

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(PL)095

(Question Serial No. 2615)

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:

Regarding the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (JO) established by the Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, please inform this Committee:

- (1) of the JO's statistics on the numbers of water seepage complaints received, cases handled, cases with the source of seepage identified and applications to the court for entry warrants in each of the past three years;
- (2) of the general follow-up work for cases where the source of seepage cannot be identified;
- (3) of the number of prosecutions instigated by the JO against owners connected with the source of seepage under the relevant provisions of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance and the number of convictions last year;
- (4) of the staff establishment and operational expenses of the JO in each of the past three years;
- (5) given that the operation of the JO will be made permanent as mentioned in the Programme, of the details of the operation, including the estimated manpower and expenditure required; and
- (6) of the percentage of the expenditure of the JO spent on equipment for checking the source of seepage since its establishment; and the estimated expenditure in the past three years for procurement of new equipment to increase the chance of successfully identifying the source of seepage.

Asked by: Hon WU Chi-wai (Member Question No. 10)

Reply:

- (1) The statistics on water seepage reports received by the Joint Office (JO), reports handled, cases with source of water seepage identified and entry warrants granted by the Court in the past three years are tabulated below –

Number of Cases	2012	2013	2014
Reports received	27 353	28 504	27 896
Reports handled ⁽¹⁾	24 553	24 856	22 056
• Cases screened out ⁽²⁾	13 727	13 062	10 961
• Cases with investigations concluded	10 826	11 794	11 095
Cases with source identified ⁽¹⁾	4 053	4 692	4 816
Entry warrants granted by the Court ⁽¹⁾	101	64	74

Note ⁽¹⁾: The figures do not necessarily correspond to the number of reports received in the same year.

Note ⁽²⁾: There are cases such as unjustified cases and withdrawn cases, for which no investigation will be made by the JO.

- (2) For cases where the source of water seepage cannot be ascertained, JO will notify the informants and keep the investigation information for reference. The informant may contact JO should the seepage condition deteriorate or when there is new information which may be useful for the investigation.
- (3) In 2014, JO instigated 88 prosecutions against building owners connected with sources of water seepage under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance and there were 60 convictions. As there is a lapse of time between instigation of prosecution and adjudication by the court, the number of convictions may not necessarily correspond to that of the prosecutions instigated in the same year.
- (4) & (5) The staff establishment and the expenditures of the Buildings Department for the operation of the JO in the past three years are tabulated below –

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Number of professional and technical staff	64	64	64
Staff costs and departmental expenses (\$ million)	21	23	28 ⁽¹⁾ (estimated)
Expenditure for engaging outsourced consultants (\$ million)	23	24	26 (estimated)

Note ⁽¹⁾: Increase due to conversion of 17 non-civil service contract (NCSC) positions to civil service posts is included.

With the operation of JO made permanent in April 2014, some of the NCSC positions in JO have been and will be converted into civil service posts. However, such conversion will not affect JO's function in handling reports on water seepage.

- (6) JO's consultant may make use of different methods and equipment in the investigation of the source of water seepage as part of its service. We are not able to provide breakdown of the expenditure spent solely on equipment. JO will continue to explore

more effective investigation methods in identifying the source of water seepage in buildings. A consultant has also been engaged to study the latest technological methods. The study commenced in October 2014 and is expected to be completed in 18 months.

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