

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Proposed Subsidy Scheme for the Replacement of Laundry Pole Holders by Laundry Racks in Public Rental Flats

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the proposed Subsidy Scheme for the replacement of laundry pole holders by laundry racks in public rental flats.

BACKGROUND

2. The Housing Authority (HA) has been implementing proactive and pragmatic measures to improve the living standard of tenants as far as resources permit. With a view to enhancing building sustainability and addressing the safety concern of tenants, the Housing Department (HD) has recently conducted a review on laundry pole holder clothes drying facilities (**Annex 1**).

Evolution of Laundry Facilities

3. Most of the estates completed before 2005 adopted the pole holders design. In addition to pole holders, laundry hangers are provided on the balcony ceiling of the flats in most of the standard type blocks as an extra clothes drying facility. After that, cord pulley type laundry racks have been the standard provision for estates completed between 2006 and 2010. More recently, parallel type laundry rods have been adopted for estates completed since 2011.

Subsidy Scheme in 2004/05

4. There were about 550 000 rental flats with pole holders before the launch in 2004/05. To encourage the change of laundry pole holders to laundry racks, the HA launched a one-off Subsidy Scheme in 2004/2005 whereby each household was required to pay \$200 to install stainless steel laundry racks in replacement of laundry pole holders. The laundry racks installation works were carried out by HA's contractors.

Free Installations for the Elderly and Disabled Persons

5. For families with all members aged over 60, it has been our policy to provide free installation of laundry racks upon request. Laundry racks will also be provided to the disabled persons subject to professional advice from their doctor and occupational therapist.

Installation of Laundry Racks by Tenants

6. Tenants may at any time approach Estate Offices to apply for the installation of an approved type of laundry rack in replacement of the pole holder at their own costs.

THE PROPOSAL

7. When properly used, the pole holder design is up to the required safety standard. Some tenants may however find the bamboo poles difficult to manoeuvre compared with cord pulley type laundry racks. On the other hand, as tenants in most of the standard type blocks have alternate indoor laundry facilities in addition to pole holders, and not all tenants prefer to dry their clothes at the location where the laundry facilities are currently provided, not all tenants need or want the replacement of pole holders with laundry racks. To strike a balance among various considerations such as tenants' preferences, public's safety concern and the optimum use of public resources, we propose to launch a new Subsidy Scheme to replace the pole holders with laundry racks on a need basis. The details of the new Subsidy Scheme are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Design of the Laundry Racks

8. The two designs, parallel and perpendicular types, currently adopted by HD in existing public rental flats will be used for the proposed new Subsidy Scheme as they fulfill the Building (Minor Works) Regulation. Parallel type design (**Annex 2**) with a maximum length of 1.8 metres will be the first choice. If the space of the re-entrant areas at the façades does not permit, the perpendicular type (**Annex 3**) will be used. As for the use of material, laundry racks made by stainless steel will be used as it is more durable as compared with other materials.

Programme of the Scheme

9. To encourage more tenants to join the proposed Scheme, the HD will conduct a survey on the intention of tenants with regard to the replacement of a new rack. Installation works under the proposed Scheme are expected to be completed in around two years. The Scheme will be applicable to all public rental flats with pole holders installed.

Amount of Subsidy

10. The estimated cost to replace a pole holder facility with a stainless steel laundry rack is about \$1,800 per flat. The HA will bear about \$1,500 for each rack. In other words, tenants will only have to pay \$300¹ for the replacement. As such, we expect that the Scheme would be attractive enough to those who wish and need to install a laundry rack.

Advantages of the New Scheme

11. There are a number of merits with the proposed Scheme.
- (a) As aforementioned, some tenants prefer hanging their laundry indoor, and some tenants in blocks of Harmony design are content to continue using approved laundry rods outside the living rooms façade (**Annex 4**). Furthermore, some existing flats are already installed with laundry racks. Therefore, some tenants may choose not to join the scheme. In this connection, in comparison to launching a comprehensive replacement scheme, the proposed Subsidy Scheme is more environmental friendly and will not involve wastage as no replacement arrangement has to be made for tenants who do not prefer using laundry racks.
 - (b) Public resources could be spent more effectively as replacement works would only carried out on a need basis. The proposed scheme will incur less expenditure for the HA compared with a comprehensive replacement² for all existing flats with pole holders.

¹ The installation cost of \$300 is a nominal amount and is much lower than the cost of installing a commonly available rack in the market with lower quality (which usually costs \$700 to \$1000). The nominal payment can ensure the proper use of public resources.

² We estimate that there are currently about 490 000 public rental flats provided with laundry pole holders. Based on the estimation, the HA will incur a total cost of about \$900 million to replace the laundry facilities in all these flats.

- (c) The installation of laundry racks is now classified as minor works under the Building (Minor Works) Regulation. If tenants are to install laundry racks on their own and at their own costs, the installation of a possible substandard rack³ may not comply with relevant legislative requirements. Whereas the quality and durability of racks installed by the HA could be ensured.

Exemption from Payment

12. In accordance with our established policy, households with all elderly members and the disabled persons who are physically capable of using laundry racks as recommended by medical practitioners will be exempted from the installation cost of \$300. In addition, we also propose to exempt families who are receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance or Rent Assistance from the payment under the proposed Scheme.

PUBLICITY

13. We expect that the public will welcome the proposal to launch the Subsidy Scheme. The HA would emphasize that the proposed Subsidy Scheme on the provision of laundry racks is an enhancement of existing estate facilities on a need basis. Meanwhile, the HA will step up the publicity on the safety use of laundry facilities.

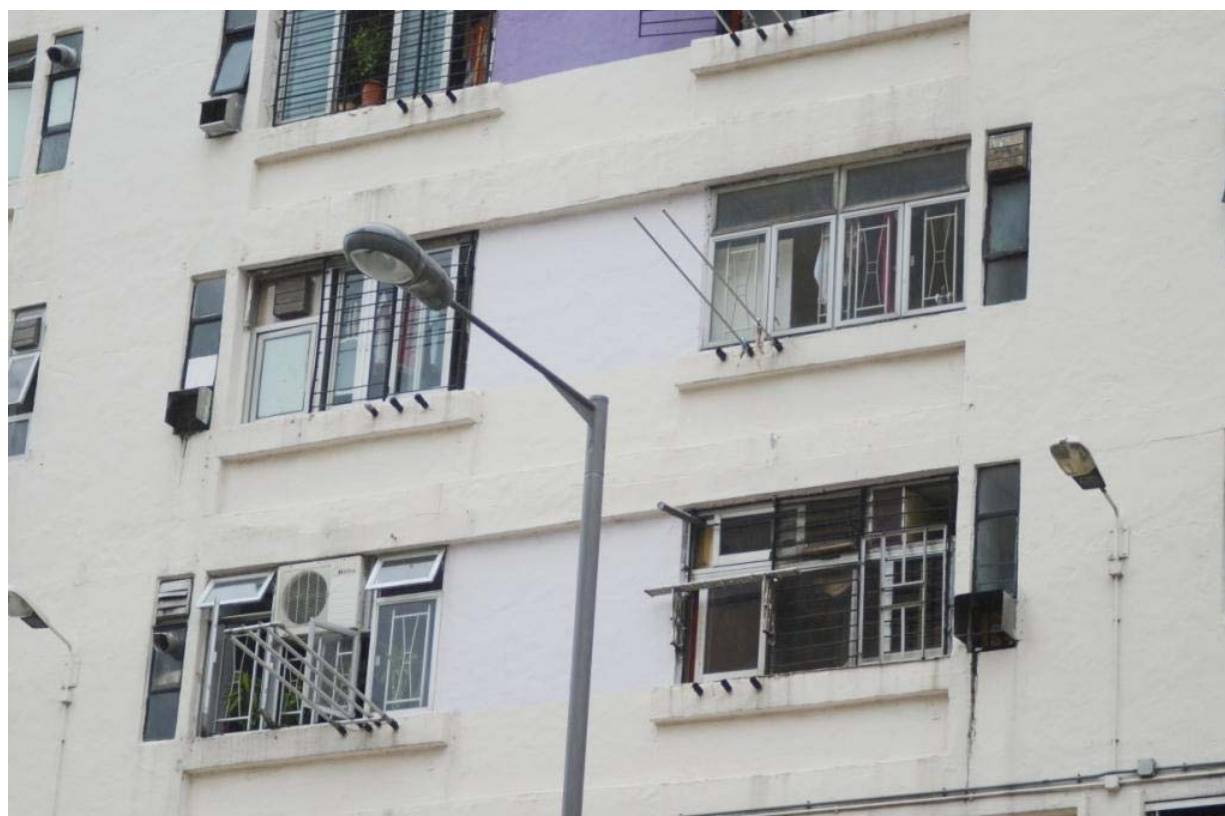
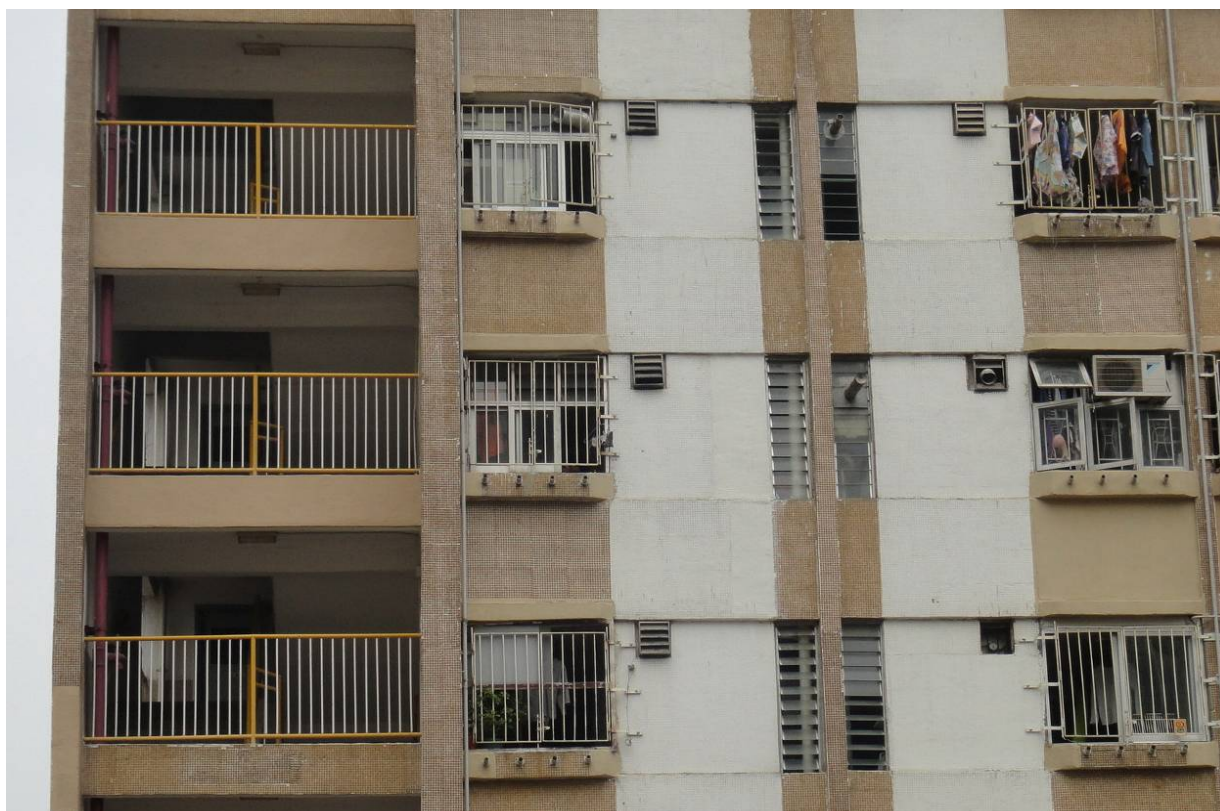
WAY FORWARD

14. The proposed new Subsidy Scheme is subject to the endorsement of the Subsidised Housing Committee under the HA at its upcoming meeting. Members are invited to note the proposal as set out in the paper.

Transport and Housing Bureau December 2013

³ The racks commonly available in the market may involve inferior and thinner materials, worker carrying out works without adequate safety provisions, no sealing up existing pole holders, no earthing connection, less robust fixing brackets and without the approval for completion by a Minor Works Contractor.

Photos of existing pole holders



Photos of parallel type laundry rack



Photo of perpendicular type laundry rack

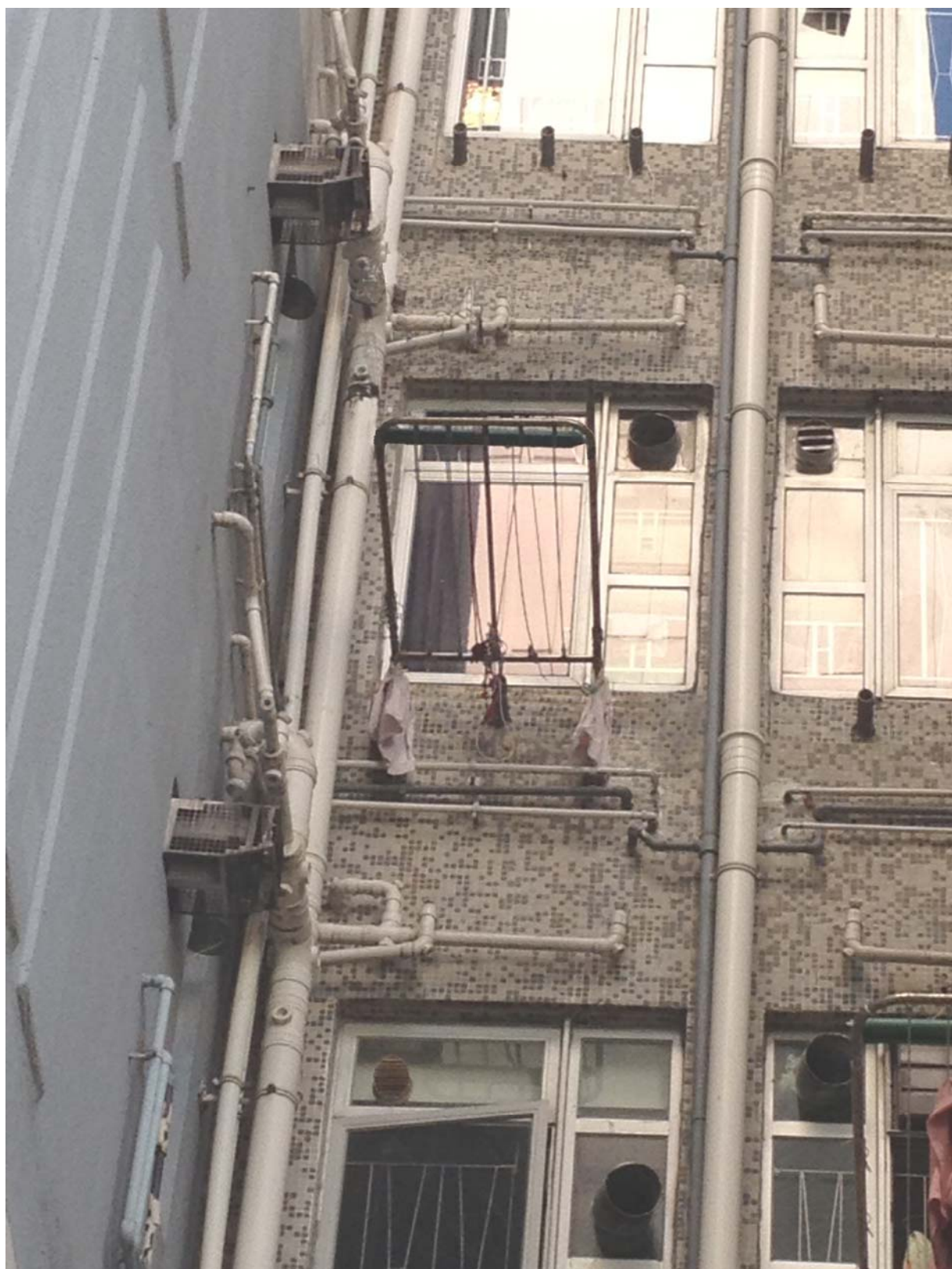


Photo of Harmony Block Façade



Tenants usually install laundry T-rods outside living room facade

The pole holders at the re-entrant are left idle.