

LCQ11: Engagement of land surveyors in public works projects

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 27):

Question:

Some members of the surveying sector have pointed out that the work carried out by land surveyors (e.g. providing information on ground features for construction works, establishing site boundaries and setting piling positions for piling works) can reduce disputes caused by unclear land boundaries and ensure that works are carried out at accurate locations. Nevertheless, the Government has not made it mandatory for public works contractors to engage, according to the project scale and complexity, a specified number of registered land surveyors to participate in the projects. Such a situation may impact on the progress and quality of the works, and is not conducive to providing job opportunities to attract new blood. On the other hand, the Highways Department (HyD) issued the Highways Department Technical Circular No. 5/2003 (the Technical Circular) in 2003, providing guidelines on the qualification and experience requirements of surveyors engaged by contractors in highway projects. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is stipulated in the Technical Circular that in respect of road works the contract value of which is over \$500 million, contractors must engage land surveyors who are members of The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors in the Land Surveying Division (or persons with equivalent professional qualifications) with relevant experience, and such surveyors should be full time on site, whether the authorities know how the relevant requirements are implemented;

(2) given that the Technical Circular has been issued for over a decade since 2003, whether the authorities have reviewed if the Circular can still cater to present-day needs; if the authorities have, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that and whether they will conduct a review expeditiously;

(3) whether government departments other than HyD have followed the guidelines set out in the Technical Circular when implementing works projects; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will consider formulating guidelines to stipulate that, in respect of public works projects the contract value of which is over \$500 million or those with complicated site boundaries, contractors must engage a specified number of registered land surveyors (or persons with equivalent professional qualifications and work experience) to participate in works planning, and such surveyors should be full time on site; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government always accords high priority to the quality and cost-effectiveness of public works. The Development Bureau and works departments review technical requirements of various aspects for public works contracts from time to time so as to align with the development of technology and project requirements. At present, the qualification and experience requirements of land surveying staff engaged by contractors are stated in the "General Specification for Civil Engineering Works" or the particular specifications prepared according to the situations of the individual projects.

My reply to Hon Tony Tse's question is as follows:

1. Since the site boundaries of roadworks projects are in general more extensive and complicated, land surveying staff with higher qualifications may be required to carry out some of the land surveying work. As such, the Highways Department (HyD) has promulgated its Technical Circular no. 5/2003 to set out the guidelines for preparation of particular specifications for individual projects for reference by its project offices. Although the technical circular has listed out the qualification and experience requirements for land surveying staff engaged by the contractors in different scale of projects, such as engaging member of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors in the Land Surveying Division or equivalent plus three years relevant working experience for works contracts with value over \$500 million, it is not a hard and fast rule for including such requirements. The Technical Circular allows the project offices to determine the appropriate requirements in the particular specification to suit the actual situations and surveying demand of individual projects. The technical circular also requires the project offices to consult its departmental survey division on the relevant qualification and experience requirements of land surveying staff engaged by the contractor to be specified in the works contracts. The HyD advised that the operation of this technical circular has long been satisfactory all along.
2. The HyD has conducted reviews on the above-mentioned technical circular regularly. At present, it considers that the details of this technical circular are still applicable. The HyD will continue to review this technical circular at appropriate times and update its details if considered necessary.
3. Works departments set out the appropriate contract requirements with respect to the nature, complexity and surveying demand of their projects. If roadworks are involved in the public works projects by other works departments, they would make reference to the above-mentioned HyD's technical circular in preparing the contract requirements. In general, for projects involving substantial surveying work, works departments would consult their respective survey division on the requirements of land surveying staff to be engaged by contractors in order to suit the latest development of technology and the market.

4. In general, public works projects managed by different works departments vary in nature and complexity of works as well as the extent of the required surveying work. It may not be desirable to set out unified requirements on the qualification, experience and number of land surveying staff together with their number for all works departments. We consider that it is more appropriate for works departments to determine the relevant requirements of land surveying staff based on factors such as the the characteristics, complexity, and site constraints of the respective projects. On this issue, the Development Bureau and works departments will continue to keep in view of the development of the technology and the market, and conduct reviews and update relevant requirements when necessary.