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29 January 2019

Legislative Council
Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Mr Anthony CHU)
(Fax No. 2543 9197)

Dear Mr CHU,

**Follow-up to Public Accounts Committee Report No. 67
Joint-office operation on water seepage in buildings**

I refer to your letter of 7 January 2019 with a similar copy to the Director of Buildings (DB) enquiring about the progress of formulation of performance indicator relating to the Joint-Office (JO) operation on water seepage in buildings in the Director of Audit Report No. 67 (Audit Report). In consultation with the Buildings Department (BD), I provide a consolidated reply in the following paragraphs.

2. In order to improve the handling of water seepage cases, a task force comprising representatives from the Food and Health Bureau, the Development Bureau, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), BD and the Water Supplies Department, and convened by the subject Assistant Directors of FEHD and BD was formed in early 2018. The task force is currently conducting a comprehensive review of the JO operation, including streamlining the work procedures and continuing to implement various recommendations of the Audit Report. Among other improvement measures under review, the task force is in the course of collecting data for working out a pragmatic performance indicator for public reference. Upon gathering sufficient information for analysis, JO will be better able to formulate a pragmatic performance indicator for handling straightforward cases.

3. In the meantime, we have analyzed the water seepage cases lodged with us in 2018. Statistics indicate that about 64.59% (23 696) of the 36 684 total water seepage cases received in the year were completed within 90 working days. For the remaining cases, about 2.46% (903) were completed within six calendar months, 2.91% (1 066) within seven to twelve months and 30.04% (11 019) were still being handled by JO.

4. The completion time frame of 90 working days is only applicable to simple and straightforward water seepage cases since longer investigation time would be required for complicated ones, for example, those involving intermittent seepages and multiple seepage sources etc. For such cases, additional, ongoing and repeated tests are needed to ascertain the source of water seepage, resulting in longer investigation process. To expedite the work process, JO has started a pilot scheme to apply new technology (namely infrared thermography and microwave tomography) in three districts to tackle water seepage cases. JO will evaluate the effectiveness of such technology in June 2019, and consider whether more extensive use is justified with a view to shortening the investigation time.

5. Besides, JO staff are required to gain access to the premises suspected to have caused the water seepage for conducting most of the tests. It will require coordination with and cooperation of the owners or occupiers concerned which takes time. If vacant units or uncooperative occupiers are involved, JO staff will have to apply for court warrants to enter the premises for investigation and take even longer time to complete the investigation.

6. For enquiries, please contact the undersigned at 2867 5641.

Yours sincerely,



(CHAN Kam-tong)

for Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

c.c. Director of Buildings (fax no. 2868 3248)

Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (fax no. 2147 5239)

Director of Audit (fax no. 2583 9063)