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Your ref : CB4/PAC/R67

22 December 2016

Mr Anthony CHU  
Clerk  
Public Accounts Committee  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central  
Hong Kong

Dear Mr CHU,

**Public Accounts Committee**  
**Consideration of Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 67**

**Maintenance and safety-related improvements  
of public rental housing flats**

Thank you for your letter of 14 December 2016 requesting for supplementary information arising from the Public Accounts Committee's public hearing held on 10 December 2016.

I have the pleasure to provide the requested information using the same paragraph referencing of your letter as follows.

- (a) Inter-departmental meetings chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing) were held amongst

representatives from the Housing Department (HD), the Water Supplies Department (WSD), the Government Laboratory (GL) and the Department of Health (DH). The main purpose of these meetings was to review water sampling test results and deliberate and decide the follow-up actions required. In general, before the inter-departmental meetings, WSD would submit water sampling test results to members of the meeting. After the water sampling results of respective public rental housing (PRH) developments were concluded at the meetings, either press conferences would be held or press releases issued (normally on the same day) to inform the public and tenants of the Affected PRH developments of the updated situation of lead in drinking water incident in the PRH developments including the number of water samples taken and number of non-compliant samples (if any) found in the drinking water of the respective PRH developments. From July to August 2015 when a number of Affected PRH developments were identified, it was a norm that oral reports were made to the relevant bureau heads before the press conferences were held or press releases issued. Thereafter, when no further Affected PRH developments were identified and when water sampling tests were carried out in PRH developments completed before 2005, relevant bureau heads were kept updated instantly via press releases which were issued on the same day after the relevant inter-departmental meetings were held.

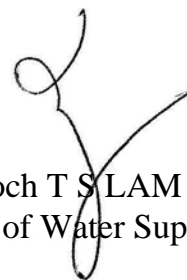
- (b) The Commission of Inquiry into Excess Lead Found in Drinking Water in its report issued on 31 May 2016 supported the WSD's proposal to set up an international expert panel on water safety (the Panel) to provide expert advice to Hong Kong on matters including water quality standard, water quality regulatory and monitoring regime, water sampling protocol etc. The Panel was set up by the DEVB on 1 June 2016 and comprises five members with three overseas members and two local members. The three overseas experts are from the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada with extensive experience in the water industry and involvement in the work of international associations. One of the two local experts is an experienced water consultant and the other is a medical professor. The details of the expertise of individual members are at **Annex**.

As of December 2016, the Panel have held three meetings for in-depth discussions on various issues related to drinking water safety. Members of the Panel have been briefed on the general water supply system and drinking water safety system in Hong Kong. They have met with the overseas expert consultants

engaged by WSD and exchanged views with the consultants, DEVB and WSD on water safety matters including the drinking water quality standard and the water sampling protocols of various international organisations and developed countries and water safety plans. They have also conducted site visits to better understand the typical plumbing systems of the PRH developments and private housing estates in Hong Kong. Panel members have provided expert advice in regard to drinking water safety and in particular a holistic plan including drinking water quality standards, the formulation of a territory-wide compliance monitoring programme and water safety plans to enhance drinking water safety in Hong Kong. Against this, the Panel works as a team with overseas members providing advice jointly with local members after detailed discussion and deliberation taking into consideration the international practice and experience as well as local environment and circumstances. DEVB and WSD are currently reviewing and studying the advice of the Panel in consultation with the overseas expert consultants. The work progress of the Panel is satisfactory with a target to complete the work by March 2017.

In regard to the expenditure for the work of the Panel, a sum of \$1.2 million has been set aside in 2016-17 financial year and the expenditure up to the end of October 2016 was about \$0.47 million.

Yours sincerely,



( Enoch T S LAM )  
Director of Water Supplies

Encl.

c.c. Secretary for Development	(fax no. 2810 8502)
Secretary for Transport and Housing	(fax no. 2523 9187)
Director of Housing	(fax no. 2761 6700)
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury	(fax no. 2147 5239)
Director of Audit	(fax no. 2583 9063)

**Members of International Expert Panel on Drinking Water Safety**

**Professor Jennifer Colbourne** was the former Chief Inspector of the Drinking Water Inspectorate of the United Kingdom. She is now a Visiting Professor of the Centre for Environmental and Health Engineering, University of Surrey, UK. The centre research projects encompass water resources surveillance, water treatment, supply and regulation etc. She is the former Chairman of the International Water Association, UK Committee.

**Dr David Cunliffe** is the lead editor of World Health Organization (WHO)'s publication 'Water Safety in Buildings' and is also former Chair of Australian National Water Quality Advisory Committee. He was the Chair of International Task Force Meeting for the Finalization of the 3rd Edition of the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality.

**Professor Michèle Prévost** holds an Industrial Chair on Drinking Water at Polytechnique Montréal. She leads the multi university Canadian Water Network initiative on lead in drinking water. She sits on International Lead and Copper Rule revision consultation team for the Office of Research and Development of the US EPA.

**Dr CHAN Hon-fai** is the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Water Supplies and expert member of Task Force on Excessive Lead in Drinking Water. Dr Chan is the past Chairman of the Environmental Division of the Hong Kong Institute of Engineers and he is also a leading water and environmental management expert.

**Professor Thomas Chan Yan-keung** is the Professor of Department of Medicine and Therapeutics, Faculty of Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Professor Chan is the Consultant Physician and Clinical Pharmacologist, Director of Prince of Wales Hospital Poison Treatment Centre and Member of Coordinating Committee of Hong Kong Poison Control Network. He is also a Member of the Advisory Committee on Water Supplies.