



康樂及文化事務署

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

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Clerk to Panel on Home Affairs  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn.: Ms Alice Leung)

Dear Ms Leung,

### **Means of Escape at the Concert Hall of the Hong Kong City Hall**

Thank you for your letter of 20 May 2014 to the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services. On the issue raised in Mr. Chan's email to Hon Ma Fung-kwok enclosed in the letter with regard to the means of escape at the Concert Hall of the Hong Kong City Hall, our reply is set out below.

The Concert Hall of the Hong Kong City Hall comprises two levels: the Stalls and the Balcony, with a seating capacity of 1 075 and 387 respectively. In accordance with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Means of Escape issued by the Buildings Department, the Stalls and the Balcony of the Concert Hall are each provided with five separate exits, through which the audience can leave the Concert Hall and get to various locations on the ground level.


The Hong Kong City Hall was built in 1962 and has been in use for 52 years. Part of its drainage system is linked to the surrounding buildings. Seawater inflow and flooding used to be common occurrences during astronomical tides and torrential rainstorms. In recent years, the problem of seawater inflow has been eased as a result of the Central Reclamation Project. Nevertheless, areas in low-lying position, such as the exit leading from the Stalls level to the public car park, rainwater will run down from the staircase on both sides during heavy rain, resulting in serious flooding and causing inconvenience to those who leave through that exit. Also, water seepage will happen near the stage area of the Concert Hall, causing disturbance to the programme and damaging the facilities inside the Concert Hall. The City Hall therefore has put in place a contingency measure for adverse weather, i.e. putting up a plank outside the exit as a water trap to prevent water from getting in, for the purposes of public safety and non-interruption of the performances.

As shown in the record, during the period from May 8 to 10, the weather was very unstable and the Hong Kong Observatory issued amber, red and black rainstorm signals as well as flooding warning a number of times. On the evening of May 8, the black rainstorm gave rise to excessive rainwater, causing flooding not only to the aforementioned exit, but also to part of the Concert Hall. In the light of this, the management of the City Hall decided to strike a balance by implementing the contingency measure – setting up the temporary water trap at the exit in question. On the evening of May 10, which was scheduled for a performance by the Hong Kong Philharmonic, our staff did not remove the temporary water trap since the weather condition was still unstable. They could tell from past experience that the audience of 726 persons at the Stalls could depart smoothly through the remaining four exits. As such, when the concert ended, the audience was led to use the other four exits to leave the Concert Hall. Yet, the duty usher at the concerned exit failed to explain the situation clearly to Mr. Chan. Neither did she relay Mr. Chan's request to the duty manager for a prompt response. We are told that Mr. Chan eventually opened the door at the concerned exit by himself, walked over the water trap and left. In this connection, we are deeply regretful for the inconvenience caused to Mr. Chan.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) attaches great importance to public safety and requires the escape routes of all performance venues be kept clear. Although the temporary erection of the water trap has genuine safety and operational need, the Department will discuss with relevant departments to explore other feasible measures to solve the problem in question. However, as the City Hall is a Grade 1 Historic Building, no alteration or realignment of the underground water mains and drainage pipes can be introduced without a study of the impact on the entire historic building. Also, prior consultation with the Antiquities and Monuments Office and other works department to find out a long term solutions is necessary.

In response to this incident, we have already instructed the management of the City Hall that, in case the erection of the water trap is unavoidable to prevent rain water flooding into the Concert Hall, detailed explanation to audience is necessary. LCSD will also strive to enhance the service quality and staff training of the City Hall so as to provide a safe and comfortable environment for the audience to enjoy the performances.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms. Randa WAN)

Chief Manager (Urban/Cultural Services)  
for Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

c.c. Secretary for Home Affairs  
(Attn: Mr William LEUNG) (Fax No.: 2591 6002)