

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**EEB(F)168**

**(Question Serial No. 3440)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

Comprehensive overhaul of public toilets in Hong Kong is an important step to improve the environmental hygiene and public facilities of the city. Through introducing technologies, adopting modern design and collating public feedback, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has provided the public and tourists with more cosy and hygienic user experience. However, public toilet refurbishment works in the past often experienced budget overrun due to impractical design (such as exceedingly luxurious). In this connection, please advise this Committee of the following:

- (a) Will the Department make public the average cost of refurbishment works for each toilet and the design criteria? How does the Department ensure that the design meets the needs of the grassroots (such as providing more facilities for people with disabilities and baby-sitting rooms)?
- (b) As the cost of daily maintenance (such as cleaning and equipment replacement) of the refurbished public toilets may be higher than that of the old facilities, will the Department earmark funding for their long-term maintenance? How will the Department avoid misallocation of resources caused by putting construction before maintenance?

Asked by: Hon TANG Ka-piu (LegCo internal reference no.: 42)

Reply:

- (a) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) have set up a working group to discuss ways to optimise public toilets and ensure that the design of public toilet facilities could blend well with the environment and keep up with the times, with a view to making the public toilet facilities hygienic, clean, safe and decent. In refurbishing, improving or reprovisioning existing public toilets, FEHD will follow its established standard of provision. The facility requirements and design criteria of public toilets, including the number and proportion of different sanitary fitments and facilities, the number of accessible unisex toilets and universal toilets, and such ancillary facilities as toilet attendant rooms, will be decided according to the actual need.

As for the design, the main considerations of ArchSD are durability and functionality. Suitable construction materials will be adopted to cope with the works method and control the building cost under a “no frills” principle. Refurbishment, improvement or reprovisioning works of public toilets will be carried out through tendering for individual project or on a term contract basis, with the works contract price being determined by bidding and tendering, hence reflecting the market price. The project scope, site location, site constraints and work method of the refurbishment, improvement or reprovisioning works vary among public toilets of FEHD. Some projects are constrained by special factors such as topography, the underground space available for laying of pipelines and ducts, special geotechnical conditions, etc., while individual public toilets located in remote areas are not connected to public sewerage system and even not accessible via a carriageway for transportation of construction materials. As the costs of individual projects vary by their nature, the average cost of refurbishment works for each public toilet is not available.

In refurbishing public toilets, FEHD will improve the design on various aspects which include providing, as far as possible, facilities that would be convenient and user-friendly based on the patrons’ needs. These improved facilities include sensor-activated taps and flushing facilities, coat hooks and facilities for baby. Before the works commence, FEHD will consult the District Councils concerned on the overall layout, partitioning and facilities of public toilets, as well as the interim arrangements during the project period. To further promote public participation in the design of public toilets, FEHD and ArchSD have jointly organised a design thinking programme in recent year(s) to garner views and innovative ideas from various stakeholders (including public toilet users of different age groups or those with disabilities, design professionals, academics, architects, cleansing workers, as well as management and maintenance personnel) through organising workshops. The views and ideas collected covered new designs which facilitate the elderly and people with disabilities in using toilet facilities, as well as provision of elderly priority compartments, accessible unisex toilets, universal toilets and baby changing rooms. FEHD and ArchSD will make reference to the relevant views and formulate plans to enhance public toilet services from the perspectives of service, design and management.

- (b) ArchSD is mainly responsible for the daily repair and maintenance of the building structure and internal fitting-out of public toilets. The costs of daily maintenance of refurbished public toilets vary among projects. However, generally speaking, the costs of long-term daily maintenance of the old facilities are comparable to those of the refurbished public toilets. Refurbishment projects will improve considerably the public toilet facilities, thereby facilitating the daily management and maintenance. In general, there is no significant change in the cleaning and management costs of public toilets after refurbishment. FEHD will closely monitor the service performance of contractors.