

Public housing applicant convicted by court for making false statement

A spokesman for the Housing Department (HD) today (June 23) said that the HD always spares no effort in combating false declarations made during applications for public housing. A public rental housing (PRH) applicant, who concealed the co-ownership of a property with a net asset value of approximately \$17 million, was ordered by a court to serve a suspended sentence yesterday (June 22).

In the case, the PRH applicant declared to have no ownership of any property and related asset value on a declaration form during a vetting interview in 2015, and declared the same on another declaration form during the intake interview in Shui Chuen O Estate Office in 2017. Subsequent investigation revealed that the PRH applicant has been one of the co-owners of a residential property in Laguna Verde, Hung Hom, since August 2000 and the approximate market value of the property was \$17 million. The net asset value of the property for one-third co-ownership held by the defendant, after deducting the unpaid mortgage repayment, should be around \$4 million, which exceeded the 2015-16 and 2016-17 total net asset limits for an elderly singleton PRH applicant of \$472,000 and \$484,000 respectively. As a result, the applicant was not eligible for public housing.

The applicant was prosecuted for making a false statement knowingly contrary to Section 26(1)(c) of the Housing Ordinance, who was previously convicted at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts. The presiding magistrate considered that a fine as punishment would not reflect the gravity of the offence. After considering the background report, the defendant was sentenced to one month's imprisonment (suspended for 12 months) by the presiding magistrate in Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday.

Together with this case, there have already been five PRH applicants or PRH residents prosecuted by the HD this month for the offences of making a false statement knowingly or neglecting to furnish information as specified in a declaration form, and they were sentenced to suspended imprisonment by the courts.

Furthermore, the spokesman reminded all PRH applicants that if they are convicted by the courts for making a false statement knowingly during a PRH application, contrary to Section 26(1)(c) of the Housing Ordinance, the maximum penalty is a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months. The PRH application concerned will be cancelled while any allocated PRH unit will be recovered by the HD.