

## LCQ12: Using the unoccupied Chun Yeung Estate as quarantine facilities

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 10):

Question:

To tackle the epidemic, the Government has, since February this year, requisitioned the unoccupied Chun Yeung Estate in Fo Tan as quarantine facilities. Some prospective tenants who have accepted advance allocation of the units in the said estate have relayed to me that the deferral of the intake date has seriously upset their plans, and the prolonged delay in specifying a handover date for the units concerned has rendered them unable to make appropriate living arrangements. Some prospective tenants have suffered a drop in income as a result of the economic downturn, and yet they still have to continue to pay exorbitant rents for private housing. Also, quite a number of prospective tenants who have arranged their children to change schools even need to make arrangements for their children to travel to other districts to attend schools. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the conditions to be met for Chun Yeung Estate ceasing to be used as quarantine facilities, and the expected time for such conditions to be met;
- (2) of the disinfection procedures to be adopted for Chun Yeung Estate upon cessation of its use as quarantine facilities as well as the time needed; and
- (3) whether the Government will, apart from disbursing a one-off ex-gratia allowance of \$6,000 per household to the prospective tenants of Chun Yeung Estate, provide other support for them; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) is an unprecedented virus which is highly contagious and fast-spreading around the world, and the outbreak situation is evolving rapidly. Apart from admitting patients confirmed or suspected to be infected to hospitals for isolation and treatment, putting close contacts who are asymptomatic but may have been exposed to the risk of contracting COVID-19 (such as close contacts of confirmed patients or persons who have been to places of high transmission risk in the past 14 days) under compulsory quarantine at quarantine centres is also a crucial element of the anti-epidemic work.

The demand on quarantine facilities in Hong Kong has surged since the

end of January this year to cope with the quarantine arrangements for close contacts of local infection cases and imported cases, the immediate evacuation for the purpose of disease investigation of infection cases, the need to bring back Hong Kong residents who were stranded in Hubei Province and those on the Diamond Princess cruise, as well as persons recently returning from places such as Pakistan and India, etc. As at now, over 7 200 persons have been accommodated at quarantine centres, among whom 142 persons showed symptoms during their stay and were affirmed as confirmed cases subsequently. This demonstrates the effectiveness of quarantine centres in preventing community outbreaks.

In consultation with the Transport and Housing Bureau, my reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Michael Tien is as follows:

(1) Currently, Chun Yeung Estate accounts for over 80 per cent of the quarantine units provided by the Government. While the outbreak has slightly eased over the past month, over 200 units at Chun Yeung Estate have been used each day on average. Nevertheless, the Government has been setting up additional quarantine facilities through construction works. It is expected that the construction works at the government site and the site reserved for future tourism development at Penny's Bay would be completed by phase from July to September, providing some 1 500 additional units. If the epidemic situation stabilises and there is no local community outbreak with unknown sources by then, the Government will cease the use of Chun Yeung Estate as quarantine centre as soon as possible such that the prospective tenants can move in afterwards.

(2) The quarantine centres have been operated in accordance with the guidelines on infection control. Cleansing, sterilisation and waste disposal have been put in place appropriately. The refuse generated by confinees will be treated as clinical waste, which is collected and handled by licensed clinical waste collectors. After the decommissioning of Chun Yeung Estate as quarantine centre, the relevant government departments will immediately conduct thorough disinfection within a few days in accordance with the guidelines on infection control.

(3) The Housing Authority (HA) understands that applicants who have accepted the advance housing offer of Chun Yeung Estate may experience inconvenience or problems due to the deferred intake. The HA hence issued letters to the concerned prospective tenants on February 20 this year, informing them of the special arrangements, under which they may opt to (i) retain the advance allocated unit until flat intake and, where necessary, apply for admission to Po Tin Interim Housing in Tuen Mun District in the New Territories during the period; or (ii) cancel the current offer and be reallocated to another suitable unit in other housing estates in their original chosen district. The HA will endeavour to meet and accord priority to their needs, subject to public housing resources available for deployment and availability of suitable vacant Public Rental Housing (PRH) units.

Under the Anti-epidemic Fund set up by the Government, a one-off ex-gratia allowance of \$6,000 per household has been granted to eligible PRH

applicants who have accepted the advance allocation offer of Chun Yeung Estate, so as to help them tide over the problems and inconvenience caused by the deferred intake. The Government understands that the ex-gratia allowance under the Fund may not be able to resolve all the problems of the prospective tenants but hopes that this could provide some relief to meet their pressing needs. Cheques for the payment of the ex-gratia allowance have been issued to all the affected prospective tenants.