

Index Page

Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2014-15

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Development

Session No. : 8

File Name :DEVB(W)-2S-e1

Reply Serial No.	Question Serial No.	Name of Member	Head	Programme
S-DEVB(W)01	S0079	CHAN Ka-lok, Kenneth	159	(2) Heritage Conservation
S-DEVB(W)02	S0059	WONG Kwok-hing	33	(5) Greening and Technical Services
S-DEVB(W)03	S0103	TANG Ka-piu	42	(2) Mechanical Installations Safety
S-DEVB(W)04	S0101	TANG Ka-piu	194	(1) Water Supply: Planning and Distribution
S-DEVB(W)05	S0102	TANG Ka-piu	194	(2) Water Quality Control
S-DEVB(W)06	S0060	WONG Kwok-hing	194	(1) Water Supply: Planning and Distribution
S-DEVB(W)07	S0061	WONG Kwok-hing	194	(3) Customer Services

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-DEVB(W)01****(Question Serial No. S0079)**

Head: (159) Government Secretariat: Development Bureau (Works Branch)

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Heritage Conservation

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Development (Works) (C S WAI)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

At the Special Finance Committee Meeting on 2 April 2014, the Secretary said that resources had been earmarked for the review of the policy on the conservation of built heritage. However, it is stated in the written reply to Members' questions regarding the Estimates that no funding has been earmarked. The Secretary later clarified that "resources, but not 'additional resources', have been earmarked". In this connection, please provide details of the public engagement activities for the policy review of heritage conservation and the estimated expenditures, such as the numbers of the public engagement activities including the proposed public fora, seminars or exhibitions, the expenditures involved, as well as the timetable for the entire consultation exercise, etc.

Asked by: Hon. CHAN Ka-lok, Kenneth

Reply:

Question Serial Number 1185 asked whether the Administration has earmarked provision for the follow-up work on the results of the policy review on the conservation of built heritage in 2014-15. In our written response to the said question, we stated that "As the amount of resources required for the follow-up work can only be determined after the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) has submitted the report to the Government, no funding has been earmarked for the follow-up work on the results of the review in 2014-15". We have, nevertheless, earmarked resources for the review itself, e.g. for holding public fora, exhibitions, etc, as mentioned in the Secretary for Development's verbal response.

As part of the public engagement exercise, AAB has just launched a series of public educational activities on the existing heritage conservation policy. The public educational activities include a roving exhibition, five public lectures, four workshops and a visit for the Friends of Heritage. The expenditure on these public educational activities will be absorbed within existing resources. AAB will then collect public views on the specific issues under the review and prepare a report to the Government. Detailed plans on the collection of views, including the expenditure and manpower to be involved, will be worked out with AAB.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-DEVB(W)02

(Question Serial No. S0059)

Head: (33) Civil Engineering and Development Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (5) Greening and Technical Services
Controlling Officer: Director of Civil Engineering and Development (C K HON)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

According to the Administration's reply DEVB(W)86, two Greening Master Plans (GMPs) will commence. In this connection, I want to know what is the progress of the GMPs implemented in the past three years; the timetable of the related design and works; the related estimated expenditure and when will the details of the works be given to the public?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

In the past three years, we have completed GMP works in the urban areas. The total expenditure of GMP works in the urban areas was about \$435 million with 24 890 trees and 5.13 million shrubs planted. We also commenced the development of GMPs for all the nine districts of the New Territories (NT), viz. Southeast NT (i.e. Sha Tin and Sai Kung), Northwest NT (i.e. Tuen Mun and Yuen Long), Southwest NT (i.e. Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan and Islands District) and Northeast NT (i.e. Tai Po and North District).

Development of GMPs for Southeast NT and Northwest NT is completed. Subject to funding approval of the Finance Committee, we plan to commence the priority greening works for these two regions in October 2014. The estimated expenditure for 2014-15 is about \$11 million.

Development of GMPs for Southwest NT and Northeast NT is in progress and is estimated to be completed in the second half of 2014. We would determine the works programme and expenditure for these GMPs upon the completion of the detailed design.

We have provided the details of the development of GMPs during our consultation with the District Councils and relevant Rural Committees of the NT.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-DEVB(W)03****(Question Serial No. S0103)**

Head: (42) Electrical and Mechanical Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Mechanical Installations Safety

Controlling Officer: Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services (CHAN Fan)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

According to the Administration's reply of serial number DEVB(W)107, the average daily wages of lift and escalator mechanic in the past four years were \$696, \$644, \$605 and \$648 respectively. Although the wage increase in the last year appeared to be quite good, it mainly resulted from the significant wage drop in previous years. Low wages and unsafe working conditions have led to high staff turnover rate. Relevant worker union further points out that aging of existing workforce and lack of new entrants have contributed to manpower shortage in the industry. As proper functioning of lifts and escalators is important to ensure public safety in use of lifts and escalators, does the Administration have any plan to cooperate with the trade to attract better personnel to join the industry so as to sustain a high quality maintenance services for lifts and escalators?

Asked by: Hon. TANG Ka-piu

Reply:

The Administration has been collaborating with the lift and escalator trade to take measures to attract more personnel to join the industry so as to sustain a high quality maintenance services. The measures include -

(i) Enhancing the status and job flexibility of workers

Registration of lift and escalator workers has been introduced under the Lifts and Escalators Ordinance (LEO) which commenced in late 2012. The registration regime for workers under LEO is to replace the employer-tied arrangement to provide workers with more flexibility in choosing jobs and hence, better bargaining power in negotiating remuneration packages.

(ii) Strengthening training

The Construction Industry Council (CIC) has incorporated the lift and escalator trade into the "Contractors Cooperation Training Scheme". Apart from enhancing job security through training employment by contractors, trainees will receive training subsidy from CIC in addition to the salary.

The Vocational Training Council (VTC) has introduced the Pilot Training and Support Scheme which covers the lift and escalator trade. It offers vocational education and training by integrating structured apprenticeship training programmes with clear career pathways. An allowance and a guaranteed salary are offered to the apprentice. In addition, the VTC and the Employees Retraining Board have jointly organised the "Lift and Escalator Assistant Mechanics Certificate Course" to provide training for new entrants to the trade.

(iii) Attracting new comers to the trade

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), together with other electrical and mechanical trade organisations and VTC, has organised the "Electrical and Mechanical (E&M) Trades Expo - Manpower Recruitment" for two successive years in 2013 and 2014 to attract new comers to join E&M trades including the lift and escalator trade. In addition, EMSD commissioned the Radio Television Hong Kong to launch the TV series "Engineering, Life and Dream" in 2014 to arouse the interest of the public, particularly the younger generation, with a view to attracting new entrants to the E&M trades. One episode in this TV series focuses on the lift and escalator trade.

(iv) Improving working conditions

EMSD has updated the Code of Practice for Lift Works and Escalator Works ("CoP") with a view to improving the working conditions. The CoP introduced a new provision that required contractors to assess and confirm that the environmental factors, such as temperature, ventilation, lightings, etc., inside the lift shaft are suitable for working before commencement of work. Moreover, the CIC also issued Guidelines on Safety of Lift Shaft Works (Volume 3) in December 2013 to promote work safety in lift maintenance.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-DEVB(W)04

(Question Serial No. S0101)

Head: (194) Water Supplies Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Water Supply: Planning and Distribution

Controlling Officer: Director of Water Supplies (Enoch T.S. LAM)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

Regarding Reply Serial No. DEVB(W)135, the question asks about whether the Administration has planned to construct any reliable and efficient fresh water supply and distribution systems for villages not yet provided with treated water supply in the coming year. The Administration replies that it will continue to conduct regular review based on updated information of anticipated water consumption, the estimated construction cost and other factors which may affect the provision of treated water supply systems. Will the Administration provide wholesome fresh water for villagers not yet provided with treated water supply based on considerations of humanitarian grounds and tourism benefits to the locality apart from the construction cost?

Asked by: Hon. TANG Ka-piu

Reply:

At present, the remote villages without treated water supply are using stream water or well water for consumption. The quality of raw water is monitored and tested regularly by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. In the event that there is a dry out of the local stream course, the Government will provide assistance including the provision of potable water to meet the needs of the residents. Nevertheless, we will continue to closely monitor and regularly review the water supply in these remote villages taking into account the various relevant factors.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-DEVB(W)05

(Question Serial No. S0102)

Head: (194) Water Supplies Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Water Quality Control

Controlling Officer: Director of Water Supplies (Enoch T.S. LAM)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

Regarding Reply Serial No. DEVB(W)134, according to the numbers of enquiries and complaints related to taste or odour received by the Water Supplies Department (WSD) in the past 3 years, I notice that the number of enquiries and complaints in 2013-2014 has been on a rising trend. Up to January this year, 144 enquiries and complaints has already been received. It is anticipated that the total number of enquiries and complaints received this year will be higher than those in the past 2 years. In January this year, some households in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long reflected that there was strange smell in domestic tap water. Has the Administration conducted any investigation into this matter? If yes, is the investigation completed? What are the investigation findings? Has excessive chlorine been detected in fresh water?

Asked by: Hon. TANG Ka-piu

Reply:

Chlorine is used for disinfection to maintain the wholesomeness of the treated water supply. Upon the receipt of complaints from 9 to 15 January 2014 about chlorine odour in the treated water supply in the Tuen Mun and Yuen Long areas, we conducted a thorough investigation. We found that the residual chlorine levels in the treated water supply leaving our water treatment works were maintained in the normal range of 1.0 to 1.1 mg/L during the above period, which was well below the maximum allowable value of 5 mg/L in the World Health Organization's "Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality" (2011). In addition, on-site analysis of water samples taken from the distribution systems and consumer taps in the same period revealed that the levels of residual chlorine levels were normal ranging from 0.6 to 0.8 mg/L.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-DEVB(W)06

(Question Serial No. S0060)

Head: (194) Water Supplies Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Water Supply: Planning and Distribution

Controlling Officer: Director of Water Supplies (Enoch T.S. LAM)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

Regarding the specific progress of improving the use of fresh water for flushing, the Director replied at the Special Finance Committee Meeting that the quantity of fresh water used for flushing will be reduced by 5%. Would the Administration advise on:

- (1) The districts covered by the said reduction;
- (2) The next steps planned; and
- (3) The expected time for full extension of salt water (seawater) for flushing?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

- (1) In 2013-14, we completed the construction of a salt water flushing supply system in Pokfulam. Furthermore, the construction of a salt water flushing supply system in the northwestern New Territories covering Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai areas will be completed by 2015. We will gradually replace fresh water with salt water supply for flushing in these districts.
- (2) We are planning to develop a salt water flushing supply system for Tung Chung.
- (3) We will continue to actively explore the supply of salt water for flushing to those areas, which are outside the existing salt water supply zones, whenever it is technically feasible and cost-effective to do so.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-DEVB(W)07

(Question Serial No. S0061)

Head: (194) Water Supplies Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (3) Customer Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Water Supplies (Enoch T.S. LAM)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

As mentioned in the Administration's Reply Serial No. DEVB(W)143, after testing and taking follow-up investigations in response to the complaints received, the Administration confirmed 11 cases of inaccurate water meters. Would the Administration advise whether those cases involved the unauthorised use of water meters? If yes, what were the details?

During the direct investigations and inspections conducted in the past 3 years, did the Administration find any cases of unauthorised use of water meters? If yes, what were the figures for the past 3 years and the law enforcement actions taken by the Administration?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

For all the 11 cases of inaccurate water meters, they were not related to unauthorised use of water meters or unauthorised taking of water from an inside service without consent of the consumer.

In the past 3 years, we have not come across any case involving unauthorised use of water meters or unauthorised taking of water from an inside service without consent of the consumer.