

LCQ9: Lifeguard manpower and water quality of public swimming pools

Following is a question by Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (June 20):

Question:

Recently, a number of swimming pool complexes under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) were wholly or partially closed temporarily due to an insufficient number of lifeguards on duty. Some lifeguard unions have estimated that 900 lifeguards will be needed to fully meet the needs during the swimming season. However, there are only a total of some 400 full-time and part-time lifeguards at present. On the other hand, there have been reports from time to time in recent years about the poor water quality of public swimming pools and its potential perils to swimmers' health. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the staff establishment, strength and number of vacancies of lifeguards of LCSD (including civil service lifeguards and non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards) in the past three years, and set out a breakdown by name of public swimming pool complex/beach and the District Council (DC) district to which the complex/beach belonged, as well as by peak and non-peak swimming season;
- (2) of the details of partial or whole closures of public swimming pool complexes/beaches (including the reasons for and number of closures and the types of facilities involved) each month in the past three years, and set out a breakdown by name of public swimming pool complex/beach and the DC district to which the complex/beach belonged;
- (3) of the attendance of various public swimming pool complexes in each of the past three years, and set out a breakdown by mode of admission (i.e. paying the normal rate, paying the concessionary rate, holding a monthly ticket and being a group user), name of public swimming pool complex and the DC district to which it belonged;
- (4) given that several new swimming pools will be completed in the coming several years and that some existing swimming pools will be converted into heated pools and have their service hours extended, whether the authorities have reviewed the staff establishment, grade structure, remuneration and promotion prospect of lifeguards, and the recruitment ratio of civil service lifeguards and non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards, so as to ensure that there will be sufficient lifeguards on duty;
- (5) of the number of complaints received by LCSD in each of the past three years about the water quality of swimming pools, and set out a breakdown by

name of public swimming pool complex and the DC district to which it belonged, as well as by content of complaint; and

(6) as some studies have pointed out that the urea content in the water of public swimming pools is on the high side, posing potential perils to public health, whether the current filtering systems at public swimming pools are effective in filtering out urea; whether LCSD will consider making urea content in the pool water one of the parameters to be monitored; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Currently, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) manages 44 public swimming pools, 41 gazetted public beaches, and five water sports centres across the territory. The safety of swimmers has always been the prime concern for LCSD in arranging the manpower of lifeguards. My reply to the six parts of the question is as follows:

(1) A breakdown of the staff establishment, strength and vacancies of lifeguards at swimming pools/beaches in the past 3 years by district is tabulated at Annex 1.

(2) LCSD will consider closing the entire swimming pool complexes or suspend the lifeguard services at beaches in response to unexpected incidents such as inclement weather, water pollution at swimming pools/beaches, urgent repair works, red tide, oil spill or unexpected absence of lifeguards, etc. Details on the closure of the entire swimming pool complexes or the suspension of lifeguard services at beaches for the reasons mentioned above in the past three years are at Annex 2. In daily operation, swimming complexes will also be partially suspended in response to factors such as regular alternate inspections and maintenance, partial failure of facilities, manpower resources of lifeguards, usage pattern of swimmers, possible impact to outdoor facilities due to adverse weather conditions like lightning, thunder, rainstorm and water pollution (such as presence of vomitus), etc. Detailed statistical figures on partial suspension of swimming pools are not available. Besides, there is no partial closure of beaches.

(3) A breakdown of the attendances at public swimming pools in the past three years by district and swimming pool is tabulated at Annex 3.

(4) LCSD attaches great importance to human resource management of lifeguards for the sake of swimmer's safety. The department is actively reviewing the establishment and remuneration of lifeguards and has implemented a number of policies and management measures to ensure adequate lifeguards are available to provide services at swimming pools and beaches. Regarding the manpower ratio of civil service lifeguards to non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards, the review needs to consider various factors, such as the operating hours of swimming pools and beaches in a year and during swimming season, the number of swimmers, the manpower demand due to

increasing number of swimming facilities in future, etc. Generally speaking, civil service lifeguards are employed for service needs which are steady throughout the year while non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards are employed for service needs which are seasonal in nature. In the past few years, there has been a steady increase in the number of civil service lifeguards and there is also an increased number of non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards. Details of the human resources policies, management measures and the growth in the number of lifeguards are at Annex 4.

(5) A breakdown of the number of complaints received by LCSD about pool water quality by district and swimming pool is tabulated at Annex 5.

(6) LCSD attaches great importance to the hygiene of public swimming pools. Pool water of its public swimming pools is continuously circulated, filtered and sterilised throughout the opening hours. Making reference to the guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (the Guidelines), LCSD has drawn up parameters for monitoring the water quality of its public swimming pools. Such parameters include, among other things, the Free Residual Chlorine, pH value, total bacteria count, E. coli, Vibrio cholerae and turbidity of pool water. According to the Guidelines, urea content is not one of the parameters to be monitored for pool water. In addition, LCSD consults the Department of Health from time to time on issues relating to hygiene and health. To ensure that the hygiene of pool water is up to standard, apart from taking water samples for testing of residual chlorine levels and pH value on an hourly basis during opening hours, LCSD has also assigned accredited laboratories to conduct testing on the pool water of its swimming pools on a weekly basis to ascertain that the water quality is up to the relevant standard. Furthermore, publicity efforts have also been stepped up to urge swimmers to observe personal hygiene, including reminding them not to pollute pool water and to go through a shower and visit the toilet before swimming, etc.

Composite Interest Rate: End of May 2018

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (June 20) the composite interest rate at the end of May 2018.*

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of funds of banks, increased by 6 basis points to 0.46% at the end of May 2018, from 0.40% at the end of April 2018 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The rise in composite interest rate reflected increases in the weighted funding costs for

both deposits and interbank funds during the month (see Chart 2 in the Annex).

The historical data of the composite interest rate from the end of the fourth quarter of 2003 to the end of May 2018 are available in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin on the HKMA website (www.hkma.gov.hk). The next data release is scheduled for 19 July 2018 and will provide the composite interest rate at the end of June 2018.

* The composite interest rate is a weighted average interest rate of all Hong Kong dollar interest bearing liabilities, which include deposits from customers, amounts due to banks, negotiable certificates of deposit and other debt instruments, and Hong Kong dollar non-interest bearing demand deposits on the books of banks. Data from retail banks, which account for about 90% of the total customers' deposits in the banking sector, are used in the calculation. It should be noted that the composite interest rate represents only average interest expenses. There are various other costs involved in the making of a loan, such as operating costs (e.g. staff and rental expenses), credit cost and hedging cost, which are not covered by the composite interest rate.

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.

Charge for each import and export declaration capped at \$200 from August 1

With effect from August 1, the charge for each import and export declaration (TDEC) will be capped at \$200 to further lower the cost of importing and exporting high-value goods to and from Hong Kong. The new measure will apply to goods imported, exported or re-exported on or after August 1.

The Legislative Council passed the Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 2018 (Amendment Regulation) today (June 20) to impose the cap of \$200 on each TDEC.

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, thanked the Legislative Council for the passage of the Amendment Regulation. He said, "The capping of TDEC charges will directly benefit the local trading and logistics industry through lowering the operating cost of import and export, encouraging the industry to move up the value chain and supporting the further development of businesses in trading, storage, logistics and distribution of high-value goods in Hong Kong, thereby strengthening Hong Kong's position as a trading hub.

"The cap on TDEC charges is expected to save the trade about \$458 million a year and benefit about 900 000 TDEC cases each involving goods at a value above \$1.644 million."

The arrangements for the lodgement of TDECs and payment of charges will remain unchanged. For enquiries, please contact the Customs and Excise Department (hotline: 2707 7748, email: customsenquiry@customs.gov.hk), the Census and Statistics Department (hotline: 2877 1818, email: trade-declaration@censtatd.gov.hk) or the three Government-appointed service providers of Government Electronic Trading Services (namely Brio Electronic Commerce Limited, Global e-Trading Services Limited and Tradelink Electronic Commerce Limited, with contact information available at www.cedb.gov.hk/citb/en/Policy_Responsibilities/gets_sp.html).

CSSA caseload for May 2018

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in May showed a drop of 124 cases, representing a decrease of 0.1 per cent compared with that of April, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics

released by the Social Welfare Department today (June 20).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of May stood at 231 419 (see attached table), with a total of 333 241 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, low-earnings cases registered a month-to-month decrease of 1.4 per cent to 4 068 cases. Both unemployment cases and ill health cases dropped by 0.3 per cent to 12 580 cases and 23 517 cases respectively. Old age cases slightly slipped by 0.1 per cent to 144 151 cases.

Single parent cases edged up by 0.4 per cent to 25 784 cases while permanent disability cases increased slightly by 0.1 per cent to 17 024 cases.