

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) Ordinance The Government's safety net protection and support measures to Low-income Persons and Families

Purpose

Further to the information paper of the Transport and Housing Bureau in November 2009, this paper reiterates the safety net and support measures provided by the Government to low-income persons and families.

Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) Ordinance

2. Upon the enactment of the relevant Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) (Amendment) Ordinance ('the Amendment Ordinance') by the Legislative Council, rent control and security of tenure were removed in 1998 and 2004 respectively. The Amendment Ordinance was passed after public consultation and in-depth examination of the details by the relevant Bills Committee of the Legislative Council. In amending the Ordinance, the Government had thoroughly considered the concerns of the public and the prevailing circumstances, including the stable development of the private residential rental market. Given that the factors being taken into account when considering the removal of rent control and security of tenure remain valid, we have no plan to reintroduce rent control and security of tenure at this stage.

Measures to assist individuals with tenancy problems

3. We understand that landlords and tenants may face various tenancy problems. The Rating and Valuation Department (RVD) provides tenants and landlords with advisory and mediation services on tenancy matters. To make it convenient for the public to make use of the service, RVD provides telephone and desk enquiry services. Also, RVD deploys its officers on duty to five designated District Offices¹ and

¹ RVD officers are on duty in Wanchai, Kwun Tong, Yau Tsim Mong, Tsuen Wan and Tai Po District Offices during specified hours.

the Lands Tribunal. At present, the Home Affairs Department, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Government 1823 Call Centre and various voluntary organizations will inform those in need of the aforementioned services or refer cases to RVD for necessary follow-up.

Assisting low-income persons and families with housing needs

4. The Government has been providing individuals and families in need with a social safety net from various perspectives including social welfare and housing.

5. Individuals and families who are unable to support themselves financially can apply for assistance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme to meet their basic needs. Low-income families and persons who cannot afford private rental accommodation may apply for public rental housing (PRH) from the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) under the current PRH Waiting List system. At present, the average waiting time for general applicants and elderly one-person applicants are 1.9 and 1.1 years respectively. According to the HA's latest Public Housing Construction Programme, the anticipated PRH production in the coming five years, coupling with the PRH flats expected to be recovered every year, should enable the target of maintaining the average PRH waiting time at around three years be met.

6. Persons with genuine and pressing housing needs but who are incapable of meeting such needs themselves may seek assistance from the Integrated Family Service Centres of the Social Welfare Department or of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The centres will provide assistance appropriate to the needs of those people after considering their actual circumstances, including provision of short-term financial assistance to meet rental and removal expenses, arrangement for admission to urban singleton hostels or temporary shelters operated by NGOs, or making recommendations to the Housing Department for admission to PRH for cases eligible for Compassionate Rehousing ('CR'). In 2008/09, about 2 000 cases were allocated PRH flats through CR.

Conclusion

7. The Government will continue to monitor the development of the private residential rental market closely and listen to views from different sectors in the community on how to further assist low-income persons and families with housing needs.

Transport and Housing Bureau
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