

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**DEVB(PL)321**

**(Question Serial No. 5802)**

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

Question (Member Question No. 353):

1. As regards making permanent the operation of the Joint Office (JO) with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to handle water seepage complaints, what are the office organisation, manpower, ranks and grades of staff, ranks of immediate supervisors and estimated expenditure broken down by year?
2. At what time this year will the arrangement of making permanent the operation commence?
3. What equipment or instruments for tests to identify the sources of water seepage does JO possess? After its operation is made permanent, will JO consider upgrading its instruments or bringing in advanced instruments to enhance the efficiency and successful rate in handling water seepage complaints? What are the details of the estimated expenditure?

Asked by: Hon. CHAN Ka-lok, Kenneth

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 (FEHD) 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. Our reply to the questions is set out below.

- (1) The Government has completed a review on the organisation and operation of JO. In addition to making JO permanent, the review concluded that JO should maintain the present organisation and operation in its future delivery of services, and further enhanced measures should be implemented to improve operation of JO. In 2014-15,

the operation of JO will involve the provision of 64 professional and technical staff from BD and 219 investigation staff from FEHD. The staff from BD includes 14 civil service staff and 50 non-civil service contract (NCSC) staff comprising two Senior Professional Officers, ten Professional Officers, 38 Building Safety Officers, seven Survey Officers and seven Technical Officers. The staff from FEHD include 113 civil service staff comprising 15 Senior Health Inspectors and 98 Health Inspectors, and 106 NCSC staff who are all Environmental Nuisance Investigators. The estimated expenditure for staffing provision and departmental expenses for BD, and for engaging outsourced consultants to assist in conducting professional investigation on water seepage cases are about \$29 million and \$24 million respectively. The estimated direct expenditure incurred by FEHD is about \$73 million.

- (2) JO will be made permanent commencing from April 2014.
- (3) There are many different causes of water seepage in buildings. Having regard to the circumstances of individual cases, JO will adopt appropriate non-destructive tests to ascertain the source of water seepage, including a series of moisture level measurements, colour water test at drainage outlets, ponding test for floor slabs, water spray test for walls and reversible pressure test for water supply pipes, etc., which are widely adopted and generally recognised to be direct and effective means of investigating the source of water seepage. Apart from visual inspection, JO staff will, as appropriate, conduct various kinds of investigations and tests with the aid of different equipment, such as moisture meter, ultraviolet torch and fluorescence-enhancing glasses. If necessary, JO staff will collect plaster or seepage samples at the seepage spots for analysis by the Government Laboratory. JO endeavours to keep abreast with the latest technological developments and is working with the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute to explore more effective investigation methods so as to enhance the capability of JO in handling reports on water seepage. JO is also making preparation for commissioning a consultancy study on the latest technological methods for identifying the sources of water seepage in buildings. The consultancy fee is estimated to be about \$3.0 million.