

Letterhead of THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF SURVEYORS
香港測量師學會的信頭

13 December 1999

The Hon. Lee Wing-Fat
Chairman of the LegCo Panel on Housing
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Sir,

LegCo Panel on Housing

I refer to the meeting held on 7 December 1999 in LegCo where the HKIS was represented by our P. C. Lau, Eric Chung and Eddie Lee and wish to summarise in bullet points, as attached, the many problems and possible solutions which were raised at the meeting and which we hope could be of use to you in formulating strategy to deal with the issue of building quality in public housing construction.

I am sure many of the points are also covered by other professional bodies and trade associations and are already quite familiar to you. I would however venture again to advocate the use of “partnering” approach which has proven to be working effectively and successfully in the private sector where the client, the consultants and the contractors are all working towards a common objective and where confrontation is a rarity. Such “partnering” approach is at the present non-existent in public housing construction projects due mainly to the Housing Department’s negative reporting system which is not only non-inducive to co-operation but also results in defensive or even confrontational position taking among HD, consultants and contractors. We hope this will receive your due consideration.

However and notwithstanding all the recent adverse publicity on the quality of public housing construction, and with only a few exceptions, many of which are in fact of general defects which do not affect the structural integrity of the buildings, the HKIS wishes to record its commendation on the colossal social duty the Housing Authority has undertaken without which our society would not have been able to provide shelter for half of our population.

Yours faithfully,
THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF SURVEYORS

Samson Wong
President

HKHA Quality Control Initiative

- Construction is management intensive and multi-interactive amongst predominantly human elements.
- 4 construction objectives: Costs, Quality, Time & Safety.
- Question to ask ourselves “why there are more problems in HKHA projects than private sector projects?”

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Possible Solutions</u>
a) incompatibility between contractor’s risk and low profit margin as tendering system places too much emphasis on tender price.	a) technical capability and past performance of contractor’s individual staff names to be given more weighting.
b) layers of subcontracting result in difficult control over quality of workers.	b) registration of subcontractors and individual workers through trade testing; wholesale/brokerage (vertical) subcontracting system to be banned.
c) insufficient tender period afforded to contractors result in poor appreciation of project needs/difficulties.	c) tenderers be given sufficient tender period and tender briefing; tenderers be encouraged to propose better alternatives..
d) unduly short construction programmes, stringent safety requirements and EPD regulations prompt contractor to cut corners.	d) realistic programme to be afforded to contractor.
e) unfair contract terms usually sided in favour of HKHA.	e) fair sharing of contractual risk between HKHA and contractors; contract terms to be reviewed.
f) “bureaucracy” and “no responsibility” mentality of HD’s supervising officers; too much paper work and form filling.	f) “partnership” culture to be cultivated among HKHA, HD, consultants and contractors; reduce paper work.
g) evasive attitude of HD’s supervising officers gives wrong impression to contractor.	g) hardline stance against substandard work from day 1 particularly on underground and concealed work.
h) negative and after-event “blame” appraisal system	h) pro-active directive supervision approach; claim prevention approach such as DRAd services in ASD projects.
i) quality of consultants services in question due to cut-throat fee; responsibility of subconsultants not clear.	i) consultants to be afforded reasonable fees; consultant’s site supervisory staff to be paid/reimbursed by HKHA and <u>not</u> through fee bidding; all consultants to be appointed separately and <u>not</u> under lead consultant.
j) inconsistent sample flats between different CAs for each project	j) one central sample flat to be viewed by all tenderers at tender stage and during construction as standard of acceptance.
k) standard design too idealistic, too finite without sufficient consideration on its constructability/buildability of design in question,	k) constructability/buildability of standard design to be reassessed with joint input from contractors/HKHA/HD/consultants.

HKHA Quality Control Initiative (Cont'd)

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Possible Solutions</u>
l) while public housing construction uses fair amount of off-site prefabrication e.g. external facade there are still lot of wet trades which rely on manual workers' workmanship.	l) use more standard components/module which could either be fabricated in factory or if constructed in-site on site could be less vulnerable to the mercy of the workers e.g. dry partitions with built-in conduit, re-useable small steel formwork components etc. which will also help reduce construction waste.
m) inconsistent quality and technical capability of mid level supervising officers such as site agent, site supervisors etc.	m) registration of and appraisal on performance of such middle management staff.
n) monotonous standard building outlook of public housing estates result in social label as low class.	n) allow design flexibility for architects but still using standard components/modules will help give identity.
o) slow response to defect rectification.	o) contractors to have special maintenance team allowed for in the tender and only be paid during maintenance period.
p) only whip and no or little carrot.	p) whip and carrot.