

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)274

(Question Serial No. 6740)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses
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:

With regard to the operation of the licensed undertakers, please advise this Committee on the following:

- (a) the number of licensed undertakers and the districts in which they were located in the past 3 years;
- (b) whether the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) conducted any inspections of the undertakers in the past 3 years; if yes, the number of inspections and the number of undertakers who were found to have breached the licensing conditions, each year as well as the details of the follow-up actions on non-compliance cases; if not, the reason(s); and
- (c) whether the Department will allocate resources in 2017-2018 for enhancing inspections of licensed undertakers to prevent over-storage or long-term storage of cremains by undertakers, lest their operation turn into that of columbaria causing crowds to gather to pay tribute to their ancestors; if yes, the details; if not, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (Member Question No. 240)

Reply:

- (a) There were 112, 113 and 121 licensed undertakers of burials in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively. The distribution of these licensed undertakers of burials by district is as follows -

| District | No. of Licensed Undertakers of Burials | | |
|------------------------|--|------------|------------|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| Hong Kong | | | |
| Central & Western | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Wan Chai | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Eastern | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Southern | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | 7 | 6 | 9 |
| Kowloon | | | |
| Yau Tsim | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| Mong Kok | 10 | 11 | 15 |
| Sham Shui Po | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kowloon City | 59 | 58 | 58 |
| Wong Tai Sin | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Kwun Tung | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | 79 | 80 | 84 |
| New Territories | | | |
| Kwai Tsing | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tsuen Wan | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tuen Mun | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Yuen Long | 12 | 12 | 13 |
| North | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Tai Po | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Sha Tin | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Sai Kung | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Islands | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| Total | 112 | 113 | 121 |

- (b) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) conducts regular inspections to the premises of licensed undertakers of burials to ensure their compliance with licensing requirements and conditions as well as provisions in the Undertakers of Burials Regulation (Cap. 132CB). The number of inspections, nature of cases found to have breached licensing conditions, and the action taken against licensed undertakers of burials in the past 3 calendar years are as follows -

| Year | No. of Inspections Conducted | Non-compliance detected | | Follow-up Action | Remarks |
|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---|----------------------|---|
| | | No. | Nature | | |
| 2014 | 340 | 62 | The licensee or a manager nominated by the licensee was found not conducting the business in person at the licensed premises. | Verbal warning given | The irregularities were found rectified during follow-up inspections. |
| | | 25 | Register of the deceased's particulars was found not updated or not available for inspection. | Verbal warning given | |
| | | 6 | Licence was not available for inspection. | Verbal advice given | |
| | | 4 | Inspection record was not available for inspection. | Verbal advice given | |
| 2015 | 467 | 18 | The licensee or a manager nominated by the licensee was found not conducting the business in person at the licensed premises. | Verbal warning given | The irregularities were found rectified during follow-up inspections. |
| | | 7 | Register of the deceased's particulars was found not updated or not available for inspection. | Verbal warning given | |
| | | 1 | Failure to display licence inside the premises. | Verbal warning given | |
| | | 17 | Inspection record was not available for inspection. | Verbal warning given | |
| 2016 | 431 | 31 | The licensee or a manager nominated by the licensee was found not conducting the business in person at the licensed premises. | Verbal warning given | The irregularities were found rectified during |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| | | 2 | Register of the deceased's particulars was found not updated or not available for inspection. | Verbal warning given | follow-up inspections. |
| | | 2 | Failure to display licence inside the premises. | Verbal warning given | |
| | | 4 | Inspection record was not available for inspection. | Verbal warning given | |

- (c) In 2017-18, the Department will continue with its efforts to conduct inspection to licensed undertakers of burials to ensure their compliance with the licensing terms and conditions. Subject to the passage of the Private Columbaria Bill, a team of enforcement officers will be deployed to carry out inspection to premises suspected to be engaged in illegal private columbarium activities, and will take enforcement action when situation warrants.

- End -