

LCQ19: Apprenticeship Ordinance

Following is a question by the Hon Ho Kai-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (November 13):

Question:

Under the Apprenticeship Ordinance (Cap 47) (the Ordinance), an employer who employs a young person (i.e. a person of or over the age of 14 years and under the age of 19 years) in a trade designated under the Ordinance (45 trades in total) must enter into a valid contract of apprenticeship with the young person (unless the young person has completed an apprenticeship, and is in possession of a certificate of completion, in that trade), and send the contract to the Director of Apprenticeship to apply for registration. Employers may also apply for voluntary registration of contracts of apprenticeship involving non-designated trades or employees aged 19 or above. The Office of the Director of Apprenticeship of the Vocational Training Council is the statutory unit which enforces the Ordinance. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) Of the total number of apprentices employed in the 45 designated trades under registered contracts of apprenticeship, together with a breakdown by trade, in each of the past three years;

(2) Of the number of contracts of apprenticeship in respect of which employers applied for voluntary registration in each of the past three years; among them, the respective numbers of cases approved and rejected as well as the percentages, together with a breakdown by trade; and

(3) Whether it knows the number of Apprenticeship Officers of each rank in the Office of the Director of Apprenticeship, and the average number of cases handled by each officer?

Reply:

President,

Under the Apprenticeship Ordinance (Cap 47), young persons aged 14 or above may join the Apprenticeship Scheme to receive relevant on-the-job training and vocational education. A young person who is aged 14 or above but below 19 and engaged in a designated trade under the Ordinance, must enter into an apprenticeship contract with the employer and register the contract with the Director of Apprenticeship (i.e. the Executive Director of the Vocational Training Council). Apprentices who are aged 19 or above and engaged in a designated trade, or apprentices who are engaged in a non-designated trade, may voluntarily register their apprenticeship contracts with the Director of Apprenticeship. Currently, there are 45 designated trades and more than 50 non-designated trades.

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The numbers of registered apprentices engaged in the designated trades under the Ordinance as at the end of the past three financial years are set out by trade at Annex I.

(2) The numbers of apprentices whose contracts are voluntarily registered in accordance with the Ordinance as at the end of the past three financial years are set out by trade at Annex II. During the same period, there was no rejected case of voluntary registration of apprenticeship contracts.

(3) According to the figures as at March 31, 2019, the Office of the Director of Apprenticeship of the Vocational Training Council arranged a total of six Apprenticeship Officers and 27 Assistant Apprenticeship Officers to handle the cases of and provide support to 4 936 apprentices. On average, each officer is responsible for 150 cases of apprentices.

LCQ 20: Accelerating the sale of flats under Tenants Purchase Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (November 13):

Question:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) implemented, from 1998 to 2005, the Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) for tenants of 39 selected public rental housing (PRH) estates to buy the flats in which they lived at a discounted price. Since then, HA has not added any estate to TPS, and one of the reasons is that the co-existence of flat owners of TPS estates and HA's PRH tenants (mixed tenure) has given rise to quite a number of problems in estate management and repair. For example, the Housing Department (HD) cannot effectively carry out repair works in buildings that involve both sold and rental units. On the other hand, the Chief Executive (CE) has mentioned in this year's Policy Address that she will propose that HA make active preparations to accelerate the sale of about 42 000 flats that remain unsold in the 39 TPS estates. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the numbers of complaints or requests for assistance, received by HD in each of the past five years, relating to the repair of the common areas (e.g. schools and slopes) in TPS estates, and the details of each case, including the amount of repair costs shared by each household;

(2) of its new thinking on resolving the problem of unclear delineation of powers and responsibilities in respect of the repair work for TPS estates caused by a mixed tenure;

(3) given that at present, the Government may invoke the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance (Cap 370) to resume private streets, whether the Government may invoke the Ordinance or other legislation to resume the common areas in TPS estates; if so, of the details; and

(4) as CE has indicated that while she has no in principle objection to a relaunch of TPS, the implementation of TPS will reduce the number of PRH flats available for allocation in the short term, and she will invite HA to look into the matter seriously when there is more certainty on the overall supply of public housing, of the specific indicators for "more certainty", and whether such indicators include the waiting time for PRH?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to Hon Chan Chun-ying's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) launched 39 Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) estates from 1998 to 2005. At present, of the about 180 000 flats in these 39 TPS estates, about 42 000 flats remain unsold. Sitting tenants may still choose to purchase their flats.

Under TPS, the co-existence of flat owners and HA's tenants in the same estates has given rise to a number of estate management and maintenance problems. Due to mixed ownership in TPS estates, the Housing Department (HD) cannot effectively carry out maintenance works (such as ceiling seepage, pipe leakage, etc) which involve both sold flats and rental units simultaneously.

To be in line with Government policies and the Building Management Ordinance (BMO), HA encourages owners to participate in and decide for themselves the estate management issues and has all along been assisting owners of TPS estates to form Owners' Corporations (OCs) in accordance with BMO to manage their own properties and estates. After taking over the management of the estates, the OCs have the full responsibility for the day-to-day management and maintenance of the common areas and facilities in the estates.

As the owner of unsold flats in TPS estates, HA appoints representatives from HD to run in elections for the management committees of OCs; if elected, the HD representatives will take part in the management of the estates jointly with other members, including advising the OCs on the day-to-day management, the requirements of the Deeds of Mutual Covenant (DMC) and relevant legislation. In addition, HD representatives will encourage owners to act in the overall interests of the estates so as to safeguard the interests of all owners, including HA. HA will also convey unsold flat tenants' views on the management and requests for maintenance of the properties and common facilities in the estates, and encourage the OCs and the property management companies to maintain communication with HA tenants.

HD has not compiled the relevant information on the numbers of complaints or requests for assistance in the past five years regarding the maintenance of the common areas (e.g. schools and slopes within the boundaries delineated in DMCs) in TPS estates, the details of each case, and the amount of maintenance cost borne by each household in respect of the areas concerned eventually.

In 2019 Policy Address, the Chief Executive invited HA to make active preparations with a view to accelerating the sale of the unsold flats in the 39 TPS estates. We believe that this measure can further meet the home ownership aspirations of public rental housing (PRH) tenants and is also conducive to resolving the estate management and maintenance problems in TPS estates arising from mixed ownership. We plan to consult the Legislative Council Panel on Housing in the first quarter of 2020 on proposed feasible measures.

(3) If the Government resumes land by virtue of Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance (Cap 370), the purpose has to be for or incidental to road works or use. If the purpose of the resumption of common areas of the estates is to solve the estate management and maintenance issues arising from mixed ownership in TPS estates, this ordinance may not be applicable.

Similarly, other laws which involve land resumption are enacted with different legislative intents, purposes and applications. Whether or not the Government may resume the common areas in TPS estates by virtue of other laws depends on the actual use of the common areas to be resumed.

(4) In recent years, the Government and HA have been identifying land actively to increase PRH supply so as to address public's demand for PRH. In order to increase public housing supply, the Government has implemented a series of measures, including revising the public/private split for the coming 10-year period from 60:40 to 70:30 in December 2018; re-allocating nine sites at Kai Tak and Anderson Road Quarry, which were originally intended for sale in the coming few years, for the use of public housing so as to provide about 11 000 public housing units; and exploring the feasibility of redeveloping the factory estates under HA for public housing development, etc. We hope to gradually alleviate the situation of insufficient public housing supply by implementing these measures. When the overall public housing supply can largely meet the public's demand and after consulting the relevant stakeholders, we will explore the feasibility of re-launching TPS and the relevant arrangements, where applicable, in due course.

[Updates on road-based public transport](#)

services and damaged traffic lights

The Transport Department (TD) today (November 13) said that public transport services have been seriously affected this morning due to continued large-scale road blockages and damage to road facilities to varying degrees. In view of safety concerns and uncertain road conditions, franchised buses can only provide limited services. The New Territories East, the New Territories West and Kowloon have been affected more seriously. With the temporary removal of obstacles on individual roads and the coordination of the TD and public transport operators, the numbers of routes providing limited services by the bus companies as at 11am are as follows:

Citybus and New World First Bus: 70

Kowloon Motor Bus and Long Win Bus: 25

Cross harbour bus: 13

In addition, traffic lights in various districts have been damaged in the past few days and more than 240 sets are under urgent repair. Those in Yau Tsim Mong, Sha Tin, Yuen Long and Tai Po are seriously affected and the repair work on some of the road sections including Nathan Road and Argyle Street in Mongkok, Tai Chung Kiu Road and Siu Lek Yuen Road in Sha Tin, Tin Shui Road in Tin Shui Wai and Tai Wo Road in Tai Po is expected to take some time. Motorists and pedestrians are advised to be patient and pay attention to road safety when passing through the affected junctions.

For the safety of road users, the TD again appeals to members of the public to stop damaging traffic lights and other road facilities. As road conditions and railway services may change in a short period of time, the TD urges commuters to continue to stay tuned to the latest traffic news. For details, please visit the TD's website (www.td.gov.hk/tc/home/index.html) or mobile application "HKEMobility".

Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Section project wins Institution of Civil Engineers People's Choice Award 2019 (with photo)

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Hong Kong Section project, comprising the HZMB Hong Kong Link Road (HKLR) and Hong Kong Port (HKP), was awarded yesterday (November 12, London time) the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) People's Choice Award 2019 for its remarkable achievement in

project management and contribution to the enhancement of regional transportation networks. This is the first time that a major Hong Kong infrastructure project has won the award.

The ICE People's Choice Award is a leading industry award for projects that have had a transformative effect on the built environment.

The Project Manager of the Major Works Project Management Office (Special Duties) of the Highways Department, Mr Chris Wong, said, "The uniqueness of this infrastructure lies in its engineering achievements and bringing the three cities, Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macao, much closer, thus enhancing the prosperity and economic development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. We are honoured that the mega project has won this prestigious award. It recognises the hard work and unyielding steadfastness of all those who contributed to achieving this engineering wonder."

Mr Wong noted that when constructing the HZMB HKLR, the design of the 180-metre-long span bridge was adopted to pass over the northern shore of Lantau Island and avoid touching the headland of Sha Lo Wan, which has significant archaeological conservation value. The construction of the Passenger Clearance Building (PCB) of the HZMB HKP is another highlight of the project.

"The roof of the PCB is designed in the form of a wave to evoke the undulating flow of surrounding waters. It is supported by a few tree-like structural columns to create an enhanced sense of spaciousness at the arrival and departure halls. Designed with abundant natural light, the PCB is an energy efficient and environmentally friendly infrastructure. The project team adopted large-scale prefabricated modules for erection of the roof for the PCB to achieve faster construction progress, enhance the quality of work and reduce the amount of working at height," he added.

The 55-kilometre-long HZMB, comprising the 12km HKLR, 29.6km Main Bridge and 13.4km Zhuhai Link Road, commenced operation in October 2018. The HZMB serves as the unprecedented cross-boundary transport infrastructure connecting Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, and is the longest bridge-cum-tunnel sea crossing in the world, bringing the Western Pearl River Delta region within three hours' drive of Hong Kong.

For more details regarding the project, please visit HZMB website: www.hzmb.gov.hk/en/project/project.html.



[Agenda of today's LegCo meeting revised](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The agenda of the Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting, scheduled for today (November 13) at 11am in the Chamber of the LegCo Complex, has been revised. The President of the LegCo, Mr Andrew Leung, has given permission for Mr Ip Kin-yuen to ask, under Rule 24(4) of the Rules of Procedure, an urgent oral question on the emergency measures to allay public resentment immediately.

For the latest agenda items of today's LegCo meeting, please refer to the LegCo Website:
www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/counmtg/agenda/cm20191113.htm.