

# LCQ16: Workmanship of subsidised housing units

Following is a question by the Hon WU Chi-wai, MH and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (Jun 26):

Question:

It has been reported that in recent years, quite a number of members of the public have, after moving into newly completed units of public rental housing, and those under the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) and Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH), found that both the materials and the workmanship of the in-flat installations are of poor quality. Some members of the construction industry have pointed out that the causes for such a situation include a shortage of experienced construction workers in recent years, and an increased use of precast concrete components (PCCs) in the construction of these subsidized housing. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in respect of the three aforesaid types of subsidized housing projects completed within the past five years, of the respective numbers of complaints/reports received by the Housing Department (HD) from residents about quality problems of the materials and workmanship of the in-flat installations, and among such complaints/reports, the respective numbers of those which were (i) made via the Defects Report Forms and (ii) made after the expiry of the warranty periods of their HOS and GSH units;

(2) in respect of the complaints/reports mentioned in (1)(i) and (ii) respectively, of the following information on each problem in the past five years relating to the quality of materials and workmanship: (i) the number of cases handled, (ii) the average time taken for the repair works, (iii) the longest time taken for the repair works, and (iv) the number of cases not handled, and set out the information by the name of each subsidized housing project and in tables of the same format as the table below;

Name of subsidized housing project: \_\_\_\_\_

Problem	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
Water seepage on the wall				
Water seepage on the ceiling				
Window problems				
...				
Other problems				

Total:		Not applicable	Not applicable	
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(3) of the most common in-flat problems involving substandard workmanship and installations (e.g. kitchen doors not meeting the fire resistance standard) that were identified by HD in the past five years in the course of hand-over inspections of the three aforesaid types of subsidized housing units;

(4) regarding the construction works in the past five years for the three types of subsidized housing projects respectively, of the (i) percentage of PCCs used on average, (ii) the number of days taken for the construction of a typical floor on average, and (iii) the number of man-days taken for the construction of a unit on average, for each of the projects; whether HD assessed, in the course of the hand-over inspections of such units, the impacts of such factors on the workmanship; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) whether HD issued in the past five years advices or warnings to or imposed penalties on the contractors of subsidized housing projects due to quality problems of materials and workmanship; if so, of the details;

(6) of the measures put in place to enhance the supervision of the workmanship of subsidized housing projects (e.g. increasing the number of inspection items and the frequency of random inspections during the construction stage, as well as reviewing the construction methods and the procedure and criteria for hand-over inspections); and

(7) whether it will consider extending the warranty period for subsidized sale units and taking other measures to better protect the rights and interests of owners who have purchased such units?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to Hon WU Chi-wai's question is as follows:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has all along been placing a high priority on the quality of its construction works, and has put in place a stringent system for inspecting and accepting completed works. From ensuring the fulfillment of contractual requirements, conducting site monitoring/inspections, to performing tests upon completion of the works, HA has been strictly monitoring the building contractors. This system applies to all HA's public housing developments, including Public Rental Housing (PRH) and the Subsidised Sale Flats (SSFs). The latter includes the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS), and the Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) projects.

Before completion of the works contract, HA performs detailed inspections and checking in each flat to ensure that the quality of the works complies with the contractual requirements. If any situation of non-

compliance with the contract is identified, HA shall request the contractor to follow-up and rectify, and conduct another round of inspection. This will ensure that the construction quality meets the required standards.

Under the current mechanism, if the tenant/owner has identified anomaly in facilities or installations of the flat within seven days of taking over the flat and that decoration works have not yet started, he/she can submit a 'Defects Report Form' to the In-take Ambassador. If the anomaly is, upon verification, confirmed as a building defect which the contractor is accountable for, the contractor will arrange the conduct of the rectification works for the tenant/owner. For SSFs, HA provides HOS and GSH flats with one-year maintenance period and ten-year Structural Safety Guarantee for the in-flats installations, finishes and facilities as stipulated in the sales brochures.

HA has always been concerning about the construction quality and has already included the "Average number of defects per flat at handover to tenants/owners for flats completed within the year" as one of its Key Performance Indicators. Our annual target is not exceeding 0.7 defects per flat. We were able to meet this target at the year-end performance reviews in the past few years (see Annex for the number of defects). In the past five years up to end May 2019, among the 77 215 completed public housing flats, HA has received about 440 verified defect cases, among which about 300 were in PRH, about 110 were in HOS and about 30 were in GSH(Note). Generally speaking, these defects involved water seepage, leakage from fittings, damaged tiles and cracks at plastering, etc. HA did not come to aware of situation involving facilities in the flats not meeting the stipulated standards.

After the tenants/owners submit the "Defects Report Forms", HA will arrange its staff to follow up with the residents as soon as possible, and arrange the rectification works according to the needs of the individual residents. HA does not keep statistics on the time required for conducting the rectification work. The time required depends on the types of the works involved. In general, rectification works within residential flat, such as those related to damaged tiling and water seepage at ceiling or wall, etc. takes about one to three weeks to complete. For other minor items such as damages to window hardware, lock or hinges, etc., rectification could be completed within a week. HA does not keep statistics on the complaints/reports from residents about quality problems of the materials and workmanship of the in-flat installations after the expiry of the defects liability warranty period.

HA has many years of experience in applying precast concrete components (PCCs) in public housing developments. Practitioners of the construction industry generally consider that such technology can improve the buildings quality. The PCCs adopted by HA generally include staircase, façade, semi-precast slab, volumetric precast bathroom, volumetric precast kitchen, partition wall, beam, balcony and refuse chute, which make up about 35 per cent of concrete volume of a typical floor and 70 per cent precast rate on plan on average. HA determines the applicable areas of PCCs in individual

project based on the corresponding conditions and settings. Owing to the different design, layout and site constraints of individual projects, HA does not have a unified construction cycle index. In general, HA can complete the main concrete structure of a typical floor in six working days and the worker per flat ratio is about 0.12 on average. This construction cycle has balanced the work schedule, site safety and the quality of buildings and is generally recognised by the industry.

Regarding contractor monitoring, HA will continue to monitor different aspects of the performance of the building contractors in HA's works contracts, including progress of works, use of materials, quality of works, site and environment management, site safety and payment of wages, etc. If the building contractor does not perform satisfactorily, HA will issue reminder letters, warning letters, or even suspend the concerned contractor from tendering HA's contracts as appropriate. In the past five years, HA suspended six new building works contractors from tendering due to unsatisfactory performance on the use of materials and quality of works etc. Among the six contractors, four were directly involved in the incident of "excess lead in drinking water" in 2015. HA will continue to monitor the use of materials and quality of works of public housing developments.

Note: The defect cases reported by tenants/ owners via the "Defects Situation Report" and verified did not include the minor defects that could be rectified by the contractor within a day, such as cleansing, tightening loosened metallic parts or lubricating, etc.