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3 January 2018

Panel on Development
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Doris LO)

Dear Ms Lo,

Government's Professional Standard on Tree Management

Thank you for your email of 11 December 2017, enclosing the request for information from the Honourable Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yea on the Government's tree management works. The requisite information is set out in the following paragraphs.

(1) Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section

The Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS) of the Development Bureau is responsible for charting out the strategic policy direction for the development of a green, liveable and sustainable urban environment in Hong Kong. The Head of GLTMS (H/GLTMS) should have a broad policy vision that cuts across different disciplines and an appreciation of the numerous challenges to sustainable greening efforts in a developed urban setting. In terms of qualifications, H/GLTMS should have recognised academic and professional qualifications in a relevant discipline with design or vegetation-related background such as Arboriculture, Architecture, Biology, Botany, Forestry, Horticulture, Landscape Architecture, Landscape Management, Landscape Science, Town Planning or Urban Design, etc.

The Tree Management Office (TMO) provides support to H/GLTMS in the formulation and effective implementation of a holistic tree management policy across departments. The Head of TMO (H/TMO) should hold a degree in a relevant discipline, such as Arboriculture, Biology, Botany, Forestry, Landscape Architecture or Landscape Management, etc., along with a recognised qualification or certification offered by a professional institution or industry organisation on arboriculture (e.g. International Society of Arboriculture, Arboricultural Association of the UK, European Arboricultural Council or Arboriculture Australia).

(2) Staff Establishment of TMO

The TMO is responsible for central coordination of Government's tree management work, advocating a professional approach to tree management among tree management departments and in the community at large. The TMO has a staff establishment of 17, including H/TMO, Assistant Secretaries, Tree Management Officers, Assistant Tree Management Officers, Senior Field Officers and Field Officers. All TMO staff members are Certified Arborists of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). They also possess additional professional arboricultural qualifications, such as Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) awarded by the ISA in the USA, Certificate in Professional Tree Inspection awarded by LANTRA Awards in the UK and professional membership of the Arboricultural Association in the UK. Some of them also possess knowledge in tree science (e.g. integrated plant pest and disease management, plant geography, ecological category study, and greenhouse cultivation and propagation management) and practical experience in various areas, including tree risk assessment, Brown Root Rot Disease management and tree care.

(3) Integrated Approach on Tree Management

Under the integrated approach, departments are responsible for managing the trees in the facilities or locations under their purview, with TMO as the overall coordination authority. The TMO has promulgated the "Guidelines for Tree Risk Assessment and Management Arrangement" and the "Guidelines on Arboriculture Occupational Safety and Health", which have stipulated the qualification, training and work experience requirements for personnel involved in tree asset management work in a safe and professional manner.

Officers involved in tree management work possess the relevant arboriculture qualification and training. Additionally, to ensure that all tree asset management work is conducted in a professional and effective manner, the GLTMS has been arranging a wide range of tree asset management training programmes for personnel involved in tree management work to raise their professional knowledge. In the past three years from 2015 to 2017, the TMO has arranged 94 training programmes for tree management staff.

(4) Outsourcing Requirements

To ensure that outsourced landscape works (covering tree care and management) are effectively delivered to specifications, works departments are required to use the contractors on the “List of Approved Specialist Contractors for Landscape Works” maintained by the Development Bureau. Contractors on the List are required to meet the financial, technical and managerial criteria and requirements in the aspects of adequate resources, relevant experience and skills, including the academic and professional qualifications, and practical experience of the practitioners. The Housing Department and the Leisure and Cultural Service Department have their own lists of approved contractors. All tree management departments are also required to follow the qualification, training and work experience requirements as stipulated in the “Guidelines for Tree Risk Assessment and Management Arrangement” in engaging qualified personnel to undertake tree risk assessment work.

(5) Training

The GLTMS has been arranging a variety of tree asset management training programmes for tree management staff at managerial, supervisory and frontline levels to raise their professional knowledge in arboriculture so that the departments can grasp the latest information and perform the tree asset management work in a professional and effective manner, for example Advanced Diploma in Tree Management and Conservation, Certificate in Professional Tree Inspection awarded by LANTRA Awards in the UK and Certificate Course on Identification of Common Trees. Additionally, tree management departments also have their training courses on urban arboricultural practices such as tree risk management, tree identification, common tree problems, pest and disease control, tree care during construction, as well as occupational safety and health in arboriculture.

(6) Survey on Arboricultural Manpower

The GLTMS commissioned a Human Resources and Competences Study (“the Study”) in 2015 to assess the workforce supply for the arboriculture, horticulture and landscape management and maintenance industry (“greening industry”) in Hong Kong. The Study covered private companies that are involved in or related to the greening industry in Hong Kong. The Study was completed in early 2017. Its results showed that there was an estimated workforce of approximately 7 310 in 2015, and projected that there would be a shortage of about 2 530 in 2018. The shortage is particularly serious for frontline workers. Key reasons include unattractive remuneration, unpleasant working conditions and low social image. To address these issues, it is necessary to establish the competency standards of the workers to uplift standards and raise the profile and professionalism of the industry. In this connection, the Study made the following five recommendations —

- (a) establishing competency standards for the industry;
- (b) providing more training opportunities;
- (c) uplifting the quality of training;
- (d) developing a Code of Conduct for the industry; and
- (e) stepping up promotion and publicity.

In the light of these recommendations, the GLTMS has embarked on the following measures with a view to uplifting and standardising the training and operation of the industry as well as enhancing the professional standing and career prospects of practitioners in the long run.

- (a) ***Establishing competency standards for the industry:*** An Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry Training Advisory Committee (A&H ITAC) has been set up by the Education Bureau and one of its tasks is to develop a set of Specification of Competency Standards (SCS) for the arboriculture and horticulture industry in Hong Kong. The SCS will set out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required for practitioners to effectively perform various tasks of different complexity in a work context up to workplace requirements. Training courses developed and accredited with reference to the SCS will be recognised under the Qualifications Framework. Learners taking the

SCS-based training courses will clearly know the competences they will acquire on graduation, and enterprises providing such training for their employees will be able to attract new blood to join the industry.

- (b) ***Providing more training opportunities:*** The GLTMS has strengthened collaboration with education and training institutions to organise more training programmes on arboriculture, including tree identification, proper pruning, use of chainsaws and machinery, pest and disease, and occupational safety and health courses for tree work to raise the knowledge and skill level of frontline staff in arboriculture.
- (c) ***Uplifting the quality of training:*** The SCS will provide a basis for developing measures to uplift industry standards and enhance the quality of training. The GLTMS has also been working with training institutes on continuous enhancement. For instance, under the requirement of the Arboriculture Vocational Assessment (AVA), all tree workers undertaking tree pruning works involving the use of chainsaw operations and tree pruning must have passed the “Vocational Assessment in Safety Use and Maintenance of Chainsaw Operation and Basic Tree Pruning for the Arboriculture Industry” to ensure the professionalism and standardisation of the local arboricultural industry.
- (d) ***Developing a Code of Conduct for the industry:*** The GLTMS facilitated the creation of the Horticultural and Arboricultural Trade Confederation (HATC), which represents industry professional bodies, associations and labour unions to streamline communication, support the roll-out of the SCS, and develop a common code of conduct, with a view to promoting safety awareness in frontline operations and practices, upholding quality standards and encouraging continuous professional development. It is part of the GLTMS’s positive capacity building efforts to align education and practice of the industry, to raise the professional standing of the industry, and to promote quality performance and the career prospects of practitioners in the long run.

- (e) *Stepping up promotion and publicity:* The GLTMS has been disseminating information and conducting seminars, on-site demonstrations, and field tours to raise public awareness, and deepen stakeholder understanding of sustainable urban forestry principles, tree asset management, life-cycle planning of trees, proper tree care, tree risk assessment and management (TRAM), vegetation health, , Brown Root Rot disease, and the regeneration of our tree assets in an urban environment. In collaboration with educational and training institutions, a number of events have also been organised to promote the industry to a wider audience.

Please let me know if you require further information. I can be reached by phone at 3509-8272 or by e-mail at joeylam@devb.gov.hk.

Yours sincerely,



(Joey LAM)
for Secretary for Development