

**Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in
examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08**

**Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
Session No. : 13**

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HPLB(H)004	0009	Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick	62	(2) Private Housing
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**Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in
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**Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
Session No. : 13**

Reply Serial No.	Question Serial No.	Name of Member	Head	Programme
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Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)001

Question Serial No.

0006

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 target "advising on restaurant license applications under the Application Vetting Panel system within 12 working days" under this Programme, will the Government inform us:

- (1) of the details of work, the expenditure and the manpower involved;
- (2) of the reasons for not achieving the target of 100% for 2006 and 2007; and
- (3) whether the progress of work has been affected by the implementation of 5-day week?

Asked by : Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply :

- (1) In accordance with the current licensing requirements, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will refer applications for restaurant licenses for the Housing Authority's divested retail and carparking properties to the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department for advice on structural stability and fire protection provisions of the premises concerned. Divested commercial properties of the Housing Authority are subject to the regulation and control of the Buildings Ordinance. The Building Authority has delegated to the ICU the authority for exercising building control over these divested buildings. It is anticipated that the ICU would process about 600 licensing/registration applications in 2007. Giving advice on licensing applications forms part of the duties of the ICU. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure and manpower involved in carrying out this particular duty.
- (2) The methods and standards previously adopted by the Housing Authority to calculate the building areas and discharge values differ slightly from those stipulated in the Buildings Department's code of practice applicable to private buildings. Therefore, in providing advice on licensing applications, the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) has to adjust and re-calculate the figures following the Buildings Department's code of

practice. In some complicated cases, it may take a little more time to complete the vetting procedure. Nevertheless, as the advice of ICU would normally be sent to the FEHD and the applicants before the relevant Application Panel Meeting, the progress of processing the application would not be affected. The ICU will accumulate the necessary experience and tidy up the building plans to ensure that the attainment rate can be improved in the next year.

- (3) In light of the implementation of the 5-day week arrangement, the ICU has set the performance target to advise on restaurant license applications in 2007 at 12 working days to ensure that the time taken for such work would not be affected. This is in line with the Buildings Department's performance target.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)002

Question Serial No.

0007

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 target "responding to emergencies outside office hours" in respect of cases in urban areas and new towns in New Territories (N.T.) and those in other areas in N.T. under this Programme, will the Administration inform us of:

- (1) the details of work, the expenditure and the manpower involved; and
- (2) the reasons for setting the target at only 80% for 2007 with Housing Department taking over the task from mid-2007 while the corresponding figures of Buildings Department in 2006 were 99.4% and 100% respectively?

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

- (1) Emergency service is activated where the safety of buildings and life or property are under threat. Responding to emergencies outside office hours will form part of the normal duties of the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department starting from mid 2007. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure and manpower involved in carrying out this particular duty.
- (2) The ICU will begin to take up the duty of responding to emergencies in relation to former Housing Authority's buildings outside office hours in mid 2007. The ICU has set the same response time for this task in 2007 as that of the Buildings Department for private buildings. While our aim is to respond to all emergencies within the specified response time, a prudent target (80% attainment rate) has been set for the initial months of our operation. We believe that experience will be quickly built up and we expect to achieve a higher attainment rate in 2008.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 14 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)003

Question Serial No.

0008

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 task to “continue with the programme of the Planned Survey in HOS / TPS buildings” under matters requiring special attention in 2007-08 under this Programme, will the Government inform us of:

- (1) the details of the work, the expenditure and the manpower involved; and
- (2) the maintenance responsibilities between the tenants and the Housing Department and the details of tenant-to-pay repair service, including the proportion of works expenses to be borne by the tenants?

Asked by : Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply :

- (1) In 2007-08, the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department will continue to carry out the Planned Survey in about 30 buildings in Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) estates. The Survey aims to implement large-scale clearance operation of unauthorised building works and building repairs similar to the blitz operation undertaken by the Buildings Department. The Planned Survey is to identify unauthorised and dangerous building works and to survey the maintenance conditions of common areas, the exterior of the buildings and drains. Upon completion of the Survey, the ICU, with delegated authority from the Building Authority, will carry out enforcement actions in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and issue advisory letters or statutory orders requiring the owners or owners' corporations to demolish illegal or dangerous structures or carry out repair works within a specified period of time (usually two months). The Planned Survey 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.

- (2) Conducting the Survey does not involve any actual building works. The responsibility for maintenance or repairs in private buildings (including HOS courts and TPS estates) rests with the owners. Tenant-to-pay service relates to public rental housing and is outside the ambit of Head 62.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)004

Question Serial No.

0009

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 matters requiring special attention in 2007-08 under this Programme include “closely monitor the adequacy and transparency of sales information provided by developers to purchasers of uncompleted residential units”. Will the Government inform us —

- (1) of the plan of the relevant work and the funding and manpower specially reserved for this work; and
- (2) whether the above work includes reconsidering the formulation of legislation to regulate the sale of first hand private residential properties, setting guidelines on property sales activities and the undertaking of study on the introduction of “cooling-off period” of first hand private residential properties?

Asked by : Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply :

- (1) The work is to ensure that consumers are provided with adequate information on the uncompleted residential properties they intend to purchase. Relevant work includes monitoring developers' compliance with the guidelines of the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong (REDA) to disclose the required information in sales brochures, ensure accuracy of sales figures and provide price lists of a certain number of units to prospective consumers, etc. Furthermore, the Government, the REDA, the Consumer Council and the Estate Agents Authority liaise closely to explore room for further improvement of sales arrangements and the guidelines. Such work forms part of the duties of one Principal Assistant Secretary and one Administrative Officer. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure involved in this particular duty.

- (2) The above work also aims at monitoring the operation of developers' self-regulatory regime, REDA's compliance committee and guidelines. Should the existing regime fail to achieve the expected results, the Government will not rule out the possibility of taking more stringent steps to improve the sales arrangements for uncompleted residential units, including administrative and legislative measures. Regarding the introduction of a "cooling-off period", the Government does not have any plan to introduce such a proposal at this stage.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 13 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)005

Question Serial No.

0010

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 matters requiring special attention in 2007-08 under this Programme include “liaise with the Hong Kong Housing Society on the orderly sale of its surplus subsidised sale flats”. Will the Government inform us —

- (1) of the plan of the relevant work and the funding and manpower specially reserved for this work; and
- (2) whether the above task includes reconsideration of land allocation for the provision of Home Ownership Scheme flats to relieve the hardship of the sandwich class?

Asked by : Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply :

- (1) The work is to maintain on-going communication with the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) regarding the sales programme and arrangements for its about 2 700 surplus subsidised sale flats. This is to ensure that as far as practicable, the implementation of HKHS's sales programme will be co-ordinated with that of the surplus Home Ownership Scheme flats under the Hong Kong Housing Authority. The work forms a small part of the duties of one Principal Assistant Secretary and one Senior Administrative Officer. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure involved in this particular duty.
- (2) The above work only concerns the surplus subsidised sale flats held by HKHS. As the thrust of the Government's repositioned housing policy is to provide public rental housing to low-income families which cannot afford private rental housing, we have no plan at this stage to resume allocation of land for construction of subsidised sale flats.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 13 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)006

Question Serial No.

0011

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 indicator of “programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances” under this Programme, the estimated number of applications processed, the number of offers made for public rental housing and interim housing, and the number of households received other housing benefits in 2007 show a marked increase as compared with the actual figures of 2006. Will the Government inform us of:

- (1) the details of the work, the expenditure and the manpower involved; and
- (2) the reason for the marked increase in the estimated figures and the details of the programmed clearances and the government actions?

Asked by : Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply :

- (1) Under Programme (4) of Head 62, the Housing Department (HD) is responsible for providing rehousing assistance to eligible clearances affected by Government’s land clearance for development or other purposes and to victims of natural disasters and other emergency incidents. The work involves verifying rehousing eligibility of the affected occupants; screening rehousing applications referred by the Lands Department (LandsD) and allocating public rental housing and interim housing to eligible applicants, etc. Apart from this, HD is also responsible for providing assistance in rehousing the occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department’s enforcement actions and carry out other related work, such as conducting on site freezing survey and registration of the affected households, and subsequent work of verifying, screening and allocation of flats.

In 2007-08, a total staff establishment of 29 non-directorate posts in HD will be responsible for performing the rehousing duties stated above and the financial provision required is estimated to be \$16.7 m. As HD will deploy its staff resources in a flexible way to achieve cost-effectiveness, we do not have a breakdown of the expenditure and manpower involved in each item of work or clearance project.

- (2) In 2007, it is anticipated that HD will process some 900 rehousing applications as a result of the programmed squatter clearances and emergency clearances. This indicator is about the same as the 800 rehousing applications originally estimated in 2006 without a marked increase. The actual number of applications, i.e. only 100 in 2006 was mainly due to re-scheduling and postponement of some work projects at the request of work departments. Major projects include Tai O Development Engineering Works (Creek Improvement) and Formation Servicing for Village Development Area, Phase I in Fanling Area 17B.

The latest clearance programme of LandsD shows that among the 120 on-going clearance projects, 1 000 families of 3 500 persons will be affected. Together with the clearance projects to be announced, it is anticipated that some 900 families would need rehousing assistance in 2007.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)007

Question Serial No.

0012

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

Programme : (5) Support Services

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

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Under the "Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2007-08" in this Programme, it is stated that the Housing Department will continue to "assess the feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government". Will the Administration inform us:

- (1) of the action plans, and the funds and staffing resources reserved for the purpose;
- (2) of the basis, criteria and timetable of the assessment and whether public consultation on the assessment will be conducted; and
- (3) whether an assessment of its impact on the progress of public housing construction will be conducted at the same time?

Asked by : Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply :

- (1) A co-ordination mechanism is in place within the Government to regularly monitor the supply of land for public housing development and to review, on a quarterly basis, the progress and flat production of public housing development projects. To ensure adequate supply of land to meet the Government's pledge of keeping the average waiting time for public rental housing at around three years, the Housing Department will, in consultation with other relevant departments, continue to identify sites in various districts for public housing development on the one hand, and assess the most suitable land use for cleared public housing redevelopment sites on the other. The feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government will be assessed in parallel. About \$1.95 million has been reserved for carrying out the above tasks in 2007-08, which includes salaries and on-cost of the staff efforts involved (equivalent to two staff).
- (2) Some of the public housing redevelopment sites are situated at prime locations. Nevertheless, in order to meet the target of keeping the average waiting time for public rental housing at around three years, cleared public housing redevelopment sites will be reserved for public housing development as far as possible. Whether a particular site is suitable for public housing development is determined by factors such as timing of site availability, development potential, compatibility with the neighbourhood, developable area, technical feasibility, etc. In devising the plan for rehousing and clearance for public

housing estates, the Housing Department will, based on the development programme of individual sites, discuss with the Planning Department and the Lands Department, and consult other concerned Government bureaux and departments as well as District Councils, in order to achieve integration with the overall development of the society and to meet the demand for public housing. The Housing Department will provide district community facilities in response to local demand as necessary. Taking Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate as an example, a portion of the redevelopment site will be reserved for a cross-district community cultural centre, a fire station and ambulance depot and district open space.

- (3) As mentioned above, the Government will monitor the supply of land for public housing development and review the development programme and flat production of public housing projects regularly to uphold the pledge of keeping the average waiting time for public rental housing at around three years.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 14 March 2007

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)008

Question Serial No.

0127

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:

The indicator of the “actual number of appeals received” shows an increase of almost 60% from 3 050 cases in 2005 to 4 859 cases in 2006, will the Government inform us of:

- (1) the manpower involved;
- (2) the reason for the increase in the number of appeals received; and
- (3) the reason that the estimated number of appeals received in 2007 is less than the actual number in 2006?

Asked by: Hon. FUNG Kin-kee, Frederick

Reply:

- (1) There are altogether ten officer-grade and clerical-grade staff members in the Appeal Panel (Housing) Secretariat in the 2006-07 financial year. In view of the increasing number of appeal cases, the Housing Department deployed one additional officer-grade staff member to the Secretariat in April 2006. In the 2007-08 financial year, we will add four officer-grade and four clerical-grade posts to the Secretariat to cope with the increase in workload.
- (2) Since the number of households incurring rent arrears has increased in recent years and the Hong Kong Housing Authority has since October 2005 tightened the criteria for issuing Notices to Quit to tenants habitually deferring payment of rent (tenancy will be terminated if a tenant pays his rent at least one month in arrears for a consecutive period of three months, instead of a consecutive period of four months in the past), the number of cases of termination of tenancies has greatly increased, hence an upsurge in the number of appeal cases.

- (3) The statistics in the past two years indicated that of the appeal cases involving rent arrears, 27% involve households receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). As the Social Welfare Department will pay the rent allowance for households receiving CSSA directly to the Hong Kong Housing Authority with effect from mid-2007, the situation of rent arrears involving CSSA households will greatly improve in the future. The number of termination of tenancies and appeal cases involving CSSA households will also decrease. In the light of this, we have correspondingly lowered the estimated number of appeal cases to be received in 2007.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)009

Question Serial No.

0177

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 Programme (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance, the estimate for 2007-08 shows an increase of 75.8% over the original estimate for 2006-07. What are the main reasons for this and to which areas of work are the additional resources mainly allocated?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Hok-ming

Reply :

Under Programme (4) of Head 62, the Housing Department (HD) is responsible for providing rehousing assistance to eligible clearances affected by Government actions in squatter clearance and to victims of natural disasters and other emergency incidents. Apart from this, HD is also responsible for providing rehousing assistance to the occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department(BD)'s enforcement actions.

When we prepared the 2006-07 estimate for Programme (4) under Head 62 last year, HD had not finalized the detailed arrangements for the transfer of squatter control and clearance duties to the Lands Department (LandsD). At the time, it was anticipated that upon transfer of the duties, HD would only need to retain a team of 15 non-directorate staff to perform rehousing eligibility verification, screening rehousing applications referred by the LandsD and BD, and allocating public rental housing/interim housing to eligible applicants.

However, according to the final agreed division of work between HD and LandsD, HD will continue to be responsible for household surveys and registration for non-squatter clearances. Therefore, the number of non-directorate staff required to carry out the duties under Programme (4) has increased from 15 to 29, and the estimate required for 2007-08 has increased compared with the original estimate for 2006-07. About 84.7% (i.e. \$14.15M) of the estimate is for the salaries and on-cost of staff, and the rest is for the office and miscellaneous expenses.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)010

Question Serial No.

0178

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 Programme (4) Rehousing of Occupants upon Clearance, the estimated figures for the 4 indicators of “programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances” in 2007 double the actual figures in 2006. Please explain and provide details of the expenditure involved.

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Hok-ming

Reply :

The latest clearance programmes of Lands Department show that as a result of the 120 on-going clearance projects, 1 000 families of 3 500 persons will be affected. Together with the clearance projects to be announced, it is anticipated that some 900 families would need rehousing assistance in 2007 and therefore about 900 rehousing applications would be processed by the Housing Department (HD) as a result of the programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances.

This indicator is about the same as the 800 applications originally estimated in 2006 without a marked increase. The actual number of applications, i.e. only 100 in 2006, was mainly due to the re-scheduling and postponement of some work projects at the request of work departments. Major projects include Tai O Development Engineering Works (Creek Improvement) and Formation Servicing for Village Development Area, Phase I in Fanling Area 17B. Regarding the other three indicators, they are deduced having regard to the estimated number of rehousing applications to be processed, the experience in dealing with similar cases in the past and the profile of the people to be affected by the 2007 clearance exercises.

Of the estimate of \$16.7M for 2007-08, about 84.7% (i.e. \$14.15M) is for the salaries and on-cost of the staff involved. As HD will deploy its financial and staff resources in a flexible way to achieve cost-effectiveness, we do not have a breakdown of the expenditure involved in each item of work.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)011

Question Serial No.

0696

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 performance target "advising on restaurant license applications within 12 working days", the actual figure in 2006 shows that only 80% of the cases achieved the target. What are the reasons for this and was it related to the implementation of the five-day week? If it was related to the five-day week, will additional manpower be deployed to speed up the process and boost the target-achieving rate? If yes, what is the estimated expenditure involved?

Asked by : Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply :

The methods and standards previously adopted by the Housing Authority to calculate the building areas and discharge values differ slightly from those stipulated in the Buildings Department's code of practice applicable to private buildings. Therefore, in providing advice on licensing applications, the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) has to adjust and re-calculate the figures following the Buildings Department's code of practice. In some complicated cases, it may take a little more time to complete the vetting procedure. Nevertheless, as the advice of ICU would normally be sent to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the applicants before the relevant Application Panel Meeting, the progress of processing the application would not be affected. The ICU will accumulate the necessary experience and tidy up the building plans to ensure that the attainment rate can be improved in the next year. The implementation of the five-day week arrangement has no bearing on the attainment rate of the performance target in 2006.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)012

Question Serial No.

0697

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 indicator "alteration and addition plans received and processed within 60 days", 16 cases were processed in 2005 and 350 cases in 2006. What were the reasons for the substantial increase and what were the manpower and the expenditure involved?

Asked by : Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply :

The alteration and addition works submissions in 2005 were for Home Ownership Scheme courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates. In November 2005, with the divestment of some retail and carparking facilities of the Housing Authority, these facilities and some public rental housing estates in which they are situated are brought under the jurisdiction of the Buildings Ordinance. The Building Authority has delegated to the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department (HD) the authority for exercising building control over the abovementioned properties. As the number of buildings under the purview of the HD has increased, so has the number of applications processed in 2006. The processing of applications for alteration and addition works forms part of the duties of the ICU. We do not have a breakdown of the manpower and expenditure involved. The staff requirements will be reviewed if the number of applications continues to increase.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)013

Question Serial No.

0698

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 programme of Planned Survey in Home Ownership Scheme/Tenants Purchase Scheme buildings conducted by the Government in 2007-08, please set out the surveyed projects and the manpower and expenditure involved, as well as the number and names of buildings to be surveyed in 2007-08.

Asked by : Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply :

The Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department completed surveys for about 30 buildings in Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) estates last year. The Survey aims to implement large-scale clearance operation of unauthorised building works and building repairs similar to the blitz operation undertaken by the Buildings Department. The Planned Survey is to identify unauthorised and dangerous building works and to survey the maintenance conditions of common areas, the exterior of the buildings and drains. Upon completion of the Survey, the ICU, with delegated authority from the Building Authority, will carry out enforcement actions in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and issue advisory letters or statutory orders requiring the owners or owners' corporations to demolish illegal or dangerous structures or carry out repair works within a specified period of time (usually 2 months).

In 2007-08, the ICU will continue to carry out the Planned Survey for about 30 buildings in HOS courts and TPS estates. The action priority may be adjusted according to the conditions of the buildings, including the number of unauthorized buildings works recorded, the maintenance condition of external wall and common areas, the number of complaints received and the overall hygienic condition of the building. The ICU would not publicize the list of buildings targeted for survey. This is to encourage owners to comply with the statutory requirements and to carry out timely rectification works. The Planned Survey forms part of the duties of the ICU. We do not have a breakdown 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 _____

15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)014

Question Serial No.

0699

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 recent years, the Government has endeavoured to improve and streamline the licensing systems. However, regarding the target of advising on restaurant license applications under the Application Vetting Panel system within 12 working days, the actual attainment rate was only 80% in 2006 and the rate for 2007 is only anticipated to reach 90%, falling short of the target of 100%. Please give the reasons and explain the difficulties. When will the Government expect to achieve the attainment rate of 100%, and what is the staffing and funding required? It is noted that the Subgroup on Business Facilitation will implement a series of measures to enhance the licensing systems. Will this help achieve a higher attainment rate in the area of service concerned?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply :

The methods and standards previously adopted by the Housing Authority to calculate the building areas and discharge values differ slightly from those stipulated in the Buildings Department's code of practice applicable to private buildings. Therefore, in providing advice on licensing applications, the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) has to adjust and re-calculate the figures following the Buildings Department's code of practice. In some complicated cases, it may take a little more time to complete the vetting procedure. Nevertheless, as the advice of ICU would normally be sent to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the applicants before the relevant Application Panel Meeting, the progress of processing the application would not be affected. The ICU will accumulate the necessary experience and tidy up the building plans to ensure that the attainment rate can be improved in the next year.

The ICU will continue to study various possible improvement measures in full cooperation with the Subgroup on Business Facilitation and other relevant departments, in order to improve the licensing systems and enhance the level of service.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)015

Question Serial No.

0700

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 :

What are the reasons for the estimated drastic increase of cases from 500 in 2006 to 600 in 2007 regarding the work on advice on licensing/registration applications (restaurants, places of public entertainment, tutorial schools, etc.)? What is the additional funding and staffing required? What are the implications on the vetting of licensing/registration applications?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy

Reply :

Based on the number of licensing/registration applications (including restaurants, places of public entertainment, tutorial schools, etc.) received during the last three quarters, we estimate that there would be about 600 applications in 2007. These applications will be handled by the existing manpower. Our service standard will not be affected. However, we will review the staffing requirement if the number of applications continues to increase.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)016

Question Serial No.

0701

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 this Programme that in 2007-2008 the Government will closely monitor, in association with the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong, the Consumer Council and the Estate Agents Authority, the adequacy and transparency of sales information provided by developers to purchasers of uncompleted residential units. Please inform this Committee of the details of the measures, the progress and the expenditure involved.

Asked by : Hon. CHAN Wai-yip, Albert

Reply :

The work is to ensure that consumers are provided with adequate information on the uncompleted residential properties they intend to purchase. Relevant work includes monitoring developers' compliance with the guidelines of the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong (REDA) to disclose the required information in sales brochures, ensure accuracy of sales figures and provide price lists of a certain number of units to prospective consumers, etc. Furthermore, the Government, the REDA, the Consumer Council and the Estate Agents Authority liaise closely to explore room for further improvement of sales arrangements and the guidelines. Such work is ongoing in nature and forms part of the duties of one Principal Assistant Secretary and one Administrative Officer. We do not have the breakdown of the expenditure for this particular duty.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

14 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)017

Question Serial No.

0702

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 :

The indicator under this Programme shows that the actual number of appeals received in 2006 were 4 859, an increase of 1 759 over the 3 100 estimated in 2006. Please inform this Committee of the reasons for the substantial increase.

Asked by : Hon. CHAN Wai-yip, Albert

Reply :

Since the number of households incurring rent arrears has increased and the Hong Kong Housing Authority has since October 2005 tightened the criteria for issuing Notices to Quit to tenants habitually deferring payment of rent (tenancy will be terminated if a tenant pays his rent at least one month in arrears for a consecutive period of three months, instead of a consecutive period of four months in the past), the number of cases of termination of tenancies has greatly increased, hence an upsurge in the number of appeal cases.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)018

Question Serial No.

0703

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 :

The estimate for 2007-08 shows an increase of 75.8% over the original estimate for 2006-07. Please explain in detail and provide separately the increase figures of individual items. How many locations are involved in the clearance projects under the programme and what are the details of the work?

Asked by : Hon. TAM Heung-man

Reply :

Under Programme (4) of Head 62, the Housing Department (HD) is responsible for providing rehousing assistance to eligible clearnees affected by Government's squatter clearance and to victims of natural disasters and other emergency incidents. Apart from this, HD is also responsible for providing rehousing assistance to the occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department(BD)'s enforcement actions.

When we prepared the 2006-07 estimate for Programme (4) under Head 62 last year, HD had not finalized the detailed arrangements for the transfer of squatter control and clearance duties to the Lands Department (LandsD). At the time, it was anticipated that upon transfer of the duties, HD would only need to retain a team of 15 non-directorate staff to perform rehousing eligibility verification, screening rehousing applications referred by the LandsD and BD, and allocating public rental housing/interim housing to eligible applicants.

However, according to the final agreed division of work between HD and LandsD, HD will continue to be responsible for household surveys and registration for non-squatter clearances. Therefore, the number of non-directorate staff required to carry out the duties under Programme (4) has increased from 15 to 29, and the estimate required for 2007-08 has increased compared with the original estimate for 2006-07. About 84.7% (i.e. \$14.15M) of the estimate is for the salaries and on-cost of staff, and the rest is for the office and miscellaneous expenses. HD has already taken up household surveys and registration for non-squatter clearance in 2006-07. However, since the actual squatter clearances implemented during that financial year were less than programmed, HD managed to carry out

such work through internal redeployment of staff resources. Therefore, the actual resources required for that financial year (the revised estimate for 2006-07 is \$14.10M) were less than the estimate for 2007-08.

According to the latest clearance programme of the LandsD, there are 120 on-going clearance projects in various parts of the territory. Taking into account the clearance projects to be announced, HD estimates that it has to process about 900 rehousing applications in 2007. In addition, according to the clearance programme of the BD, about 700 single staircase buildings located in different districts in Hong Kong with illegal rooftop structures have to be handled in 2007. The number of rehousing applications involved is about 700.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date _____ 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)019

Question Serial No.

0704

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 :

Please explain why the estimated number of bedspaces provided in transit centres in 2007 (408) is less than the actual number in 2006 (700).

Asked by : Hon. TAM Heung-man

Reply :

The number of bedspaces provided in transit centres in 2007-08 would decrease as compared with 2006-07 because the Housing Department closed the transit centre at Wong Chuk Hang in September 2006. At present, the available bedspaces can fully satisfy the needs.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)020

Question Serial No.

0705

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 :

As the estimate for 2007-08 is 113.3% higher than the revised estimate for 2006-07, please provide a detailed breakdown of the increased expenditure and the reasons for such an increase.

Asked by : Hon. TAM Heung-man

Reply :

In order to speed up the processing of appeal cases, the number of Appeal Panel members will increase from 54 to 80 in April this year and the staffing support for the Secretariat will be enhanced correspondingly. On salary expenses, an additional \$3.8 million will be provided for the addition of four officer-grade and four clerical-grade posts. Other recurrent expenditure (including expenses for hiring venues for hearing sessions, office computers, office equipment and miscellaneous items) will also increase correspondingly by \$1.3 million.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)021

Question Serial No.

0706

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 :

- (1) Why is it that the actual number of appeals received in 2006 was 59.3% higher than that in 2005? Are the cases received in 2005 that were not handled in early 2006 counted as the caseload of 2006? If yes, what is the number of such cases?
- (2) What is the number of cases that had not been handled at the end of 2006?

Asked by : Hon. TAM Heung-man

Reply :

- (1) Since the number of households incurring rent arrears has increased and the Hong Kong Housing Authority has since October 2005 tightened the criteria for issuing Notices to Quit to tenants habitually deferring payment of rent (tenancy will be terminated if a tenant pays his rent at least one month in arrears for a consecutive period of three months, instead of a consecutive period of four months in the past), the number of cases of termination of tenancies has greatly increased, hence an upsurge in the number of appeal cases.

The number of appeal cases received in 2006 only covers cases received from January to December 2006. Cases which were received in 2005 but have not yet been handled by early 2006 are not included.

- (2) As at end of 2006, there are 2 666 outstanding cases.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)022

Question Serial No.

0707

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 for 2007-08 has increased by 35.5% as compared with the 2006-07 revised estimate. Please provide a detailed breakdown of the increase in expenditure and give the reasons for the increase.

Asked by : Hon. TAM Heung-man

Reply :

With effect from 2007-08, the Housing Department's existing work on compilation and analysis of data relating to the private housing market will be funded from General Revenue. The estimate for 2007-08 has increased by 35.5%, amounting to \$3.9 million, over the 2006-07 revised estimate to provide additional provision for this purpose. About 87% of the increased provision (\$3.4 million) is for the salaries and on-cost of the staff responsible for the work. The remainder is for the related operating and administrative expenses.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

14 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)023

Question Serial No.

1570

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 :

Why is it that the estimated expenditure for 2007-08 is 113.3% higher than the revised estimated expenditure for 2006-07?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Hok-ming

Reply :

In order to speed up the processing of appeal cases, the number of Appeal Panel members will increase from 54 to 80 in April this year and the staffing support for the Secretariat will be enhanced correspondingly. On salary expenses, an additional \$3.8 million will be provided for the addition of four officer-grade and four clerical-grade posts. Other recurrent expenditure (including expenses for hiring venues for hearing sessions, office computers, office equipment and miscellaneous items) will also increase correspondingly by \$1.3 million.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)024

Question Serial No.

1571

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

Programme : (5) Support Services

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

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

The Housing Department is assessing the feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government. May I ask what the criteria of "prime housing sites" are?

Asked by : Hon. CHEUNG Hok-ming

Reply :

In principle, sites with good view, good locations, good accessibility and high market value are considered prime sites, which include some of the public housing redevelopment sites in the urban area. Nevertheless, in order to meet the pledge of maintaining the average waiting time of public rental housing applicants at around three years, the cleared public housing redevelopment sites will be reserved for public housing development as far as possible. On the other hand, whether a particular site is suitable for public housing development is determined by a number of factors such as timing of site availability, development potential, compatibility with the neighbourhood, developable area, technical feasibility, etc.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)025

Question Serial No.

1572

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 will continue to compile as-built records of existing Home Ownership Scheme/ Tenants Purchase Scheme and public rental housing buildings, and retail and carparking premises. How many more rental flats/retail premises and carparks completed in early years are yet to have their drawings prepared for record purpose?

Asked by : Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply :

Progress on the compilation of as-built drawing records for properties built by the Hong Kong Housing Authority are as follow:

- (1) Home Ownership Scheme courts – the work has been completed for 115 courts and that for the remaining 31 will be completed by 2008/09.
- (2) Tenants Purchase Scheme estates – the work has been completed for 30 estates and that for the remaining 9 will be completed by 2008/09.
- (3) Divested retail and carparking facilities – the work has been completed for 73 facilities and that for the remaining 107 will be completed in 2009-2010. The as-built drawing records for the public rental housing blocks within the estates with divested retail and carparking facilities will be compiled thereafter.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)026

Question Serial No.

1573

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 the Housing Department's programmed squatter clearance, the number of interim housing flats reserved for rehousing in 2007 has increased over four times as compared with that in 2006. Is the number sufficient? In the long run, will the number of interim housing flats be adequate to meet the practical needs of society?

Asked by : Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply :

Under this programme, the number of 100 interim housing allocations made in 2006 for the Lands Department's (LandsD) programmed squatter clearances is an actual figure, while the number of 450 interim housing allocations for 2007 is an estimated one. Since the squatter clearance projects actually carried out by the LandsD in 2006 were less than programmed, the interim housing allocations required were correspondingly reduced. The estimated number of 450 interim housing allocations for 2007 is projected according to the LandsD's anticipated squatter clearance programme for the coming year, which should be adequate to meet the need of 2007.

With the Hong Kong Housing Authority's relaxation of the rehousing policy for those affected by clearance and the reduction in the average waiting time for allocation of public housing, the demand for interim housing has dropped significantly in recent years. In the long run, the Housing Department will have adequate interim housing to meet future needs.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)027

Question Serial No.

1574

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 indicators under this Programme, the estimated number of appeals received in 2007 is 4 100, which is 759 less as compared with the actual figure of 4 859 in 2006. What are the reasons for the estimated number of appeals in 2007 to drop significantly when compared with the actual figure in 2006?

Asked by : Hon. CHAN Wai-yip, Albert

Reply :

The statistics in the past two years indicated that of the appeal cases involving rent arrears, 27% involve households receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). As the Social Welfare Department will pay the rent allowance for households receiving CSSA directly to the Hong Kong Housing Authority with effect from mid-2007, the situation of rent arrears involving CSSA households will greatly improve in the future. The number of termination of tenancies and appeal cases involving CSSA households will also decrease. In the light of this, we have adjusted downwards the estimated number of appeal cases to be received in 2007 correspondingly.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)028

Question Serial No.

1575

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 the revised estimate for 2006-07 under this Programme is 48.4% higher than the original estimate, please advise us on the reasons for such a significant increase.

Asked by : Hon. CHAN Wai-yip, Albert

Reply :

Under Programme (4) of Head 62, the Housing Department (HD) is responsible for providing rehousing assistance to eligible clearances affected by Government's squatter clearance and to victims of natural disasters and other emergency incidents. Apart from this, HD is also responsible for providing rehousing assistance to occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department(BD)'s enforcement actions.

When we prepared the 2006-07 estimate for Programme (4) under Head 62 last year, HD had not finalized the detailed arrangements for the transfer of squatter control and clearance duties to the Lands Department (LandsD). At the time, it was anticipated that upon transfer of the duties, HD would only need to retain a team of 15 non-directorate staff to perform rehousing eligibility verification, screening rehousing applications referred by the LandsD and BD, and allocating public rental housing/interim housing to eligible applicants.

However, according to the final agreed division of work between HD and LandsD, HD will continue to be responsible for household surveys and registration for non-squatter clearances. Therefore, the number of non-directorate staff required to carry out the duties under Programme (4) has increased from 15 to 29. In 2006-07, since the actual squatter clearances implemented were less than programmed, HD managed to carry out the work through internal redeployment of staff resources, with the number of staff gradually increased to 23 non-directorate staff. The estimate for 2006-07 was thus revised from the original \$9.5M to \$14.1M. In 2007-08, the number of non-directorate staff required to carry out the duties under Programme (4) will increase to 29.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)029

Question Serial No.

1576

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 :

Under this Programme, estimated provision for 2007-08 is \$2.6 million (18.4%) higher than the revised estimate for 2006-07. This is due to increase in operating expenses including salaries and on-cost for an addition of six staff members to cope with the increase in workload relating to rehousing of the occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department's enforcement action. Please inform this Committee of the number and locations of rooftop structures intended to be cleared in 2007-08.

Asked by : Hon. CHAN Wai-yip, Albert

Reply :

According to the clearance programme of the BD, about 700 single staircase buildings located in different districts in Hong Kong with illegal rooftop structures have to be handled in 2007.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)030

Question Serial No.

1577

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

Programme : (5) Support Services

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

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Please state the staff establishment and duties and responsibilities involved in this Programme in detail. Regarding the indicator of “the number of infrastructure projects obtaining funding approval from the Legislative Council in the year”, the estimated figure for 2007 is 5. Please provide the details of these five projects.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

Housing Department currently has an equivalent of ten staff (including professional and technical staff) performing duties relating to this Programme. The work involves:

- (1) administering housing-related infrastructure projects under the Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 711;
- (2) collating and checking the accuracy of data of overall public and private housing statistics to facilitate infrastructure and land supply planning by relevant bureaux and departments; and
- (3) ensuring adequate supply and timely delivery of suitable sites for development of public housing.

The five infrastructure projects (under Head 711), the funding of which is expected to be approved by the Legislative Council in 2007, are as follows:

- (1) local open space adjoining Tseung Kwan O Area 73B public housing development;
- (2) demolition of buildings at Cheung Sha Wan police married quarters, a school and a medical clinic;

- (3) demolition of buildings, structures and chimneys at Kennedy Town Comprehensive Development Area;
- (4) development at Anderson Road; and
- (5) water supply to housing development at Anderson Road.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)031

Question Serial No.

1578

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

Programme : (5) Support Services

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

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Regarding the indicator of “the number of infrastructure projects under construction”, the estimated figure for 2007 is 38. Please provide the relevant details.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

The estimated 38 infrastructure projects (under Head 711) under construction in 2007 include:

- (1) 17 Category A projects listed under Capital Works Reserve Fund in “Estimate 2007-08”;
- (2) five proposed projects the funding of which is expected to be approved by the Legislative Council in 2007, including :
 - (i) local open space adjoining Tseung Kwan O Area 73B public housing development;
 - (ii) demolition of buildings at Cheung Sha Wan police married quarters, a school and a medical clinic;
 - (iii) demolition of buildings, structures and chimneys at Kennedy Town Comprehensive Development Area;
 - (iv) development at Anderson Road;
 - (v) water supply to housing development at Anderson Road; and
- (3) 16 Category A projects not listed in “Estimate 2007-08”. These works have commenced and are expected to be completed in 2006-07. Settlement of final payments is in progress.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)032

Question Serial No.

1579

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

Programme : (5) Support Services

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

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

As to areas such as monitoring the progress on supply of public housing sites, the Public Housing Construction Programme and assessing the feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government, are there any indicators to measure the progress of work? If yes, please provide the details.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

According to the latest Public Housing Construction Programme, the estimated production of new public housing flats within the five-year period from 2006-07 to 2010-11 is about 71 000 flats. Monitoring the progress on public housing land supply and assessing the feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government are ongoing tasks, aiming at maintaining the average waiting time of public rental housing applicants at around three years. To ensure adequate supply of public housing to meet public demand, regular reviews are carried out on a quarterly basis to monitor the land supply for public housing, the progress of public housing development projects and the amount of public housing flat production.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)033

Question Serial No.

1580

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 :

Why is there a significant increase in the numbers of both the plans for alternation and addition works and the resubmissions for such works received by the Government in 2006 comparing with 2005?

Asked by : Hon. HO Chun-yan, Albert

Reply :

The alteration and addition works submissions in 2005 were for Home Ownership Scheme courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates. In November 2005, with the divestment of some retail and carparking facilities of the Housing Authority, these facilities and some public rental housing estates in which they are situated are brought under the jurisdiction of the Buildings Ordinance. The Building Authority has delegated to the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of the Housing Department (HD) the authority for exercising building control over the abovementioned properties. As the number of buildings under the purview of the HD has increased, so has the number of applications (including resubmissions of plans) processed in 2006.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)034

Question Serial No.

1871

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 :

The estimate for 2007-08 is \$5.1 million higher than the revised estimate for 2006-07. This is mainly due to increase in operating expenses including those incurred by an addition of eight staff members for handling appeals. Please provide the ranks, annual salaries, and specific duties and responsibilities of these new posts.

Asked by : Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply :

The new posts to be created include four Executive Officers and four clerical grade officers (one Clerical Officer, one Assistant Clerical Officer and two Clerical Assistants), resulting in an increase of salary expenditure by \$3.8 million.

The main responsibilities of the Executive Officers are: assisting the Chairman of the Panel to appoint the Appeal Tribunals and draw up the hearing schedules; serving as secretary to the Appeal Tribunals; handling enquiries and correspondence between appellants and the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA); and providing information to Members of the Appeal Panel (Housing) to explain the latest HA policies on tenancy issues.

The clerical grade officers are responsible for the general duties of the Secretariat, including routine clerical work, processing and filing appeal documents, arranging the delivery of documents, preparing for the hearings and providing logistic support, and data input, etc.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
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INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)035

Question Serial No.

1872

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

Programme : (5) Support Services

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

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

The Housing Department will assess in 2007-08 the feasibility of returning prime public housing sites to the Government. Please advise on the progress of the assessment work. When is the related work expected to be completed? Please also provide the details of the sites involved in each district and the cost involved.

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 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 assessed. The assessment is an ongoing task. In principle, sites with good view, good locations, good accessibility and high market value in the territory are considered prime sites, which include some of the public housing redevelopment sites in the urban area. However, in order to meet the abovementioned objective regarding the average waiting time for public housing, the cleared public housing redevelopment sites will be reserved for public housing development as far as possible.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

Thomas C Y CHAN

Post Title _____

Permanent Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands (Housing)

Date _____

15 March 2007

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

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)036

Question Serial No.

1873

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 regards “providing assistance in rehousing the occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department’s enforcement actions”, please give the numbers of the residents rehoused in 2006-07 by districts, and a breakdown of the manpower and expenditure involved. What specific measures are in place to expedite the rehousing of the affected residents?

Asked by : Hon. LI Kwok-ying

Reply :

In 2006, the Housing Department (HD) processed about 700 rehousing applications relating to illegal rooftop structure clearances and relocated about 1 000 persons. Some 800 were rehoused to public rental housing/interim housing in the urban area (including Hong Kong Island and Kowloon) and 200 in the New Territories and the Islands District.

In 2006-07, a total of 23 non-directorate staff performed the duties under Programme (4) and the revised estimate was \$14.1M, the majority of which, about 83.7% (i.e. \$11.8M) was for the salaries and on-cost of the staff, and the rest was for the office and miscellaneous expenses. We do not have a breakdown of the cost and manpower for individual items of work or clearance projects.

HD will deploy its manpower resources flexibly with a view to expediting rehousing. Under normal circumstances, rehousing offers are made to occupants of illegal rooftop structures within two weeks after confirmation of the clearee’s eligibility.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

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

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 :

- (1) The estimate for 2007-08 has drastically increased by 35.5% as compared with the 2006-07 estimate. Please give a detailed account of the staffing provision and work duties involved in 2006-07 and 2007-08, and provide the details on the increase in work.
- (2) Has any indicator or complaints hotline been put in place to effectively monitor the adequacy and transparency of sales information provided by developers? If no, will the Government consider reserving resources for such a purpose? How many complaints or cases of inadequacy or lack of transparency of sales information provided by developers were received or noted in 2006-07? Please give a detailed account of these cases.
- (3) Has funding been reserved for reviewing the self-regulatory mechanism adopted by the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong so as to enhance the transparency of the sale of uncompleted flats? If yes, what is the expenditure involved and when will the review report be completed? If no, will the Government consider making such arrangements?

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

- (1) The work under Programme (2) in 2006-07 and 2007-08 includes mainly compiling and maintaining a database on private housing supply, releasing data on housing supply in the primary market, providing analyses on developments in the private housing market, increasing the transparency of sale of uncompleted residential units, monitoring the subsidised housing schemes entrusted to the Hong Kong Housing Society, and improving the calibre and professionalism of local estate agents, etc. The establishment in 2006-07 is nine staff. The 35.5% increase in the estimate for 2007-08 over the 2006-07 revised estimate is mainly because starting from 2007-08, the cost for Housing Department's existing work on compilation and analysis of private housing data (including the salaries and on-cost of the equivalent of four staff) will be funded from the General Revenue.

- (2) We introduced in 2001 a website and a telephone hotline to receive complaints and views from the public on sales descriptions of uncompleted residential properties. During 2006-07, we received six complaints concerning sales descriptions of first-hand residential units. Amongst these cases, two alleged that developers did not provide consumers with price lists, while the remaining four cases were related to the advertisements and sales brochures of the properties concerned. We have already completed follow-up actions for the above cases.
- (3) We have been monitoring the operation of developers' self-regulatory regime, their compliance committee and guidelines for sales arrangements. We also closely monitor public opinions on sales arrangements of uncompleted residential units to ensure that the regime operates effectively in meeting the market's needs. Such work is ongoing in nature and forms part of the duties of one Principal Assistant Secretary and one Administrative Officer. We do not have a breakdown of the expenditure 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 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)038

Question Serial No.

1085

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 :

The estimate for 2007-08 shows a substantial increase of 113.3% as compared with the 2006-07 revised estimate. Please give a detailed account of the staffing provision, job duties, as well as the additional staffing and work details in 2006-07 and 2007-08.

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

There were four Executive Officers and six clerical grade officers (three Assistant Clerical Officers and three Clerical Assistants) in the Appeal Panel Secretariat in the financial year 2006-07. In view of the increasing number of appeal cases, the Housing Department deployed one additional officer-grade staff member to the Secretariat in April 2006. In the 2007-08 financial year, we will add four officer-grade and four clerical-grade posts (one Clerical Officer, one Assistant Clerical Officer and two Clerical Assistants) to the Secretariat to cope with the increase in workload.

The main responsibilities of the Executive Officers are: assisting the Chairman of the Panel to appoint the Appeal Tribunals and draw up the hearing schedules; serving as secretary to the Appeal Tribunals; handling enquiries and correspondence between appellants and the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA); and providing information to Members of the Appeal Panel (Housing) to explain the latest HA policies on tenancy issues.

The clerical grade officers are responsible for the general duties of the Secretariat, including routine clerical work, processing and filing appeal documents, arranging the delivery of documents, preparing for the hearings and providing logistic support and data input, etc.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(H)039

Question Serial No.

1086

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 the estimate for 2007-08 is 18.4% higher than the revised estimate for 2006-07, please provide detailed information on the staffing provision and duties under the columns of 2006-07 (Actual) and 2007-08 (Estimate). What are the details of the additional duties? Regarding the targets for 2007 and 2006, there has been a substantial increase in the numbers of programmed squatter clearances or emergency clearances, and the estimated number of applications processed increases from 100 to 900. What are the reasons? What are the details of the anticipated additional squatter clearance or emergency clearance programmes?

Asked by : Hon. LEE Wing-tat

Reply :

Under Programme (4) of Head 62, the Housing Department (HD) is responsible for providing rehousing assistance to eligible clearnees affected by Government's squatter clearance and to victims of natural disasters and other emergency incidents. Apart from this, HD is also responsible for providing rehousing assistance to the occupants of illegal rooftop structures displaced by the Buildings Department (BD)'s enforcement actions.

When we prepared the 2006-07 estimate for Programme (4) under Head 62 last year, HD had not finalized the detailed arrangements for the transfer of squatter control and clearance duties to the Lands Department (LandsD). At the time, it was anticipated that upon transfer of the duties, HD would only need to retain a team of 15 non-directorate staff to perform rehousing eligibility verification, screening rehousing applications referred by the LandsD and BD, and allocating public rental housing/interim housing to eligible applicants.

However, according to the final agreed division of work between HD and LandsD, HD will continue to be responsible for household surveys and registration for non-squatter clearances. Therefore, the number of non-directorate staff required to carry out the duties under Programme (4) has increased from 15 to 29, and the estimate required for 2007-08 has increased compared with the original estimate for 2006-07. About 84.7% (i.e.

\$14.15M) of the estimate is for the salaries and on-cost of staff, and the rest is for the office and miscellaneous expenses. HD has already taken up household surveys and registration for non-squatter clearance in 2006-07. However, since the actual squatter clearances implemented during that financial year were less than programmed, HD managed to carry out such work through internal redeployment of staff resources, with the number of staff gradually increased to 23 non-directorate staff. Therefore, the actual resources required for that financial year (the revised estimate for 2006-07 is \$14.10M) were less than the estimate for 2007-08.

The actual staff strength for 2006-07 and estimated staff strength for 2007-08 are as follows :

Rank	Required Staff Establishment	2006-07 Actual Staff Strength	2007-08 Estimated Staff Strength
Housing Manager	1	1	1
Assistant Housing Manager	4	4	4
Housing Officer	20	16	20
Clerical Staff	4	2	4
Total	29	23	29

Since the actual squatter clearances implemented during 2006 were less than programmed, there were only 100 rehousing applications. According to the latest clearance programme of the LandsD, there are 120 on-going clearance projects in various parts of the territory. Taking into account the clearance projects to be announced, HD estimates that it has to process about 900 rehousing applications in 2007.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Thomas C Y CHAN

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

Date 15 March 2007