

**Bills Committee on
Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) (Amendment) Bill 2003**

**List of follow-up actions arising from the discussion
at the meeting on 2 February 2004**

- (1) To provide the number of applications for public rental housing (PRH) on compassionate ground and from past beneficiaries of subsidized home ownership schemes as well as the number of successful applications over the past three years.

Reply

As we advised Members before in our previous reply, past beneficiaries of Subsidized Home Ownership Schemes (SHOS) are not allowed to apply for PRH again after sale of their flats. This is necessary in order to better safeguard the rational allocation of public housing resources. However, the Housing Authority (HA) has been exercising discretion to allocate PRH units to those who are in genuine hardship and have to dispose of their flats acquired under SHOS.

2. In early 2002, in response to the suggestion of the LegCo Panel on Housing, the HA endorsed a set of revised criteria for considering such applications, as follows –

- (i) bankruptcy;
- (ii) financial hardship resulting in the need for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance;
- (iii) adverse changes to family circumstances such as divorce, death of bread-winner, etc;
- (iv) a significant drop in household income resulting in difficulties in financing the home purchases; and
- (v) households beset with medical and social problems but not to the extent to qualify for compassionate rehousing.

3. The HA considers the above measures adequate to allow the households beset with hardship, financial or otherwise, which prevents them from continued home ownership, to have access to PRH, while at the same time safeguarding the rational allocation of public housing resources.

4. The number of applications for PRH from past beneficiaries of SHOS and the number of successful applicants over the past three years are as follows –

Financial Year	No. of applications received from past beneficiaries of SHOS	No. of successful applications
2001/2002	1233	169
2002/2003	3259*	1313
2003/2004 (up to 31/1/2004)	1921	1108

* The number of applications increased after the relaxation of application criteria of past beneficiaries of SHOS since 1.2.2002.

5. Meanwhile, those who have genuine need and immediate housing problem, coupled with other justified financial, social and/or medical grounds, can apply for Compassionate Rehousing (CR) at Social Welfare Department (SWD) for a PRH unit. The number of referrals from SWD for PRH on compassionate ground and number of applications successfully rehoused over the past three years are as follows –

Financial Year	No. of referrals	No. of applications rehoused*
2001/2002	1441	1399
2002/2003	1903	1703
2003/2004 (up to 31/1/2004)	1435	1339

*Note: The number rehoused is less than the number referred for various reasons, e.g. the applicant's circumstances have subsequently changed or the applicant has withdrawn the application.

(2) To advise the considerations which the Administration will take into account in offering transit centre or interim housing to evicted tenants who are not able to meet the eligibility criteria for PRH, such as the seven-year residence rule.

Reply

An evicted family will not be rendered homeless. For an evicted family referred from the Bailiff Office executing a possession order, the Housing Authority (HA) will first accommodate the family in a temporary shelter in a Transit Centre (TC), so long as its members are Hong Kong residents.

2. During their stay in TC, upon verification of their genuine homelessness and subject to meeting the eligibility criteria for PRH application through the General Waiting List (GWL), which include (i) income-cum-asset test, and (ii) no-domestic-property test, the HA will rehouse them to an Interim Housing(IH) unit to wait for maturity of their GWL application. It should be pointed out that in arranging the TC and subsequently an IH unit to the evicted family, the HA will not consider if it fulfills the 7-year residence requirement, which has to be met only when the family is rehoused from an IH unit to a PRH unit.

3. In case the evicted family cannot fulfill the eligibility criteria for PRH, they could stay in the TC for a maximum of 3 months. During this period, they can seek assistance from the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and Non-government Organisations (NGOs), such as Hong Kong Family Welfare Society, Caritas-Hong Kong, Christian Family Services Centre, and Neighbourhood Advice Action Council, through the 66 Family Services Centres/Integrated Family Services Centre they operate. Examples of the assistance are set out in Annex.

Assistance being provided by SWD and NGOs to evicted families

Provision of accommodation

- Those who have genuine need and immediate housing problem, coupled with other justified financial, social and/or medical grounds, can apply for Compassionate Rehousing (CR) at Social Welfare Department (SWD) for a PRH unit.
- Residential Placement including (a) Aged Home Placement and (b) Urban Hostel for Single Persons could be arranged for the evicted individuals if they meet the eligibility criteria. Under (a), emergency placement in subvented aged homes can be arranged for singleton or couple aged over 60. Under (b), placement in the two urban hostels operated by NGOs (聖雅各福群會李節街單身人士宿舍 and 救世軍怡安宿舍) can be arranged for single adults. The two hostels offer 80 placements with a maximum staying period of 6 months.

Finding suitable accommodation

- Information such as advertisement on suitable accommodation and on estate agencies will be passed to the evicted individuals or families if they do not have adequate support network (e.g. New Arrivals).
- If need be, the caseworkers will escort and accompany the individuals or families in searching the right tenement.
- Trust funds could be released by SWD to help the evicted tenants to settle the rent deposits and other expenses arising from the removal. The 4 major charitable/trust funds included Li Po Chun Charitable Trust Fund, Tang Shui Kin and Ho Tim Charitable Fund, Brewin Trust Fund and Kwan Fong Trust Fund for the Needy.

Counselling service

- Counselling service is offered to the evicted tenants to help them cope with the stress and anxiety which may arise from the eviction and removal.