

**Address by the Governor,
Sir David Wilson, KCMG,
at the opening of the 1988/89
Session of the Legislative
Council on 12 October 1988
(extract on Housing)**

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(g) Housing

(i) Public Housing Programme

68. Housing is a very important part of our social infrastructure. The Government have taken a number of steps in the past year towards achieving our objective of providing adequate accommodation for all by the turn of the century. The Housing Authority was reorganized in April. It was given greater financial autonomy so that it can put its resources where they are most needed to implement the Long Term Housing Strategy.

69. As part of this strategy, the Authority has drawn up a programme to redevelop over 500 older public housing blocks between now and the end of the century. About 500,000 tenants of these blocks will be allocated flats in modern estates with lower population densities and a better living environment. To meet public demand, the Authority is also providing greater opportunities for home purchase, both in the public sector and, through the recently introduced Home Purchase Loan Scheme, in the private sector. 12,500 Home Ownership Scheme and Private Sector Participation Scheme flats have been sold this year. And

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2,500 loans have been made available for the purchase of private sector flats. This does not of course lessen our commitment to provide rental flats for those who need them.

70. Due mainly to the acute shortage of labour in the construction industry, housing production in the 1987/88 financial year fell below our annual target of 35,000 rental and Home Ownership Scheme flats. Completion of the delayed projects, however, will boost production in 1988/89 to 54,200 flats. This will be the highest number of flats ever completed in a single year and more than sufficient to offset last year's shortfall. But I must emphasise that this high figure is mainly the result of delays in the programme. For the future, the labour shortage casts a worrying shadow over prospects for keeping the building programme on track.

71. To improve the standard of public housing still further, a new generation of block designs is being introduced the Harmony Blocks. The first of the new style flats in these blocks will be ready in the early 1990s. They will have 10% more space, larger kitchens and a better internal layout. The new Harmony Blocks will also use a less labour-intensive construction method but still at a cost comparable to the existing designs.

72. Squatter

72. Squatter housing in the urban area is a long standing problem which has proved difficult to resolve. We are now making real progress. This year, 32,000 residents of the two largest remaining urban squatter areas, at Shaukeiwan and Diamond Hill, will be rehoused. Our target is to provide housing for all urban squatters by 1994/95. We must make sure that this is achieved.

73. In addition, a good start has been made on the clearance of the Kowloon Walled City. So far 4,200 of the original 33,000 residents have accepted offers of rehousing. Clearance and demolition will be completed in 1992 and the site will be developed as a public park. A major eyesore and health hazard will then have become a much needed public amenity.

(ii) Building Management

74. The management of private multi-storey buildings understandably remains is a subject of public concern. The Government's policy to provide a legal framework which will give owners of private buildings the opportunity to manage their buildings effectively. Legislative amendments are being drafted which will make it easier to form owners

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corporations, and to improve the way in which these bodies operate. I expect this legislation to come before this Council early next year.

75. In addition, a new Advisory Committee on Private Building Management is being established. This Committee will include a majority of non-government members, one of whom will be its Chairman. It will advise the Government on what further measures are needed to improve the management of private buildings.

76. The demand for cheap tourist accommodation has led to an increase in the number of guest-houses. We must ensure that they are safe. The Administration have therefore decided to license the operation of these premises so as to ensure acceptable standards of fire safety, structural safety and environmental hygiene. Work on the necessary legislation is already in hand.

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