

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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Head: (82) Buildings Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (AU Choi-kai)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question (Member Question No. 50):

What were the staffing provision and total expenditure for the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (JO) in 2013-14 and in the previous three financial years?

What are the percentage changes in the staffing provision and estimated total expenditure of the JO in 2014-15? What measures are there to monitor the effectiveness, expenditures and efficiency of the JO?

Asked by: Hon. TSE Wai-chun, Paul

Reply:

Water seepage in private premises is primarily a matter of building management and maintenance for property owners. However, if the problem of water seepage causes public health nuisance, a risk to the structural safety of a building or wastage of water, the Government will consider intervening by exercising the relevant statutory powers. To facilitate action, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department (BD) have established the Joint Office (JO) since 2006 to co-ordinate investigation of reports on water seepage and taking of enforcement actions. Having regard to the continuous demand for JO's service, the operation of JO will be made permanent in 2014-15. Of the current 64 non-civil service contract (NCSC) positions from BD in JO, 17 will be converted to civil service posts in 2014-15.

The number of staff from BD for the operation of JO and the expenditure for staffing provision and departmental expenses, and for engaging outsourced consultants to assist in conducting professional investigation on water seepage cases from 2010-11 to 2014-15 are tabulated below:

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Number of professional and technical staff from BD	60	60	64	64	64
Staff cost and departmental expenses (\$ million)	16	19	21	23	29 ^{Note} (estimate)
Expenditure for engaging outsourced consultants (\$ million)	28	23	23	24	24 (estimate)

Note: The increase is mainly due to conversion of 17 NCSC positions to civil service posts.

JO has implemented various measures to monitor and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of handling reports on water seepage, namely drawing up internal guidelines on investigation work, formulating milestones for progress monitoring at various stages of investigation, refining operational guidelines on exercising power of entry under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, and enhancing information management. JO also has internal mechanism to monitor the progress of outsourced consultants' work and the expenditure for engaging consultants.