

香港特別行政區政府

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

房屋及規劃地政局

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10 July 2006

Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road, Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Mr. Anthony Chu)
(Fax No. 2869 6794)

Dear Mr. Chu,

**Meeting-cum-luncheon between Legislative Council Members
and Sham Shui Po District Council Members
on 8 June 2006**

Strengthening Regulation of Signboards

I refer to your letter of 19 June 2006. Thank you for letting us have sight of Sham Shui Po District Council members' comments on the captioned matter. Our response is as follows:

- (a) As regards signboard safety, we consider that subsuming the control of signboards under the framework of the building control system is the simplest and most effective way to achieve the objective. The erection of signboards is currently under the same control as that for other types of building works which will require supervision by registered professionals and approval of the Building Authority before commencement of works. With the implementation of the proposed minor works control system, it would provide an avenue

through which the persons intending to erect smaller signboards could erect them through legal and more expeditious procedures and at a lower cost.

In 2000, the Government considered the feasibility of introducing a signboard registration system. Upon studying the implementation details of the proposal and analyzing views from various sectors, we concluded that the establishment of a signboard registration system would increase the financial burden of the business owners or signboard owners as they have to pay various fees for registering the signboards and go through other relevant procedures. Since such a proposal would cost quite an amount of public money and is also unfair to those signboard owners who follow the proper procedures, it was not adopted in the end.

- (b) The originally proposed minor works control system was included in the Buildings (Amendment) Bill 2003 which was introduced into the Legislative Council in April 2003. During the deliberation of the Bills Committee, Members of the Bills Committee, some trade groups and contractors' associations raised various views and concerns on the proposal. The proposal was finally removed from the Bill. A Working Group, set up by BD and comprising members from building professional institutes, the trade and contractors' associations, is working out a revised proposal. The proposal will be included in the Buildings (Amendment) Bill. We aim to introduce the Bill into the Legislative Council in the 2006/07 legislative session.
- (c) To tackle unauthorized building works ("UBW"), BD has appointed consultants to carry out patrolling inspections. They will take action within 48 hours upon receipt of any complaints relating to UBW (including signboards) under construction. If any large unauthorized signboards are found under construction or newly erected during inspection, BD will issue removal orders so as to curb the proliferation of new unauthorized signboards.

BD has also stepped up enforcement action on existing signboards

through the Blitz UBW Clearance (“BUC”) operation and the Clearance Operation of UBW at Pedestrian Streets (“COUPS”) in 2006. In 2006, enhanced enforcement action is also instigated in BUC and COUPS operations to unauthorized signboards that exceed 15 m² for TV-screen type signboards or 30 m² for other signboards.

In 2005, BD carried out surveillance inspections of some 3,700 signboards in Sham Shui Po District and removed about 170 abandoned signboards. In 2006, BD targets to inspect about 36,000 signboards and remove about 1,400 dangerous or abandoned signboards in the whole territory.

We would be grateful if Members of the Sham Shui Po District Council could inform BD should they find any suspected unauthorized or abandoned signboards. BD will follow up the cases accordingly.

- (d) It is the responsibility of signboard owners to maintain the safety of their signboards and to remove their signboards upon moving or closure of business. If an owner of a premises where an approved signboard is attached wishes to obtain financial assistance for maintenance and repair works for the signboard, he/she can apply for a loan under the Building Safety Loan Scheme from the Director of Buildings. Such loan can also be used to carry out works relating to the removal of unauthorized building works, including illegal or abandoned signboards.

Yours sincerely,

(Agnes Ho)
for Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

c.c. Director of Buildings Department (Attn: Mr ST Lam)