

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2004-05  
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO  
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(PL)040

Head : 82 Buildings Department                      Subhead (No. & title) : Question Serial No.

Programme : Buildings and Building Works                      1088

Controlling Officer : Director of Buildings

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question :

Regarding the Hire of Services and Professional Fees, the Administration anticipates that the expenses in 2004-05 will be more than \$86 million, much higher than the revised estimates of the same in 2003-04. Why is there such an increase? As for the hire of professional services, what kind of professional services are included? Could these services be provided by the professional staff in the Buildings Department?

Asked by : Hon. HO Chun-yan, Albert

Reply :

Compared with the revised estimates in 2003-04, there will be an increase of \$49.8 million in 2004-05 for the hire of services and professional fees. The main reasons for the increase are:

- (i) increased outsourcing in the investigation and removal of unauthorized building works (UBW) in progress, large scale clearance of UBW and investigation and monitoring of building repairs, amounting to \$24.2 million;
- (ii) outsourcing part of the enforcement actions to the Housing Authority in respect of backlog removal orders, drainage defects in private buildings and UBW in rear lanes and blackspots, amounting to \$16.3 million; and
- (iii) carrying out consultancy studies on standards of building design and conditions of existing buildings, amounting to \$9.3 million.

The duties imposed on and the powers granted to the Building Authority under the Buildings Ordinance have to be carried out and exercised by officers of Government departments as set out in the Buildings Ordinance and cannot be outsourced.

Amongst the services required in respect of items (i) and (ii) above, the tasks outsourced to private consultants are non-statutory services required before and after the issue of statutory orders. They mainly comprise building inspections, preparation of inspection reports, drafting of statutory orders, preparation of compliance reports and answering enquiries from the owners concerned. For item (iii), specialized professional services are involved in specific areas of the consultancy studies in question.

The tasks under items (i) and (ii) above can be performed by Buildings Department staff. However, outsourcing of these tasks is in line with Government's policy to contain the growth of the civil service. In addition, the tasks involved are time-limited in nature and professionals providing such services are available in the private sector.

Signature	_____
Name in block letters	Marco WU
Post Title	Director of Buildings
Date	26.3.2004