

LEGCO QUESTION NO. 2
(Written Reply)

Date of meeting : 17.4.2002

Asked by : Hon Lui Ming-wah Replied by : Secretary for
Planning and Lands

Question

A recent survey conducted by my office revealed that on the main streets throughout the territory, the percentages of shops and buildings displaying building numbers ranged between 25% and 81%. If calculated on the basis of the three regions, namely Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, the percentages ranged between 40% and 66%, which were lower than the results of the sample surveys carried out by the Administration in 1998 and in 2000, which stood at 77% to 91% and at 81% to 89% respectively. At the same time, it was found that there were no or not enough street name plates on many streets, or that the name plates were improperly located or were of inconsistent shapes. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) whether it will formulate a long-term and specific target for the ratio of shops and private buildings displaying building numbers; if it will, whether it will calculate the ratio on the basis of streets; if not, of the reasons for that;
- (b) whether it will appeal to users of shop premises, owners of private buildings or owners' corporations for the display of building numbers, and provide them with practical assistance;
- (c) whether it will consider collaborating with District Councils to improve the ratio of display of building numbers on a district basis; and whether it will consider issuing instructions to impose a specified time limit on buildings for displaying building numbers, and prosecuting those who fail to comply with the instructions in accordance with the law; and
- (d) of the concrete measures in place to improve the situation in which the street name plates in Hong Kong are insufficient, improperly located and of inconsistent shapes?

Reply

Madam President,

- (a) The Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) empowers the Government to require building owners to display correct building numbers at prominent spots of their buildings.
- (b) To ensure that building numbers are properly displayed at all new buildings, the Rating and Valuation Department will allocate building numbers to new buildings within one month after their completion. Moreover, the Government has issued guidelines to developers on the required size of building numbers to be displayed and suitable locations for their display. After notifying owners and developers of the relevant building numbers, the Rating and Valuation Department will monitor their compliance until the building numbers have been properly displayed. According to the records of the Rating and Valuation Department, virtually all new buildings have complied with this requirement. The few remaining cases of non-compliance have arisen primarily because the streets concerned have not yet been named.

As regards existing buildings, the Rating and Valuation Department launches a building numbering campaign once every two or three years to ensure the proper display of building numbers by owners. During the past three campaigns, the Rating and Valuation Department sent out letters to owners/occupiers of all ground floor units and owners' corporations to remind them of the need to display building numbers properly. Sample surveys were carried out afterwards. The results showed that about 85% of the buildings inspected had their building numbers properly displayed.

As regards non-compliance cases, follow up actions have been taken by the Rating and Valuation Department, including, for example, the issue of warning letters to remind the owners/occupiers of the importance of proper display of building numbers. In the majority of these cases, the building numbers were removed or damaged during the course of renovation. In view of this, the Rating and Valuation Department, once becoming aware that a property has been re-let or undergoing renovation work, would issue a letter to the owner/occupier concerned to remind them to properly display their building number after the completion of such work. Appropriate follow up action will also be taken by the Department.

Since the existing arrangements have generally fulfilled the Government's requirements, the Rating and Valuation Department considers that there is no

need to set out any new specific target on the ratio of buildings displaying building numbers.

- (c) Although the Government is empowered to take prosecution action against offenders under the Buildings Ordinance, experience of the Rating and Valuation Department shows that owners/occupiers would follow the Department's direction on the proper display of building numbers, making prosecution action unnecessary under these circumstances.

We would also be happy to consider any practicable suggestions on the proper display of building numbers by owners/occupiers, including cooperation with District Councils and other organizations concerned.

- (d) As regards the installation of street name plates, the current practice of the Highways Department is to install these name plates at the beginning and end of a public road, and also at the corner of road junctions where feasible and where there are no obstructions.

Highways Department is currently undertaking a consultancy study on standards for enhanced streetscape and street furniture. The study will particularly focus on the following aspects to come up with improvement measures:

- a) the feasibility of inscribing building numbers on street name plates;
- b) the redesign of the sign face of street name plates; and
- c) the adoption of a more unified approach to deal with the locations and methods of mounting street name plates, e.g. the use of multi-function poles to mount street name plates at street corners.

The study is expected to be completed by mid-2002. Once the proposals on street name plates are adopted, we will implement them in phases.