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19 May 2000

Miss Odelia Leung
Clerk to Bills Committee on the
Urban Renewal Authority Bill
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Miss Leung,

**Bills Committee on the
Urban Renewal Authority Bill**

Thank you for your letter of 16 May 2000.

Our response to the points raised in the second paragraph of your letter is as follows:

(a) Advisory committees

Under the Urban Renewal Authority Bill, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) is required to publish in the Government Gazette the details of its proposed projects for public inspection. The URA would consult the District Councils concerned and hold public meetings to inform local residents of its proposed projects and to gather public views.

We support Members' proposal to set up district advisory committees to assist the URA in gathering public views. We will put this proposal to the URA when it is formed.

(b) Cash compensation

Tenants affected by land resumption for URA projects would be given a choice of flats in different public rental housing estates. A cash allowance would be given by the URA to affected tenants who do not qualify for public rental housing.

Those who have a justifiable reason for not accepting public rental housing may also receive the cash allowance. For example, if an elderly person intends to retire to his home village in the Mainland, he may receive the cash allowance. If an affected tenant does not wish to move into an interim housing flat, he may also receive the cash allowance.

Any person who has received the cash allowance in lieu of rehousing should not be eligible for any form of rehousing or housing assistance for a period of say 3 years.

(c) Preliminary agreement between the Government and the Housing Authority

Members have asked us to raise a number of points concerning the allocation of public rental housing units to affected tenants with the Housing Authority (HA). We are discussing these points with the HA. We will let Members know of HA's response as soon as possible.

(d) Urban renewal social work teams

The Land Development Corporation (LDC) is currently funding two urban renewal social work teams. These teams are separate from and independent of the LDC. The Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and St James' Settlement each operates a team at present. The staff of these teams reach out to residents in LDC redevelopment areas, identify the needs of affected residents, explain to them their rights and offer them assistance where necessary.

The organizational structure and existing strength of the two teams are as follows:

YWCA		St James' Settlement	
Team Supervisor	1	Part-time Supervisor	1
Social Workers	6	Social Workers	3
Clerical & Office Support Staff	2	Clerical Assistant	1
<i>TOTAL</i>	9	<i>TOTAL</i>	5

We consider that such social work teams play an important role in facilitating the urban renewal process and in acting as a bridge between the LDC and the affected residents. We will recommend to the URA that it should set up a social work team for each of the nine urban renewal target areas to provide assistance and advice to residents affected by its projects. Such a team should be set up before the first URA project has commenced in a target area.

Yours sincerely,

(Stephen Fisher)
for Secretary for Planning and Lands

c.c. Department of Justice
(Attn: Mr J D Scott and Ms R Chai)

Director of Planning
(Attn: Mr T K Lee)