

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2006-07  
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO  
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

**Reply Serial No.**

**HPLB(PL)092**

**Question Serial No.**

**0916**

Head: 91 Lands Department                      Subhead (No. & title):

Programme:            (1) Land Administration

Controlling Officer:    Director of Lands

Director of Bureau:    Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question : The Lands Department has projected that 2 300 cases of small house grants can be processed in 2006. However, there are more than 10 000 cases pending at present and some applicants have been waiting for as long as 10 years. Please advise this Council of:

- (a) the reason for not enhancing the target for processing small house grants;
- (b) the number of staff and salary expenditure involved in the discharge of duties for processing small house grants at present;
- (c) the number of staff and salary expenditure to be involved if the yearly target for processing small house applications is raised from 2 300 to 5 000 cases under the existing policy, and its implications on the overall expenditure of the department; and
- (d) subject to the relaxation of the restriction on the plot ratio of small house developments, the estimated number of cases which can be processed each year, as well as its implications on the manpower, salary expenditure, and departmental expenses.

Asked by:    Hon. LAU Sau-shing, Patrick

Reply:

- (a) The long processing time for many of the applications is due to factors beyond the Department's control such as site unsuitability, local objections, land title verifications, etc. The Department has improved the service by reducing the waiting time between receipt and commencement of processing of small house applications from a range of 12 to 48 months to a range of 12 months to 36 months depending on the caseload of each New Territories District Lands Office.

- (b) At present, 104 staff representing 12% of the land executive and land inspector grades officers who have the relevant expertise and experience in work relating to small houses are wholly or partly engaged in processing small house applications, and the salary expenditure is about \$32 million per year.
- (c) If the annual target is to be raised to 5 000 cases as proposed, a rough estimate is that the existing manpower and other resources will need to be almost doubled. However, such work requires staff with the relevant experience and skills to resolve many difficult issues involved. There are practical constraints on further redeployment.
- (d) The development of multi-storey buildings in certain designated village expansion areas is a very preliminary proposal, and its feasibility has yet to be established. It is premature at this stage to provide an estimate of the additional number of small house applications that can be processed each year and the resources that would be required.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name in block letters PATRICK L C LAU

Post Title Director of Lands

Date 11 March 2006

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