

LCQ13: Supply of tap water to remote villages

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

Question:

It has been reported that as remote villages such as Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun, Chau Tau in Tung Ping Chau and Mui Tsz Lam in Sha Tin currently have no supply of tap water, residents of those villages can get fresh water only from the storage cisterns in these villages and the hillside streams nearby. However, those water sources dried up last month due to the very hot weather, causing the residents to suffer from a lack of water supply and making it necessary for the Water Supplies Department to transport fresh water to solve the problem temporarily. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the name of the villages yet to be supplied with tap water and the population of each of the villages, and set out the information by District Council district;
- (2) of the number of times in the past three years for which the authorities transported fresh water to remote villages temporarily and the expenditures involved, broken down by name of village;
- (3) of the number of times to date this year for which the authorities transported fresh water to remote villages temporarily and the quantity of water supplied, broken down by name of village;
- (4) whether it will make good use of the fiscal surplus by constructing tap water supply systems for remote villages or improve the water storage facilities therein, so as to reduce the occurrence of a lack of fresh water supply to the residents; and
- (5) whether it will review the criteria used for determining if tap water supply systems should be constructed for remote villages?

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 WSD will also provide necessary assistance, such as providing water tanks and potable water.

The reply to the Hon Kenneth Lau's question is as follows:

(1) The villages currently do not have treated water supply and their respective estimated population are listed in the Annex.

(2) Between 2015 and 2017, the Government transported potable water, on an ad hoc basis, to remote villages for a total of 46 times at a cost of around \$475,000. A breakdown of the details by villages is at below.

District Council	Village Name	Number of times of transporting potable water	Costs (HK\$)
Tai Po	Tung Ping Chau	2	2,280
Islands	Po Toi Island	44	472,400

(3) From January 1 to June 8 this year, the Government transported potable water, on an ad hoc basis, to remote villages for a total of 21 times and at a volume of 88.5 cubic metres. A breakdown of the details by villages is at below.

District Council	Village Name	Number of times of transporting potable water	Volume of water (m3)
Tai Po	Tung Ping Chau	4	14.5
Islands	Po Toi Island	15	67.5
Tuen Mun	Tin Fu Tsai	2	6.5

Note: Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun is not in the list of remote villages in Annex. However, due to the insufficient water pressure to some locations of higher terrain in the village, the WSD transported potable water for some of the residents for one time in May, the amount of water transported is 1.5 cubic meters.

(4) & (5) The remote villages that do not have treated water supply 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 Government has been monitoring the water supply situations of these remote villages. 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 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 that do not have treated water supply, for example the latest population and nearby developments, and will also study various solutions to tackle the problem of deterioration of water quality due to low water consumption, including exploring exploitation of water sources to supplement existing raw water sources.

In addition, the HAD will continue to improve the existing water storage facilities for these remote villages, such as relaying water pipes and installing additional water storage facilities to meet the needs of the villagers.