Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2021-22 Reply Serial No.

DEVB(PL)141

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. 3078)

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:

Regarding the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (JO) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department:

(1) What are the number and percentage of cases outsourced by JO to private companies using infrared thermography or microwave tomography in 2020-21 out of the number of requests for assistance received, and the total costs of such outsourcing services?

(2) What are the estimates for outsourcing investigation work in 2021-22?

(3) JO applied the infrared thermography in eight pilot districts in the past two years. What are the effectiveness? Is there a plan to extend the pilot application to Kowloon East in the new financial year? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon TSE Wai-chun, Paul (LegCo internal reference no.: 12)

Reply:

Investigation of reports on water seepage in buildings is carried out by the Joint Office (JO) set up by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department (BD). Generally speaking, JO staff would carry out initial investigation of the source of seepage, including colour water test of drainage pipes. In cases where the source of seepage cannot be identified by the initial investigation, professional investigation will be carried out with the assistance of outsourced consultants.

Since the second half of June 2018, JO has applied new testing technologies such as infrared thermography and microwave tomography in professional investigation in selected pilot districts where applicable. With the experience gained and data obtained through pilot application of the new testing technologies, JO has extended the use of these technologies to

a total of 12 districts as of March 2021, including Wong Tai Sin. It should be noted that in cases whereby these technologies cannot be effectively applied due to, for example, spalling of concrete ceilings at the locations of water seepage and blockage of pipes and other facilities, the outsourced consultants have to continue to employ the conventional tests. As at 31 December 2020, the success rate[(1)] of cases using the new testing technologies is about 75% which is higher than the success rate of around 65% for cases using conventional testing methods. JO is refining the technical guidelines and procedures relating to the use of the new technologies and is planning to gradually extend such technologies to other districts.

In 2020, JO completed the investigation of 14 052 cases with the results concluded, among which 9 780 cases required professional investigation. In the same period, 1 922 cases (i.e. above 20%) adopted these new testing technologies in the professional investigation. In 2020-21 and 2021-22, the estimated expenditures for engaging outsourced consultants for professional investigation are around $36 million and $47 million respectively. BD does not compile statistics solely on the total cost of water seepage investigation using new technologies.

Note [(1)]: Success rate = $\dfrac{\text{Cases with source of water seepage identified}}{\text{Cases with source of water seepage identified} + \text{Cases with source of water seepage not identified and investigation completed (viz. cases where investigation has not been completed due to, e.g. seepage ceases to exist during investigation are excluded)}}$

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