

Press in December 1995

Press December 13, 1995

Headline : *Housing Chairman reviews on achievements and challenges*

Content : The following is issued on behalf of the Housing Authority :

The Hong Kong Housing Authority has taken positive steps to increase housing supply to meet demands, enhance living quality for public housing tenants, and promote home ownership to meet the aspirations of the community.

In her second report as Chairman of the Authority, Ms Rosanna Wong reviewed the achievements of the Authority over the past year (1994/95), and highlighted some of the challenges that lie ahead.

Cooperation between the Authority and the Government has been further strengthened with the signing of a supplemental agreement on financial arrangements in October 1994, according to Ms Wong. And the establishment of the Housing Branch not only enhances the co-ordination of housing development projects within the public and private sectors, but helps to speed up the processing of new public housing projects through a project action team.

"Overall, it reaffirmed Government's continuous commitment in supporting the Authority's housing programme, and strengthened the already sound financial basis on which the Authority will further pursue the objectives of the housing strategy up to 2001 and beyond," she pointed out.

Increasing housing supply

The Authority is working towards the goals of the Long Term Housing Strategy. Production of housing continued during the year with the completion of 28 444 flats.

"In the year under review, the Authority continued to urge the Government to allocate more serviced and usable land for building rental and home ownership flats," said Ms Wong. As a result, a total of 43.7 ha of land were granted to the Authority and there are plans for 34,000 new flats to be built on this land.

The Authority also took steps to maximize the development potential of existing sites. Among the sites secured during the year, 21 are new sites in the urban area or infill sites adjoining existing housing estates which will be used for fast track

development of about 9,600 additional flats in the coming two years.

Other new initiatives taken by the Authority included the adoption of new design for Housing for Senior Citizens on low-rise structures such as carpark buildings to make more efficient use of airspace, and the commencement of studies on the feasibility of further increasing building height, and centralizing community facilities in one building, thereby releasing the flats which would otherwise be taken up by such facilities within the estate.

Promoting Home Ownership

In response to the growing demand for home ownership, the Authority has continued to place heavy emphasis on Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) and Private Sector Participation Scheme (PSPS).

During the year, some 13,000 flats were sold under the HOS and PSPS at prices of about half the market level. And through this effort, the Authority has successfully induced 8,000 sitting tenants to release their rental flats for home ownership flats, and assisted 5,000 families in the private sector to acquire their homes.

To attract potential HOS flat buyers, especially existing public housing tenants, the Authority is committed to constantly improve the quality of HOS flats. Two new designs for HOS flats with higher standards of finishes and fittings and more efficient use of space have been developed during the year.

The Home Purchase Loan Scheme was also given new impetus in 1994/95 through the increase of the maximum loan to \$300,000 and the extensive of the monthly subsidy to 48 months.

Enhancing housing management

Notable initiatives on housing management included the pilot scheme of the Estate Management Advisory Committee (EMAC) and improvement to customer services.

Eight EMACs were established over the past year and 85 tenants representatives were appointed as EMAC members. It is expected that the scheme will be extended to all other estates following a review.

The Authority also launched a Customer Service Assistant to improve counter service in public housing estates. Other service improvements included the development of a new system to handle tenants' day-to-day requests for repair, and enhancement of security measures in public housing estates.

Facing the challenges ahead

Apart from the above achievements, Ms Rosanna Wong also highlighted the major challenges the Authority is facing, with particular reference to the shortage of flat supply in the coming two years.

An area the Authority would look into is to increase the mobility of sitting tenants and better-off tenants via the home ownership channel or other incentive schemes.

As maintenance of public housing estates has always been a matter of public concern, Ms Wong said the Authority would take a strategic review on planned maintenance and special repairs for older estates awaiting redevelopment.

Community relations would also be strengthened through a comprehensive strategy and a more open access to information policy.

The Housing Authority Annual Report 1994/95 will be on sale at \$40 a copy at the Government Publications Centre, G/F Lower Block, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, on December 18.

Note to Editors: A copy and a photograph of The Housing Authority Annual Report 1994/95 will be boxed for collection at GIS later in the afternoon. End

Wednesday, December 13, 1995