

LEGCO QUESTION NO. 14 (Written Reply)

Asked by: Hon LAU Kong-wah

Date of meeting: 4 May 2005

Replied by: Secretary for Housing,
Planning and Lands

Question:

With respect to the processing of New Territories small house applications by the Lands Department, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the average time taken to process such applications;
- (b) of the number of processed applications in each of the past three years, broken down by the number of years taken to process them, as well as the reasons for the longer processing time in some cases;
- (c) of the existing staff establishment for processing such applications in various District Lands Offices (“DLOs”); and
- (d) whether staff of the DLOs concerned have complained or reflected to the authorities that their offices are understaffed for processing such applications, and whether the authorities have reviewed the staffing resources in this respect?

Reply :

President,

My reply to the four parts of the question is as follows:

- (a) Due to the large number of small house applications received in the past, applicants have to wait for some time before their applications can be processed. The waiting time ranges from one to three years, depending on the number of outstanding

applications in the district. The actual processing time also varies, depending on the complexity of individual cases. Normally, it takes about one year to process a case. Complicated cases need longer processing time.

- (b) In the past three years, the number of cases handled by the Lands Department (Lands D) is as follows:

Year	Number of cases handled
2002	2 130
2003	2 132
2004	2 178

Lands D does not have the relevant statistics on the breakdown of cases in terms of the number of years taken to process them.

Some cases need longer processing time mainly due to the existence of more complicated circumstances. Examples include problems associated with the emergency vehicular access, technical matters such as drainage and geotechnical problems, insufficient documents of the applicants to prove their indigenous villager status, or objections to the applications. Under these circumstances, the applicants will need more time to consider ways to overcome the problems or seek professional advice to resolve them. Also, DLOs will have to co-ordinate with government departments concerned with a view to resolving the problems.

- (c) The deployment of manpower is mainly based on the number of small house applications handled by DLOs. The staff deployed to process small house applications are as follows:

<u>District Lands Offices</u>	<u>Number of Staff Responsible for Processing Small House Applications</u>
Islands	9
North	14
Sai Kung	10
Shatin	10
Tai Po	24.5
Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing	4
Tuen Mun	5.5
Yuen Long	28

- (d) Lands D has received requests from the staff for increasing manpower in the past. It also reviews the manpower deployment on processing small house applications from time to time. However, as resources are limited, Lands D has to balance the distribution of resources among different areas of work. As such, it has no plan to increase the manpower to process small house applications for the time being. Nevertheless, Lands D is now reviewing, in consultation with Heung Yee Kuk, the procedures for processing small house applications with a view to streamlining them so that the waiting and processing time can be shortened.

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