

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**DEVB(PL)141**

**(Question Serial No. 0940)**

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. 64):

Under the programme "Buildings and Building Works", the Administration has set lower targets for new buildings in 2014 regarding processing building plans, processing within 28 days applications for consent to commence building works, and processing applications for hoarding permits. Will the Government advise this Committee:

1. of the expenditure and manpower involved in the above work this year; for new buildings, of the number of applications for consent to the commencement of building works processed within 28 days and hoarding permits processed this year;
2. of the reasons for lowering the above targets in the coming year; whether shortage of manpower is involved; whether the Administration will deploy additional resources in the coming year to handle the above work; if yes, of the details and of the expenditure and manpower involved; if not, the reasons for that; and
3. whether lowering the above targets will affect the construction of new buildings; if yes, of the details; whether the Administration has made any assessment; if not, the reasons for that?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

(1)

The existing resources of 180 professional and technical staff in the two New Buildings Divisions (NBDs) of the Buildings Department (BD) are responsible for processing applications for approval of building plans, consent to the commencement of building works and hoarding permits as part of their overall duties in the control of new buildings and associated works on private land. We are not able to provide a breakdown of the expenditure or manpower involved solely for such work.

(2) and (3)

In 2013, a total of 13 091 applications for consent to the commencement of building works were processed, out of which 13 023 were processed within 28 days. In the same year, 914 hoarding permits were issued or renewed.

To facilitate applicants in obtaining approval, if an application can be approved subject to minor amendments or further particulars to be furnished, BD allows the authorised person (AP) and the registered structural engineer (RSE) to make such amendments or furnish the required particulars instead of rejecting the application. For the purpose of calculating the processing time, before 1 November 2013, these cases were taken to be approved within the target time frame, regardless of the time taken by the AP and RSE to make such necessary amendments or furnish such required particulars. From 1 November 2013 onwards, such time incurred on the part of the AP and RSE has been taken into account in computing the processing time. Therefore, the planned targets in processing various types of applications of less than 100% in 2014 only reflect the revised methodology of computing the processing time, and are not related to manpower adequacy. The progress of construction works of new development will not be affected by the change in the methodology of computing the processing time.

To strengthen services in the approval of plans and related applications for private development projects, five new posts comprising one Building Surveyor, one Structural Engineer, one Survey Officer (Building), one Technical Officer (Structural) and one Clerical Assistant will be allocated to the NBDs of BD in 2014-15. The above increase in manpower involves an additional expenditure of about \$2 million per annum.