this particular duty.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)002

Question Serial No.

0121

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Regarding the planned surveys in Home Ownership Scheme courts and/or Tenants Purchase Scheme estates conducted by the Housing Department in 2005, how many buildings were surveyed, what the locations were, and how much expenditure was involved?

Asked by : Hon. LEUNG Yiu-chung

Reply :

In 2005-06, the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department had conducted surveys of 55 buildings in six courts (King Ming Court, Shun Chi Court, Hiu Tsui Court, Yee Tsui Court, Siu Shan Court and Kwong Lam Court) under the Home Ownership Scheme and one estate (Tung Tau (II) Estate) under the Tenants Purchase Scheme with a view to identifying and removing unauthorised and dangerous building works. The expenditure incurred was fully funded by the Housing Authority. We do not have further breakdowns of the expenditure and manpower involved in conducting these surveys.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)003

Question Serial No.

0122

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

In which Home Ownership Scheme courts and/or Tenants Purchase Scheme estates will planned surveys be conducted in 2006? What is the estimated expenditure?

Asked by : Hon. LEUNG Yiu-chung

Reply :

In 2006-07, the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department will carry out surveys in about 60 buildings in six Home Ownership Scheme courts and five Tenants Purchase Scheme estates with a view to identifying and removing unauthorised and dangerous building works. Priority will be determined with reference to a number of factors, including the number of unauthorised building works, the maintenance conditions of common areas and external walls, the number of complaints received, the overall hygienic condition and the age of the buildings, etc. The surveys form part of the duties of the Independent Checking Unit. We do not have further breakdowns of the expenditure and manpower involved in carrying out this particular duty.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)004

Question Serial No.

0368

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

The Housing Department sets the attainment rate of the target of advising on restaurant license applications under the Application Vetting Panel system within 14 days at only 80% in 2006. Please explain why the key performance measure cannot be set at 100%.

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply :

Commercial properties of the Housing Authority divested in November 2005 are subject to the regulation and control of the Buildings Ordinance. The Director of Buildings has delegated the authority for exercising building control over these divested buildings to the Independent Checking Unit. As the methods for calculating building area and discharge value previously adopted by the Housing Authority differ slightly from those used by the Buildings Department, in processing the licensing applications the Independent Checking Unit has to adjust and re-calculate the figures using the Buildings Department's methods and standards. In some individual complex cases, this procedure may take a little more time and may as a result lengthen the vetting process. Due to this consideration, for 2006 we have set the attainment rate of this performance target at 80%. The Independent Checking Unit will accumulate the necessary experience and tidy up the building plans to ensure that the attainment rate can be improved to 95% or above.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)005

Question Serial No.

0615

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Please provide the details of the relevant programme, the required expenditure on recurrent and estimated contingencies and the manning scale involved in the liaison with other government departments to ensure that necessary Multi-Disciplinary Response Team measures are in readiness for any outbreak of communicable diseases in Hong Kong.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply :

“Ensuring necessary Multi-Disciplinary Response Team measures are in readiness for any outbreak of communicable diseases in Hong Kong” is a contingency measure. With delegated authority from the Director of Buildings, in case of such outbreak or suspected outbreak in buildings sold under the Home Ownership Scheme and the Tenants Purchase Scheme, the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department will work with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Department of Health to inspect the drainage system of the building(s) concerned in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Multi-Disciplinary Response Team. The Department of Health can then take appropriate follow-up actions. As this is a contingency measure, the Independent Checking Unit will deploy its existing resources to cope with the additional workload, having regard to the situation and the scale of drainage inspections required. There is no need to set aside resources for the implementation of this contingency measure. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure and manpower involved in this particular duty.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)006

Question Serial No.

1004

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

Programme : (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

The estimate of \$10.0 million for 2006-07 is the provision for the salaries and on-cost of nine staff. Compared to the provision for the other Programmes, the expenses for Programme (2) are higher. For example, the average cost per staff under Programme (3) Appeal Panel (Housing) is only \$510,000. Please explain in detail why the average cost per staff under this Programme is higher.

Asked by : Hon. TIEN Pei-chun, James

Reply :

Because the scope and nature of work for each Programme under Head 62 are different, staff of different grades and ranks with different remunerations are required. Accordingly, the average cost per staff varies under each Programme.

The work under Programme (2) is mainly to maintain an orderly, fair and free environment to facilitate the stable and healthy development of the private residential property market. Such work involves policy matters. Of the provision of \$10 million for 2006-07 for this Programme, \$7.1 million is for the salaries and on-cost of 9 staff (i.e. 1 AOSGC, 1 SAO, 1 AO, 1 CEO, 1 EOI, 1 ACO, 1 PSI and 2 PSII). The average cost per staff is \$0.79 million.

The work under Programme (3) is mainly to provide administrative and secretarial support to the Appeal Panel (Housing). Of the provision of \$5.1 million for that Programme, \$4.1 million is for the salaries and on-cost of 10 staff (i.e. 4 EOI, 3 ACO and 3 CA). The average cost per staff is \$0.41 million.

Compared to Programme (3), the scope of work under Programme (2) is wider and the nature of work is much more complex. The work, therefore, needs to be handled by staff at more senior levels. Hence, the average cost per staff is higher than Programme (3).

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)007

Question Serial No.

1074

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

Programme : (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Regarding the arrangement of paying singleton and doubleton allowances in lieu of rehousing to eligible applicants, please provide details of the following for 2004 and 2005 respectively:

- (i) the total number of affected singleton and doubleton households and the number of cases of which the households opted for allowances;
- (ii) a breakdown of the cases concerned by types of housing cleared (illegal rooftop structures, squatter huts, etc.);
- (iii) the amount of allowances; and
- (iv) the manpower involved for the departments concerned.

Asked by : Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply :

- (i) In 2004, of the 586 one-person and two-person households affected by clearances, 12 opted for cash allowances in lieu of rehousing. In 2005, of the 495 one-person and two-person households affected by clearances, 29 opted for such allowances.
- (ii) The following is a breakdown of the cases concerned :

| 2004 | Squatter Clearance | | Rooftop Structure Clearance | | Total |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| | One-person Household | Two-person Household | One-person Household | Two-person Household | |
| Number of households affected by clearances | 84 | 1 | 194 | 307 | 586 |
| Number of households opted for allowances | 1 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 12 |

| 2005 | Squatter Clearance | | Rooftop Structure Clearance | | Total |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| | One-person Household | Two-person Household | One-person Household | Two-person Household | |
| Number of households affected by clearances | 64 | 41 | 202 | 188 | 495 |
| Number of households opted for allowances | 16 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 29 |

- (iii) The amounts of such allowances disbursed in 2004 and 2005 were around \$470,000 and \$1,200,000 respectively.
- (iv) Disbursement of cash allowances is part and parcel of the duties undertaken by squatter clearance staff of the Housing Department in the course of rehousing households affected by clearances. It is not possible to itemise the manpower involved in this particular aspect of duty. Following the transfer of squatter clearance and control duties to the Lands Department from 1 April 2006 onwards, these duties will be undertaken by the 15 staff members of the newly set up Clearance Housing Unit of the Housing Department.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Regarding the on-going conduction of planned surveys in Home Ownership Scheme and/ or Tenants Purchase Scheme buildings, will the authorities inform us:

- (a) of the details, staffing provision, expenditure required and target (the number and types of buildings to be included) of the surveys?
- (b) of the works category of the completed and outstanding projects in the surveys, and the anticipated completion dates of the latter?
- (c) whether the surveys on the repair and improvement to debonded tiles in public housing carried out by the Housing Authority in 2005-06 are under the purview of the Housing Department? If yes, please provide the survey results.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply :

- (a) In mid 2004, the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department started a five-year survey programme in all Home Ownership Scheme courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates with a view to identifying and removing unauthorised and dangerous building works. The survey programme will cover 408 547 units in 146 Home Ownership Scheme courts and 39 Tenants Purchase Scheme estates. Priority for the survey is determined with reference to a number of factors, including the number of unauthorised building works, the maintenance conditions of common areas and external walls, the number of complaints received, the overall hygiene condition and the age of the buildings, etc. In 2006-07, the Independent Checking Unit will carry out surveys in about 60 buildings in six Home Ownership Scheme courts and five Tenants Purchase Scheme estates. The surveys form part of the duties of the Independent Checking Unit. We do not have further breakdowns of the expenditure and manpower involved in carrying out this particular duty.

- (b) The surveys themselves do not involve any works. So far, we have started surveys in 89 buildings in two Tenants Purchase Scheme estates and 11 Home Ownership Scheme courts. Upon completion of the surveys, the Independent Checking Unit, with delegated authority from the Director of Buildings, will carry out enforcement actions in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and issue advice letters or statutory orders requiring the owners or owners' corporations to demolish the illegal structures, demolish or rectify any dangerous structure or carry out repair works within a specified period, usually within two months.
- (c) Inspections relating to debonded tiles in public housing are under the charge of the Housing Authority and outside the ambit of Head 62. For information, inspections of all public housing blocks beset with tile-debonding were completed in August 2005. The necessary follow-up repairs were undertaken immediately after the inspections. The remaining on-going repairs will be completed by mid-2006.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 13 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

In relation to the proposed transfer of squatter clearance and control duties for the whole territory to the Lands Department starting 1 April 2006, please provide the following information:

- (a) the number of staff to be reduced;
- (b) whether the reduced estimated expenditure of \$244.7 million will be transferred to the account of the squatter control offices under the Lands Department;
- (c) which department will undertake the formulation and modification of squatter policy upon transfer of the above duties; and
- (d) whether the transfer of duties will lead to any changes to the 2006-07 squatter policy.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply :

- (a) Upon transfer of squatter clearance and control duties to the Lands Department on 1 April 2006, there will be corresponding adjustments to the staff establishments under Head 62 and Head 91. 323 staff members of the Housing Department will be transferred to the Lands Department to carry out squatter clearance and control duties, while 15 will be retained for setting up a Clearance Housing Unit to continue to provide rehousing arrangements to eligible households affected by clearances, natural disasters and other emergency incidents.
- (b) \$165 million will be transferred from the Housing Department to the Lands Department on 1 April 2006 following the transfer of the squatter control and clearance duties. In addition, the ambit under Head 62 has been reviewed, re-organised and expanded to cover other programmes of activities, including building control, private housing and Appeal Panel (Housing).

- (c) As from 1 April 2006, the Lands Department will be responsible for squatter clearance and control duties for the whole territory. Upon the transfer of such duties, the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau will continue to be responsible for the squatter control policy.
- (d) The transfer of duties mentioned above will not lead to any changes in the existing squatter control policy.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 13 March 2006

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)010

Question Serial No.

1726

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

Programme : (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

On liaising with the Hong Kong Housing Society on making preparations for the sale of its surplus subsidised sale flats, will the Government inform this Council of:

- (a) the current number of surplus courts and flats;
- (b) the details of the sales programmes, including the sales schedules and the number of flats to be offered; and
- (c) whether the liaison work includes coordination of the sales programmes of surplus flats under the Home Ownership Scheme of the Hong Kong Housing Authority and those of the Hong Kong Housing Society, such as setting the selling prices and the sales schedules? If yes, please provide the details.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Kok-long, Joseph

Reply :

- (a) According to figures provided by the Hong Kong Housing Society, it has 2 727 surplus subsidised sale flats. The breakdown is as follows -

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Marina Habitat | 12 flats |
| Verbena Heights | 20 flats |
| Cascades | 83 flats |
| Highland Park | 343 flats |
| Kai Tak Garden Phase II | 472 flats |
| The Pinnacle | 645 flats |
| Tuen Mun Area 4C | 1 152 flats |

- (b) The sales schedules and the number of surplus subsidised sale flats to be offered by the Housing Society are being formulated. The Housing Society agrees in principle to align its sales programme and arrangements with those for surplus flats under the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) of the Housing Authority as far as practicable.
- (c) Our work is mainly to liaise with the Housing Society with a view to aligning the sales programme and arrangements for its surplus subsidized sale flats (including target groups, principles for setting selling prices, mortgage guarantee, and defects liability period, etc.) with those for surplus HOS flats under the Housing Authority as far as practicable.

We will continue to liaise closely with the Housing Society after its sales programme and arrangements have been finalised, to ensure that implementation of its sales programme is well co-ordinated with that of the Housing Authority as far as practicable.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**Head : 62 Housing Department Subhead (No. & title) :Programme : (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon ClearanceControlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and LandsQuestion :

The actual statistics for the number of squatter clearance households allocated public rental housing and interim housing flats in 2004 and 2005 are not available. Will the Government inform this Council of:

- (a) the reasons for the unavailability of the statistics; and
- (b) the number of squatter clearance households failing to pass the income and asset tests and thus not eligible for rehousing in public rental housing in 2005. Among them, how many were not allocated public rental housing flats because the Department did not exercise discretion?

Asked by : Hon. LEE Kok-long, JosephReply :

- (a) The duties and staffing of Programme (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance under Head 62 will be re-organised following the transfer of squatter control and clearance duties for the whole territory to the Lands Department. As from 1 April 2006, the Housing Department will set up a Clearance Housing Unit to continue to provide rehousing arrangements to eligible households affected by clearances, natural disasters and other emergency incidents. Due to such change, we have not provided information on the number of squatter clearance households allocated public rental housing and interim housing flats in 2004 and 2005 in the Controlling Officers' Report. These figures are set out below :

| | 2004 (number of households) | 2005 (number of households) |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Public rental housing | 32 | 76 |
| Interim housing | 3 | 14 |
| Other housing benefits | 4 | 32 |
| Total | 39 | 122 |

- (b) In 2005, the Housing Department carried out income and asset tests on 200 households affected by squatter clearances. Of them, 28 were screened out and not rehoused to public rental housing. Of these 28 households, only three households applied for temporary stay in interim housing. The duration of their stay cannot exceed one year.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 13 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)012

Question Serial No.

1136

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

Programme : (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

As squatter clearance and control duties for the whole territory will be transferred to the Lands Department effective from 1 April 2006, why is there still a provision of \$9.5m estimated for this programme for 2006-07? Please give a detailed account of the expenditure involved.

Asked by : Hon. TIEN Pei-chun, James

Reply :

During squatter clearance operations, the affected households are rehoused to public rental housing or interim housing subject to their eligibility. Hence, while squatter clearance and control duties for the whole territory will be transferred to the Lands Department with effect from 1 April 2006, the Housing Department will continue to discharge the rehousing duties. The Department will form a Clearance Housing Unit to arrange rehousing for eligible households affected by clearances, natural disasters and other emergency incidents. In addition, the Unit will render assistance in rehousing the occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department's enforcement actions. Of the provision of \$9.5 million, 77.9% (i.e. \$7.4 million) covers the salaries and on-cost of the 15 non-directorate grade staff and the remainder is the associated operating expenses.

Details of the 15 non-directorate grade staff are set out as follows :

| Rank | Number of Post |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Housing Manager | 1 |
| Assistant Housing Manager | 2 |
| Housing Officer | 10 |
| Assistant Clerical Officer | 1 |
| Clerical Assistant | 1 |
| Total | 15 |

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)013

Question Serial No.

1143

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Regarding the targets of advising on restaurant licence applications under the Application Vetting Panel system within 14 days and responding to emergencies within three hours on a 24-hour basis as stated in paragraph 5, it is anticipated that the attainment rates are only 80% in 2006 while the targeted rates for the two items are both set at 100%. Please explain why the targets for these two items cannot be achieved.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

Restaurant licence applications

Commercial properties of the Housing Authority divested in November 2005 are subject to the regulation and control of the Buildings Ordinance. The Director of Buildings has delegated the authority for exercising building control over these divested buildings to the Independent Checking Unit. As the methods for calculating building area and discharge value previously adopted by the Housing Authority differ slightly from those used by the Buildings Department, in processing the licensing applications the Independent Checking Unit has to adjust and re-calculate the figures using the Buildings Department's methods and standards. In some individual complex cases, this procedure may take a little more time and may as a result lengthen the vetting process. Due to this consideration, for 2006 we have set the attainment rate of this performance target at 80%. The Independent Checking Unit will accumulate the necessary experience and tidy up the building plans to ensure that the attainment rate can be improved to 95% or above.

Response to emergency

Emergency service is activated in the case of emergencies affecting the safety of buildings and posing imminent danger to life or property. While our aim is to handle all emergencies within the performance target of 3 hours, we envisage that on occasions we may be unable to do so due to the following possible unforeseen circumstances :

- (a) receipt of a great number of emergency calls within a short period of time during a typhoon or other inclement weather situations, causing a delay in response;
- (b) the need for more time to travel where the emergency occurs in a remote area; and
- (c) difficulties in gaining entry to the flat in question owing to resistance of the property owner.

In light of the above, for 2006, the attainment rate of the performance target of handling emergencies within 3 hours is set at 80%. The Independent Checking Unit will handle all emergencies as expeditiously as possible in order to achieve 100% attainment.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)014

Question Serial No.

1144

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

It is stated in Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2006-07 in paragraph 6 that the Housing Department will continue with the programme of planned surveys in Home Ownership Scheme/Tenants Purchase Scheme buildings. Please advise on the details.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

In 2006-07, the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department will carry out surveys in about 60 buildings in 6 Home Ownership Scheme courts and 5 Tenants Purchase Scheme estates with a view to identifying and removing unauthorised and dangerous building works. Priority will be determined with reference to a number of factors, including the number of unauthorised building works, the maintenance conditions of common areas and external walls, the number of complaints received, the overall hygienic condition and the age of the buildings, etc.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

10 March 2006

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)015

Question Serial No.

1145

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

It is stated in Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2006-07 in paragraph 6 that the Housing Department will liaise with other government departments to ensure that necessary Multi-Disciplinary Response Team measures are in readiness for any outbreak of communicable diseases in Hong Kong. Please provide the details of the preparation work.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

“Ensuring necessary Multi-Disciplinary Response Team measures are in readiness for any outbreak of communicable diseases in Hong Kong” is a contingency measure. With delegated authority from the Director of Buildings, in case of such outbreak or suspected outbreak in buildings sold under the Home Ownership Scheme and the Tenants Purchase Scheme, the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department will work with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Department of Health to inspect the drainage system of the building(s) concerned in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Multi-Disciplinary Response Team. The Department of Health can then take appropriate follow-up actions.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)016

Question Serial No.

1146

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

Programme : (2) Private Housing

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

It is stated in Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2006-07 in paragraph 9 that the Housing Department will liaise with the Hong Kong Housing Society to make preparations for the sale of its surplus subsidised sale flats. Please provide the details of the preparation work.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

Our work is mainly to liaise with the Hong Kong Housing Society on the formulation of the sales programme and arrangements (including target groups, principles for setting selling prices, mortgage guarantee, and defects liability period, etc.) for its 2 700 odd surplus subsidised sale flats. The Housing Society agrees in principle to align its sales programme and arrangements with those for surplus flats under the Home Ownership Scheme of the Housing Authority as far as practicable. The detailed arrangements are being worked out by the Housing Society.

We will continue to liaise closely with the Housing Society after its sales programme and arrangements have been finalised, to ensure that implementation of its sales programme is well co-ordinated with that of the Housing Authority as far as practicable.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

10 March 2006

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)017

Question Serial No.

1147

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (3) Appeal Panel (Housing)

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

It is stated in paragraph 12 that the indicator for the number of hearing days for 2006 is 210. What measures will the Housing Department take to speed up the hearing process so that the number of hearing days can be reduced?

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

The time required for hearing by the Appeal Panel (Housing) depends on the complexity of the cases. More time is required for hearing complicated cases. Moreover, sufficient time must be allowed for the appellant to state his/her grounds of appeal in the hearing. For this reason, the Housing Department should not seek to speed up the hearing process in order to reduce the number of hearing days. As the number of appeal cases received in 2005 has increased, there is an accumulation of unheard cases. The Housing Department has arranged for the addition of three officer-grade and clerical-grade staff members for the Secretariat and planned to take in more than ten additional members for the Appeal Panel, so that the number of hearing days can be increased in 2006 and the waiting time for hearing appeal cases can be shortened.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)018

Question Serial No.

1148

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (3) Appeal Panel (Housing)

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

It is stated in Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2006-07 in paragraph 13 that the Housing Department indicates that it will continue measures to cope with the increase in caseload, including strengthening staffing support and increasing the number of Members of the Appeal Panel (Housing). Please provide the details on this.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

In view of the accumulation of unheard cases resulting from the increase in the number of appeals received in 2005, arrangements have been made for the addition of three officer-grade and clerical-grade staff members to the Secretariat and more than ten additional members to the Appeal Panel (Housing), so that the number of hearing days can be increased in 2006 and the waiting time for hearing can be shortened.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)019

Question Serial No.

1149

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

It is stated in Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2006-07 in paragraph 18 that the Housing Department will co-ordinate the use of the transit centres under its purview. Please advise on the details and provide information on the number, locations, facilities and capacities of the transit centres.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

The Housing Department's transit centres are aimed to provide temporary accommodation for people in need of urgent shelter as a result of natural disasters, emergencies and government actions. Apart from squatter households affected by clearances, the transit centres also accommodate persons whose public housing tenancies have been terminated and homeless persons referred by other government departments such as bankrupts referred by bailiffs, people affected by closure orders issued by the Buildings Department, and street sleepers and victims of emergencies referred by the District Offices. The Housing Department will co-ordinate with relevant government departments for the use of transit centres to ensure that those in need will receive immediate assistance.

The Housing Department currently operates three transit centres. They are located in Wong Chuk Hang, Po Tin and Shek Lei, providing about 700 bedspaces. Transit centres only serve as temporary shelters. The facilities include bedspaces, lockers for placing personal belongings, and communal kitchens and toilets. Detailed information on the transit centres is as follows:

| Transit Centres | Locations | Number of Bedspaces |
|------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Wong Chuk Hang | Nam Fung Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong | 242 |
| Po Tin | Po Tin Estate, Tuen Mun | 408 |
| Shek Lei | Shek Lei Estate, Tsuen Wan | 40 |

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Total | 690 |
|--------------|------------|

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)020

Question Serial No.

1189

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Under Programme (1) Building Control, one of the functions of the Independent Checking Unit is to process licensing/registration referrals by government departments (e.g. restaurants, places of public entertainment and tutorial schools). The Buildings Department, however, also performs this function.

In this respect, is there overlapping of the above function in the two departments? How is the work distributed? What are the implications of such distribution of work for government finances and staffing requirements?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Hok-ming

Reply :

With respect to processing licensing/registration application referrals from the relevant Licensing Authorities, the Independent Checking Unit of the Housing Department is responsible for applications pertaining to the Housing Authority's divested retail and commercial properties while the Buildings Department is responsible for applications pertaining to other private buildings. There is no overlapping of duties and financial and staff resources between the two departments.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)021

Question Serial No.

2214

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (3) Appeal Panel (Housing)

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

- (a) It is expected that the number of Members of the Appeal Panel (Housing) will be increased in 2006-07 to cope with the increase in caseload. How many more Members are expected?
- (b) Regarding the increase in the number of Members, is it necessary to amend the existing Housing Ordinance to set the maximum composition of the Appeal Panel (Housing)? What are the implications of such a change for the estimated expenditure?

Asked by : Hon. MA Lik

Reply :

- (a) The Housing Department plans to appoint more than 10 additional Members to the Appeal Panel (Housing) in 2006-07 to cope with the increase in caseload.
- (b) The Housing Ordinance does not prescribe a maximum on the numbers of Appeal Panel members. As members serve on the Appeal Panel on a voluntary basis, increasing the number of members will not have any implications on the estimated expenditure.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)022

Question Serial No.

2232

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

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

Programme : (3) Appeal Panel (Housing)

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Regarding the "number of appeals received", the indicator set for 2006 shows an increase of 50 cases as compared with the actual figure of 2005 but the number of hearing days has increased by only 43 days. Please give an account on how the Government can manage to increase the hearing days by this small number with the increased number of cases.

What are the staff and financial implications arising from the relevant arrangements?

Asked by : Hon. CHAN Kam-lam

Reply :

Normally, a few appeal cases are heard in each hearing day. The actual number of cases handled in each hearing day depends on the complexity of the cases. As the number of appeals received in 2005 has increased, there is an accumulation of unheard cases. The Housing Department has arranged for the addition of three officer-grade and clerical-grade staff members for the Secretariat and planned to take in more than 10 additional members for the Appeal Panel, so that the number of hearing days can be increased in 2006 and the waiting time for hearing appeal cases can be shortened.

The additional cost for the above arrangements is about \$1.2 million which has been included in the 2006-07 Estimates.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 13 March 2006

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)023

Question Serial No.

2244

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 62 Housing Department Subhead (No. & title) : 000 Operational expenses

Programme :

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing)

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

The departmental expenditure for 2006-07 under Operational expenses is estimated to be \$88,827,000. On this, would the Government inform us of the details of the departmental expenditure and whether the expenses incurred for contracts for various outsourced services are included.

Asked by : Hon. CHAN Yuen-han

Reply :

Head 62 covers the four major activities funded from General Revenue, including building control, private housing, Appeal Panel (Housing) and Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance. The construction, management and operation of the public housing programme and other activities under charge of the Housing Authority are not included. Details of the provisions for Head 62 Housing Department in 2006-07 are as follows :

| | <u>\$ Million</u> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Salaries, On-costs & Other allowances | 76.7 |
| Other Expenses | 6.3 |
| Share of Head Office Expenses | 5.8 |
| Total | 88.8 |

Expenditure on the outsourced cleansing, security and maintenance services funded under Head 62 has been included in "Other Expenses" set out above, with the contract costs estimated at about \$0.6 million.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date 10 March 2006