

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)149**

**(Question Serial No. 0253)**

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 (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Please provide information on the following:

- (a) the expenditure and manpower for taking forward the Private Columbaria Bill and implementing the licensing scheme for private columbaria upon commencement of the legislation;
- (b) given the Government's previous assessment that there could be a large number of cases in which temporary storage at public temporary niches is required for ashes originally stored at private niches upon commencement of the Private Columbaria Ordinance, details of the existing public temporary niches, including their locations, quantities, fees and application procedures or eligibility criteria.

Asked by: Hon Steven HO Chun-yin (Member Question No. 20)

Reply:

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) will set up a "Regulation of Private Columbaria Branch" (RPCB) to deal with the preparatory work for taking forward the Private Columbaria Bill and implementing the licensing scheme for private columbaria upon commencement of the legislation. The new RPCB comprises the Licensing Board Secretariat, the Licensing Team and the Enforcement Team, involving about 50 posts, out of which seven posts will be redeployed from the existing staff establishment. This involves an additional annual recurrent staff cost of about \$24 million.

The Department provides service for temporary storage of cremains in all its crematoria free of charge in the first two months following cremation. The duration may be extended upon application at a monthly fee of \$80. The applicant is required to complete and submit the relevant application form not less than 14 days prior to the intended storage date to one of the FEHD Cemeteries and Crematoria Permit Offices.

The Department at present has a total of about 23 000 temporary urn storage spaces at Kwai Chung Crematorium and Wo Hop Shek Columbarium (Phase III & Phase V). An additional 28 000 temporary urn storage spaces will be made available at the old Kwai Chung Crematorium, vacant staff quarters at Cape Collision Crematorium and the Hong Kong Cemetery by stages from Q2 2016 to Q2 2017. In other words, the total number of temporary urn storage spaces will be increased to more than 50 000 in the coming year. Meanwhile, we are exploring the feasibility of increasing temporary storage spaces in other venues.

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