

LCQ5: Civil Service Public Housing Quota Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Lai Tung-kwok and a reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

The Government has introduced the Civil Service Public Housing Quota Scheme (the CSPHQ Scheme) to provide junior civil servants and rank and file officers of the disciplined services with the opportunity to move into public rental housing ("PRH") or purchase flats under subsidised sale flat schemes. It is learnt that the CSPHQ Scheme is severely oversubscribed, with the latest number of applicants for the PRH special quota approximately 10 times the quota, and the waiting time even longer than the 5.7 years for PRH general applicants. On the other hand, retired rank and file officers of the disciplined services are unable to move out of their quarters in a timely manner because they have not yet been allocated a PRH flat, which has significantly lengthened the waiting time of existing staff for quarters. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has assessed the impact of insufficient quotas under the CSPHQ Scheme; if so, of the conclusions; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it has estimated the numbers of applications for general quota and special quota to be received under the CSPHQ Scheme and the successful rates of housing allocation in each of the coming five years, together with a breakdown by PRH and the Home Ownership Scheme; and

(3) whether it will consider afresh purchasing housing units in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, which are in close proximity to Hong Kong, for allocation to eligible civil servants, so as to alleviate the problem of acute shortage of quota supply under the CSPHQ Scheme?

Reply:

President,

The Civil Service Public Housing Quota (CSPHQ) Scheme is a discretionary housing benefit that is provided not according to the conditions of service. Both the original intent and purpose of the Scheme are not to provide flats in a quantity equivalent to the demand. Eligible junior civil servants and rank and file officers of the disciplined services may apply for public rental housing (PRH) flats, or Green Form Certificates (GFCs) applicable to purchase of flats under subsidised sale flat schemes. Such schemes include the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS), HOS Secondary Market Scheme and Green Form

Subsidised HOS. Whether an eligible officer can be allocated a quota is mainly affected by the number of quota, the choice of estate/district and the officer's relative priority among other applicants.

The replies to the respective parts of the question are as follows:

(1) For junior civil servants and rank and file officers of the disciplined services, apart from the CSPHQ Scheme being provided on a discretionary basis, other discretionary housing benefits include the Non-accountable Cash Allowance (NCA) for a maximum aggregate period of 120 months which is subject to an annual quota of 1 800, and departmental quarters for the disciplined services. Take the cash allowance as an example, at present, generally, eligible officers would be invited to submit applications within one year of attaining the eligibility (i.e. officers on MPS Points 22 to 33 or equivalent with at least three years of continuous service, or officers below Master Pay Scale (MPS) Point 22 or equivalent with at least 20 years of continuous service) and would receive the allowance in the year following the application. Eligible officers may choose to submit applications under an appropriate housing benefit scheme according to their individual circumstances and needs.

The Civil Service Bureau has been maintaining communication with the Housing Department on the number of quota. After balancing various factors, on top of the normal annual quota of 1 000 PRH flats and 500 GFCs, the Subsidised Housing Committee of the Hong Kong Housing Authority agreed to provide additional 250 GFC quota places annually for the eight years from 2020/2021 to 2027/2028, making a total of 750 quota places each year. While the Government understands it is staff's hope to increase the quota under the Scheme, the Government must at the same time consider the keen demand for public housing from the public. Given the current tight supply of public housing, the Government has to strike a balance between increasing quota places for civil servants and public demand.

(2) Eligible civil servants may make reference to the annual circular memoranda issued by the Government and apply for the CSPHQ. The eligibility criteria under the CSPHQ Scheme include years of service, income and family composition, etc. Officers who meet the basic eligibility criteria may choose the year for submitting application according to their individual circumstances (such as their length of service), and they/their family members have to undergo further verification of their eligibility (e.g. compliance with the rules on prevention of double housing benefits and requirements of the Housing Authority). As such, we are unable to provide the estimated number of applications and success rate for the next five years. For reference, in the past five years (i.e. 2018/2019 to 2022/2023), in respect of the General Quota that is applicable to junior civil servants, there were on average about 4 100 applications for PRH quota and about 2 800 applications for GFC quota per year, and the percentage of applicants provided with a PRH quota and GFC quota was 16 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. As for the Special Quota that is applicable to rank and file officers of the disciplined services, there were on average about 3 900 applications for PRH quota and about 500 applications for GFC quota per year,

and the percentage of applicants provided with a PRH quota and GFC quota was 9 per cent and 63 per cent respectively.

(3) The proposal of purchasing housing units in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) cities for allocating to eligible civil servants will bring enormous financial burden to the Government. We have no plan to purchase housing units in GBA cities as housing benefits for civil servants.