

Bills Committee on Urban Renewal Authority Bill

Concerns raised at the meeting on 27 March 2000

Members requested the Administration -

- (a) to reconsider the suggestion of providing for an appeal channel in respect of objections against a proposed development project. Members have pointed out the heavy involvement on the part of the Secretary for Planning and Lands in charting the urban renewal strategy and in planning urban renewal projects. It would amount to a conflict of interest if he has the final say on whether a development project should proceed. To overcome the problem of prolonged objection procedures, members have suggested stipulating a statutory time limit within which the objection procedures should be completed; and
- (b) to consider the need for imposing penalty for providing false information with intent under clause 29. Members are concerned about the ways to ensure the accuracy of information provided by residents to be affected by a redevelopment project during a freezing survey. In this connection, the Administration is requested to advise how the Hong Kong Housing Authority tackles this issue.

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11 April 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 28 March 2000.

Our response to the two points raised by Members at the Bills Committee meeting held on 27 March 2000 is as follows:

(a) Appeal channel

Members have asked us to consider including in the Urban Renewal Authority Bill (the Bill) a provision for an appeal channel against the Secretary for Planning and Lands' decision to authorize the Urban Renewal Authority to proceed with a development project under clause 21(4) or clause 21(7) of the Bill. We appreciate Members' concern in this matter. We will reconsider the proposed approval procedure for development projects and let Members have our considered view as soon as possible.

(b) False statements

Members have asked us to consider whether it is necessary to include in the Bill a provision that any person who intentionally makes a false statement to an interviewer during a freezing survey of the Urban Renewal Authority commits an offence. The freezing survey is an exercise to determine the preliminary eligibility of affected tenants for rehousing. Other documentary proof would be required at a later stage to affirm actual eligibility. We consider it not necessary to make it an offence for a person to give false information with intent during a freezing survey.

Under section 26(1) of the Housing Ordinance (Cap. 283), a person who makes a false declaration in applying for public housing or in providing information to the Housing Authority when declaring income and assets commits an offence. There is no specific offence for making a false statement to an interviewer during a freezing survey.

Yours sincerely,

(Stephen Fisher)
for Secretary for Planning and Lands

c.c. Director of Planning
(Attn: Mr T K Lee)

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