

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**DEVB(PL)266**

**(Question Serial No. 4343)**

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 operation of the Joint Office (JO) set up by the Buildings Department (BD) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), please inform this Committee:

1. of the number of staff in different grades and ranks in JO (including staff of FEHD) and the expenditure involved in 2015-16;
2. of the number of staff of the contractors hired by JO and the expenditure involved in 2015-16;
3. of the numbers of cases processed by JO in 2014, broken down into cases with the source of seepage identified and not identified, and the number of prosecution cases;
4. given that it was mentioned in the authorities' reply for the Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2014-15 (Reply Serial no. DEVB(PL)338) that JO, with the assistance of the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute, was conducting a study on investigation methods for tracing the source of water seepage, of the findings of the study, the expenditure involved and the time when they can be put into service; and regarding continuing the consultancy study as stated under Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2015-16, of the expenditure involved in the study and its progress; and
5. of the reasons and justifications for conducting two consecutive studies on water seepage.

Asked by: Hon MA Fung-kwok (Member Question No. 51)

Reply:

1. In 2015-16, the operation of the Joint Office (JO) involves 64 professional and technical staff from the Buildings Department (BD) as well as 219 investigation

staff from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). The 64 BD staff comprise two Senior Professional Officers, 10 Professional Officers, 17 Technical Officers, 17 Survey Officers and 18 Buildings Safety Officers, whereas the 219 FEHD staff comprise 15 Senior Health Inspectors, 128 Health Inspectors and 76 Environmental Nuisance Investigators. The estimated expenditures for staffing provision and departmental expenses incurred by the BD and FEHD for the operation of the JO are \$30 million and \$81 million respectively.

2. In 2015-16, the estimated expenditure for engaging nine outsourced consultants to assist in conducting professional investigation on water seepage cases is \$25 million. The JO does not keep statistics on the number of staff employed by the consultants.
3. The statistics on water seepage reports received, cases handled and results of investigation in 2014 are tabulated below –

	<b>Number of Cases in 2014</b>
Reports received	27 896
Reports handled <sup>(1)</sup>	22 056
• Cases screened out <sup>(2)</sup>	10 961
• Cases with investigations concluded	11 095
- Seepage ceased during investigation	4 146
- Source of water seepage identified	4 816
- Source of water seepage could not be identified and investigation terminated	2 133
Prosecutions instigated <sup>(1)</sup>	88

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

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

4. & 5. The study being conducted by the JO with the assistance of the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute (HKASTRI) aims to explore the feasibility of using real-time monitoring technique in tracing the source of water seepage. This study involves the application of an advanced technology in the field of water seepage investigation. After experiential trials in the laboratory, the JO will have to conduct field tests on the performance of such technology. It is premature to assess the completion date of the study at this stage. The expenditure of the study is absorbed by the existing resources of the JO and the JO does not provide any funding to the HKASTRI.

On the other hand, the JO has engaged a consultant to conduct a study on the latest technological methods for identifying the source of water seepage in buildings, which is different from the study being conducted by the JO with the assistance of HKASTRI mentioned above. The consultancy study will research on technological matters both locally and overseas, together with the carrying out of field tests on selected cases. It will also assess and recommend the most suitable

testing methods for use in private buildings as well as formulating technical guidelines for the JO. The study commenced in October 2014 and is expected to be completed in 18 months. The estimated expenditure is \$4.5 million.

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