

LCQ10: Water works carried out in villages

Following is a question by the Hon Cheng Chung-tai and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 13):

Question:

As of March last year, a total of about 400 residents in 19 villages are not yet supplied with tap water. Recently, several residents of Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun have revealed that they have been using water from water tanks and streams nearby. These water sources dried up last month due to the hot weather. Therefore, the Water Supplies Department (WSD) needed to transport potable water to the residents in that village. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of requests for assistance or complaints received regarding the supply of tap water from the residents of the above 19 villages in the past two years, broken down by village name;

(2) whether the authorities conducted any technical feasibility study and economic assessment on laying water mains to the above villages in the past two years; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) this Council and the relevant District Council members have made repeated requests to the authorities for constructing tap water supply systems for the above villages, but the authorities have been declining these requests due to low cost-effectiveness for the relevant works and very high per capita capital costs. Have the authorities reviewed if cost-effectiveness for these works should outweigh the basic living needs of the residents?

Reply:

President,

At present, the treated water supply networks cover about 99.9 per cent of the population of Hong Kong. Areas that do not have treated water supply are mainly remote villages with sparse population. Although these villages do not have treated water supply, they have access to systems that supply stream or well water for domestic consumption. These supply systems have been in use for many years. Most of them are under the maintenance of the Home Affairs Department (HAD). The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department also regularly monitors and tests the quality of the stream or well water in these villages to ascertain their suitability for potable consumption. In the event of these water sources becoming depleted or insufficient, the Government will provide assistance. For example, the HAD will transport potable water to villages with water shortage to meet the needs of villagers. The Water

Supplies Department (WSD) will also provide necessary assistance such as providing water tanks and potable water.

For the case of Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun, there are about 750 residents in Tsing Shan Tsuen according to estimate of the Tuen Mun District Office. The treated water supply network of the WSD currently covers about 700 residents. The remaining 50 residents are living in locations at a higher terrain of the village where the water pressure of the water supply system is insufficient for delivering treated water supply there. However, the WSD is studying the feasibility of extending the existing water supply network in Tsing Shan Tsuen and enhancing the water pressure to cover the entire village.

The reply to the Hon Cheng Chung-tai's question is as follows:

(1) In the past two years, the WSD received requests for provision of treated water supply from 10 remote villages, including Tai Long (South Lantau), Nim Shue Wan, Cheung Sha Lan, Tso Wan (Northeast Lantau), Po Toi Island, Yi O (West Lantau), Mui Tsz Lam, Tung Ping Chau, Wong Chuk Yeung and Sham Chung. In addition, for some villages that are covered by the water supply network of the WSD, those residents who are living in the locations at a higher terrain where the pressure of the water supply system is insufficient for delivering treated water supply there have also requested the WSD to provide treated water supply, such as Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun.

(2) & (3) The Government has been monitoring the water supply situations of the above remote villages. These remote villages have sparse populations and are far away from both urban areas and existing treated water supply network. If treated water supply systems are to be constructed for these remote villages, low water consumption may lead to stagnant water in water mains and hence resulting in the deterioration of water quality. Moreover, the per capita capital cost for the construction of treated water supply systems for these villages would be high. The WSD has been continuously exploring possible options to solve the above issues and will regularly review the situations. In fact, the WSD has been completing treated water supply systems for remote villages in recent years, such as the water supply systems in Tung Ah, Tung Ah Pui, Ngan Hang and Nan Lai Wan in South District, Sham Ah Shui on Lantau Island and Yuen Tun Ha in Tai Po. The WSD will continue to closely monitor and regularly review the situations of the remote villages without treated water supply, such as the latest population and nearby developments, and will also study various options to address the problem of deterioration of water quality due to low water consumption, including exploring exploitation of water sources to supplement existing raw water sources. For those villages with treated water supply but it is unable to reach the residents who are living in the locations at a higher terrain due to insufficient water pressure, the WSD will study the feasibility of extending the existing water supply networks in these villages and enhancing water pressure to cover the entire villages.