

(Summary Translation)

The Hong Kong & Kowloon Painters General Unions (the “Union”) has written to the Legislative Council Secretariat to express views on the proposal for banning the use of slung boards by painters when painting external walls.

The Union points out that slung boards have been used for a few decades. They can save on time, money and energy, and are easy to handle, effective and suitable for a wide range of works. They cause less disturbance to residents and are particularly suitable for buildings whose external walls are fitted with laundry racks and air-conditioner ledges. What is more, this type of work still offers stable employment opportunities despite its long history in the construction sector.

The Union is of the view that whether slung boards are less safe than scaffoldings and electrical boards should not be judged through subjective assessment. In fact, according to media reports, workers working on scaffoldings and electrical boards have a higher accident rate than their counterparts working on slung boards.

The Union hopes that the Labour Department will consult the majority of workers concerned in addition to seeking the views of some LegCo Members and professionals during the legislative process. The department should be equally concerned about industrial safety and worker’s livelihood. Recently, 145 workers in 9 construction sites became unemployed after some LegCo Members had called for the introduction of legislation banning the use of slung boards. More workers in this field are expected to join their ranks. The Union points out that works involving slung boards, scaffolding and electrical boards require human labour and can not be entirely done by machines. Therefore, the Administration should be very careful in introducing legislation in this respect.

The Union opines that the usefulness of slung boards should not be entirely brushed aside simply because safety precautions were not adequately taken in some construction sites. What is more, works involving slung boards should not be suspended without prior warning, so as to avoid causing financial losses for the workers concerned. The Union hopes that the Labour Department will draw up a comprehensive safety guide to working on slung boards, promote “green cards” among workers concerned, introduce skill tests for them and provide training on industrial safety for more workers. The Union asks the Labour Department to allow slung boards workers in the 9 construction sites whose work has been suspended to resume their work as soon as possible.

The Union also hopes that arrangements will be made for its representatives to meet LegCo Members to put forward their views.