

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**DEVB(PL)101**

**(Question Serial No. 1919)**

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

Question:

Given the novel coronavirus epidemic, members of the public are deeply concerned about the design and regulation of the drainage systems in their buildings. Will the Government inform this Committee of the following:

1. Regarding Stage 2 legislative amendments to the Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines) Regulations (Cap. 123I) being prepared in respect of new buildings, does the Government have any plans to enhance the design standards of the drainage system? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?
2. For implementation of the initiative, has the Government set the timetable for inspection and determined the order of priority? What are the details?
3. What are the manpower and expenditure involved in this initiative?
4. Those buildings which fit the definition of private residential and composite buildings with defective drainage systems are mainly old buildings without owners' corporations. What measures will be taken by the Government to assist the building owners concerned to support the enforcement actions? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hak-kan (LegCo internal reference no.: 14)

Reply:

1. The main objectives of Stage 2 legislative amendments to Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines) Regulations are to (a) replace the prescriptive requirements by performance-based requirements to cater for

advancement in building technology, and (b) introduce a higher standard for the design of drainage systems of new buildings including, for example, an enhanced design of floor drains to prevent water seals of traps from running dry, the requirement of providing a proper distance between the open end of a ventilating pipe on the roof and the window of a building, and the design of drainage pipe that could avoid backflow of sewage to lower floors caused by pressure fluctuation inside the pipes when the upper floors flush the toilet.

2. With funding from the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF), the Buildings Department (BD) has engaged consultancy firms to undertake a one-off special scheme to inspect the external drainage systems of all private residential or composite buildings exceeding three storeys in height (the inspection scheme). The funding for the inspection scheme under the AEF is outside the scope of the Appropriation Bill or the estimates of the General Revenue Account. The inspection scheme, launched in June 2020, is a 24-month special measure, covering the inspection of external drainage systems of around 20 000 private residential or composite buildings across the territory. Priority has been given to those buildings located in specified areas as announced by the Secretary for Food and Health in exercising his power to enforce compulsory testing under Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation.
3. A total of 38 BD staff comprising professional, technical and clerical grade officers are required to implement the inspection scheme and take follow-up actions under the Buildings Ordinance. \$300 million has been earmarked for the inspection scheme.
4. Owners should take primary responsibility for the proper maintenance of their properties. Nevertheless, the Government recognises that some owners may have genuine difficulties in fulfilling their responsibility in maintaining their properties due to lack of financial means, technical knowledge and/or organisation ability. Therefore, apart from taking enforcement action to ensure that building owners would discharge their statutory responsibilities, the Government has stepped up public education and publicity and also provided financial assistance to owners of private buildings to maintain and repair their buildings, including building drainage systems through various assistance and loan schemes. Key assistance and loan schemes include the Operation Building Bright 2.0 (OBB 2.0), the Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Needy Owners, the Building Safety Loan Scheme, and Urban Renewal Authority (URA)'s Home Renovation Interest-free Loan and the Common Area Repair Works Subsidy. In addition, the Government has earmarked \$1 billion in the 2021-22 Budget to establish the Building Drainage System Repair Subsidy Scheme (DRS) to subsidise owners of private residential and composite buildings aged 40 or above with lower average rateable values in repairing or upgrading the drains of their buildings.

To facilitate owners to apply the various assistance schemes above, URA has launched an all-in-one Integrated Building Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme (IBRAS). Under the IBRAS, owners can simply complete one set of application forms for multiple applications by those who meet the eligibility criteria of the respective assistance schemes. Also, during the special one-off inspection mentioned above, BD's

consultancy firms distribute leaflets and posters to the owners, which contain information of IBRAS and the relevant assistance schemes. They also set up hotlines under the inspection scheme to answer owners' enquiries including those on the assistance schemes. If owners encounter difficulties in complying with BD's enforcement actions on investigation and repair of their buildings, BD's in-house social services teams would outreach and take care of their financial, psychological and social needs, including assisting them in applying for the respective assistance schemes according to their eligibility.

In addition, under both OBB 2.0 and the proposed DRS, apart from accepting applications from owners of eligible buildings, BD may on risk basis select target buildings and carry out requisite works in default of owners for compliance of outstanding statutory order(s) for the common drains of the buildings or outstanding statutory notice(s) for Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme and seek to recover the cost from owners concerned afterwards. Eligible owners may also benefit from both schemes.

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