

(Translation)

Motion on
“Urging the Government to amend the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance”
moved by Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG
at the Council meeting of 16 November 2016

Motion as amended by Hon CHAN Han-pan

That the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (‘Ordinance’) stipulates that the fire protection of composite and domestic buildings constructed on or before 1 March 1987 must be enhanced to better meet the requirements of the day; information shows that as at end of January 2016, the Administration has issued fire safety directions (‘directions’) to 5 453 buildings in total, among which only 339 buildings have fully complied with the directions or have been exempted from complying with the directions; persons who have received the directions indicated that, in their attempts to comply with the directions, they have encountered financial and engineering problems as well as operational problems of owners’ corporations of the buildings, etc., and with very limited support rendered by the Administration, they were fined or prosecuted for failing to comply with the directions; moreover, due to the shortage of contractors and relevant professional and technical personnel prepared to undertake fire safety works, tender prices of works are jacked up under a supply-demand imbalance, thereby increasing owners’ financial burden; in this connection, this Council urges the Administration to expeditiously amend the Ordinance to empower responsible persons of the Administration to, under urgent circumstances, carry out improvement works on fire service installations of buildings unable to comply with the directions and provide necessary assistance, enhance training for professional and technical personnel of fire safety works, and establish a ‘Building Management and Maintenance Authority’ to increase the transparency of tenders and attract more contractors to participate in bidding for fire safety works; moreover, as many buildings are ‘three-nil buildings’ which do not have owners’ corporations or residents’ organizations or are not managed by property management companies, and most of their owners and/or occupiers (including elderly and low-income persons) lack professional knowledge of property management and engineering techniques, the Administration should adopt the following measures to provide appropriate support to persons who are required to comply with the directions:

- (1) given that the existing Building Safety Loan Scheme, Integrated Building Maintenance Assistance Scheme, Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Elderly Owners and Building Management Professional Advisory Service Scheme provide limited assistance to persons who are

required to comply with the directions, the Administration should, by making reference to the Operation Building Bright, launch an 'operation for fire safety improvement' to provide eligible persons with subsidies as well as professional advice and technical support on aspects of engineering techniques, property management, etc.; and

- (2) taken into account that the building design of quite a considerable number of old buildings has made it impossible to retrofit modern fire service facilities, such as the installation of standard water tanks for automatic sprinkler systems, and the improvement of fire service installations may involve the issue of ownership, the Administration should adopt a more flexible approach and exercise discretion in handling cases with practical difficulties, including enhancing the 'Pilot Scheme on Improvised Hose Reel System' to increase the number of scheme places, and where technically feasible, extending the coverage of the scheme from the current three-storey buildings to those of six or fewer storeys, so that the hose reel systems of more buildings may obtain water from town mains direct.