THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY

Memorandum for the Rental Housing Committee

Notes of Meeting with Concern Group

Attached for Members’ information are the notes of a pre-meeting held at the Oi Man Community Hall, Oi Man Estate on 14 February 2000 (Monday) between the Rental Housing Committee and the following concern group present:

**Concern Group**

(a) The Federation of HK, KLN and NT Public Housing Estates Resident and Shopowner Organization

**Subject**

Waiting List income and asset limits
Policy on overcrowding relief
Policy on splitting of tenancy
Refurbishment for PRH flats

File No. : HA/PRP/3/17/2 II

Date : 3 March 2000
(Translation)

Notes of Meeting with
the Federation of HK, KLN and NT Public Housing Estates
Resident and Shopowner Organization
held in Oi Man Community Hall, Oi Man Estate
on 14 February 2000 at 2:35p.m.

PRESENT

Members of Rental Housing Committee (RHC)

Mr NG Shui-lai, JP  (Chairman)
Mr CHAN Bing-woon, SBS, JP
Dr LI Ling-hin
Ms KO Po-ling

Representatives of Housing Department (HD)

Mr S T CHEN  Chief Manager / Management (Supporting Services) 1
Mr Y F CHAN  Senior Housing Manager / Applications 1
Mrs L W F LEUNG  Housing Manager / Management Policy (Estates & Areas)
Miss Patti HO  Assistant Committee Secretary / 3 (Recording Officer)

Representatives of the Federation of HK, KLN and NT Public Housing Estates
Resident and Shopowner Organization (the Concern Group)

Mr MAN Yu-ming
Mr WONG Wai-chung
The Honourable LAW Lai-kuen
Mr CHEUNG Kam-fuk
Ms HUI Po-chun
Mr YIU Cheuk-hung
Mr LO Ho-yin
Opening Address

The Chairman welcomed representatives of the Concern Group to the meeting and noted their submission (Annex).

Views of the Concern Group

2. Representatives of the Concern Group put forward their views as follows:

(1) At present, any study grants, scholarships and other education allowances were included in the income assessment for applicants of public rental housing (PRH) provided by the Housing Authority (HA). Considering that the provision of these grants and allowances was to ensure that students would not be denied proper education for lack of means while the award of scholarships was to encourage students to strive for excellent performance, the Concern Group maintained that the HA should disregard these benefits when assessing the household income, as what the Housing Society had been doing. They added that the same exemption should also apply to overtime payment which was of a non-recurrent nature.

(2) According to the existing policy, PRH tenants could apply to have their spouses, children under 18 or dependent parents added to their tenancies. While addition of the spouse of one of the tenant’s married children was allowed, the other children of the tenant were required to move out upon marriage. The Concern Group opined that such a policy tended to encourage unauthorized occupation and create conflicts among family members as a result of overcrowded living conditions. They called for a revision of the existing policy to allow occupants sharing the accommodation to split from the tenancy and apply for other PRH units.

(3) The problem of overcrowding in PRH households remained serious. At present, there were about 25,000 families with a living density below 5.5m² per person, representing 4.5% of the PRH households in Hong Kong. As regards the eligibility criteria for overcrowding relief, no revision had been made since 1987. In view of a significant increase in the supply of public housing over the next two years, the Concern Group opined that the HA should take the opportunity to solve the problem of overcrowding in PRH households. Hence, they requested that:

(i) the quota for overcrowding relief be increased from 5,000 to 7,000 households per year;

(ii) the eligibility criteria for overcrowding relief be relaxed;

(iii) the priority for overcrowding relief be reviewed;

(iv) 50% of the quota for overcrowding relief be alloted to eligible households who would have to apply for transfer through a waiting list while the other 50% to households which were seriously overcrowded;
(v) overcrowded households be allowed to apply for relief by joining the Waiting List for PRH; and

(vi) overcrowded households be allocated an additional unit in accordance with the allocation standard, in small household developments where larger units were not available.

(4) In view of the fact that a number of vacant flats had been reserved to meet contingencies, the Concern Groups proposed that a portion of these vacant flats be allocated for overcrowding relief.

(5) Considering that it was wasteful to require outgoing PRH tenants to remove from their flats all self-installed fittings of which some might be brand new, the Concern Group proposed that subject to the consent of the new tenants, the HD should retain in the flats concerned those fittings that were in good condition so as to save on resources and reduce the time required for refurbishment. In addition, they urged the HD to strengthen its supervision of contractors to bring refurbishment works to consistently high standards.

Response of RHC Members and HD Representatives

3. In response, Members and HD Representatives made the following points:

(1) Though consideration must have been given to various factors by the HA when formulating its policies, Members agreed that it was necessary to put under review some policies which were formulated many years ago. The RHC therefore was going to hold a brainstorming session to make a comprehensive review of the existing PRH policies, during which the exclusion of bursaries and scholarships from income assessment would also be discussed.

(2) Members agreed that scholarships which served to encourage students to achieve excellent performance should not affect their eligibility for public housing. They also remarked that in reviewing the policy, the HA would take into account the practice of other public bodies.

(3) Owing to the shortage of 1-P rental units in the past, the HD accommodated singleton households with shared flats. Such singletons, whether principal tenants or not, were allowed to add their spouses, children under 18 or dependent parents to their tenancies upon marriage or family reunion. If occupants sharing the accommodation had originally acquired their PRH tenancy through one single application, their requests for additions, except those of the principal tenant, would not been granted.

(4) Applications for splitting were normally not accepted unless there were special or compassionate reasons for which the HD would consider individual cases on their
own merits.

(5) While agreeing that it was necessary to review the eligibility criteria for overcrowding relief for urban PRH households, Members considered it essential to ensure rational allocation of public housing resources to needy persons, including WL applicants and households affected by redevelopment and clearance operations.

(6) In respect of refurbishment for PRH flats, the HD had already issued internal instructions to its staff that fittings within the vacated flats might be retained. As it was the current practice to carry out refurbishment and allocation simultaneously on vacation of the flats, it would prolong vacancy if works could not commence until new tenants had been consulted. The HD had in recent years enlisted more contractors for refurbishment works so as to ensure quality despite a shortened turn over period. Besides, the decreasing number of complaints in recent years showed that the quality of refurbishment works had been greatly improved. The HD would continue to strengthen its work in monitoring and handover inspection.

4. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

(Annexes in Chinese only)