

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

DEVB(PL)107

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

Question Serial No.

2011

Programme : Buildings and Building Works

Controlling Officer : Director of Buildings

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Development

Question :

Regarding the indicators for Existing Buildings in the Programme, will the Government explain:

- (a) for the indicators under unauthorised building works (UBWs), why is there a downward adjustment for the indicators including “reports from members of the public attended to”, “warning notices issued”, “removal orders issued” and “prosecutions against failure to comply with removal orders” in 2010-11? Does this imply the Administration considers that the problem of UBWs in existing buildings has been alleviated significantly so that enforcement action can be reduced?
- (b) will the substantial reduction in these indicators somehow affect the staff and manpower needs of the Department? If so, how much manpower and expenditure will be saved? How will the Department deal with these surplus manpower and resources?

Asked by : Hon. PAN Pey-chyou

Reply :

- (a) The Buildings Department (BD) launched, in 2001 and 2006 respectively, two five-year enforcement programmes to remove unauthorised building works (UBWs) and to improve building safety in Hong Kong. The enforcement programmes have been progressing well. As stated in the Controlling Officer's Report, the target set in 2006 for improving the safety and appearance of 5 000 buildings in five years has been achieved at large by the end of 2009. The UBWs remaining outstanding will be cleared. To sustain the momentum and promotion of awareness of the need to remove UBWs and to clear the outstanding cases, a further 200 buildings (instead of about 1 000 per year in previous years' operations)

will be selected for the clearance operation of UBWs in 2010. The Co-ordinated Maintenance of Buildings Scheme will cease operation in 2010 and the manpower for the Scheme will be redeployed for the implementation of Operation Building Bright. In the light of the above adjustments, the corresponding number of removal orders and warning notices to be issued in 2010 is estimated to be fewer than that in 2009. Nevertheless, our plan to instigate about 3 000 prosecutions against failure to comply with removal orders in 2010 is comparable to the planned figures set for the past few years. On the other hand, the estimated number of reports from members of the public on UBWs that will be received is slightly adjusted downward (from 26 000 in 2009 to 24 000 in 2010) as a large number of UBWs have been removed in the past years.

In the ten-year enforcement programme commenced in 2001, the BD has so far removed around 380 000 UBWs, exceeding its target of clearing around 40 000 UBWs a year. Up till now, most of the high-risk UBWs have been removed. We anticipate that by the end of the ten-year programme in March 2011, the BD will have removed more than 400 000 UBWs. We believe that most of the UBWs to be cleared under the established enforcement policy will have been removed by that time. The BD will redeploy its regular resources and focus on the implementation of the new statutory control system, public education programme and preventive inspection and repairs. The BD will have sufficient resources to safeguard building safety in Hong Kong.

- (b) Staff of the Existing Buildings Divisions of the BD are responsible for the enforcement programmes for removal of UBWs. It is part of their work in connection with other related work concerning building safety and maintenance. As at the end of January 2010, there were 482 time-limited non-civil service contract (NCSC) staff for the implementation of the ten-year clearance programme. Upon the completion of the ten-year enforcement programme, the relevant resources for the programme, including the NCSC staff, will come to the end of its term. The Administration is comprehensively reviewing the strategy and necessary measures to enhance building safety in Hong Kong in the coming years, including the required manpower resources.

Signature _____

Name in block letters AU Choi-kai

Post Title Director of Buildings

Date 19 March 2010