

[Translation]

香港特別行政區政府

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

運輸及房屋局

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27 May 2016

Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung  
Room 1017  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Dr Hon CHEUNG,

**Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2016-17**  
(Question Serial No. R022 - R023)

I refer to the above questions which you raised during the examination of the estimates of expenditure for 2016-17 regarding public rental housing (PRH) applications from ethnic minority (EM). Our reply is as follows.

Since Chinese and English are the official languages of Hong Kong, these two languages are adopted by the Housing Department (HD) in preparing Application Form for PRH and related documents, as well as in daily correspondence with applicants. HD has operational difficulties in translating all documents and correspondence into various EM languages. To assist EMs who wish to apply for PRH, HD has offered the following additional support services –

- (a) HD has uploaded, in six commonly used EM languages (i.e. Urdu, Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Tagalog and Thai), the general information pertaining to PRH applications and the numbers for telephone interpretation service hotline for these six EM languages offered by the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER) onto the website of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA)/HD. To facilitate those EM applicants who do not have computers, HD has also placed the above information in the HA Lok Fu Customer Service Centre and mailed the information leaflets on the support service centres to the EM applicants for their reference;

- (b) If a PRH applicant is noticed to be an EM, HD will attach the "Information Note" of the services provided by the support service centres written in six EM languages when HD sends letters to notify him/her of the progress/details of his/her application or invite him/her to attend the detailed vetting/flat selection; and
- (c) When an EM applicant has approached CHEER for the provision of interpretation service in attending the detailed vetting interview, CHEER will make arrangements with HD for providing interpretation services through webcam during the interview. Even if the EM applicant has not made prior request but still wish to have interpretation service provided during the vetting interview, HD will contact CHEER to see if immediate arrangement for interpretation services through webcam can be arranged.

It is observed that the above "Information Note" has raised EM's awareness of the interpretation services available and the number of requests for such services from EM applicants has increased. HD also noted that many of the EM applicants prefer bringing along their friends/relatives who can speak Chinese or English to interpret for them without the need of the professional interpretation services provided by CHEER.

In addition, the property management company of HA Customer Service Centre has employed two EM hall attendants and provided customer services training to facilitate them to assist EM applicants, such as leading them to appropriate counter and providing simple interpretation services.

In the past five years, HD has not received any report of PRH applications from EM being affected by their difficulty in understanding Chinese or English. Besides, HD does not maintain statistics on the nationalities and race of PRH applicants.

Yours sincerely,

( Original Signed )

(Jerry CHEUNG)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.

Clerk to the Legislative Council Finance Committee (Attn: Mr Daniel SIN)  
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Attn: Ms Emily TSANG)