



**Forum for immigration consultants who arrange for  
Mainlanders to view properties in Hong Kong**

(9 December 2009) The Estate Agents Authority (EAA) today held a forum on matters related to immigration consultants' or estate agencies' arranging for Mainlanders or foreigners to purchase properties in Hong Kong. During the forum, attendees were briefed on the relevant regulations and points to note when making such arrangements.

Attending the forum were some 30 participants, including representatives from a number of immigration consultants, estate agency companies, the Immigration Department, the Consumer Council as well as police officers from the Joint Financial Intelligence Unit. They had a useful exchange of views on the subject.

During the forum, the EAA introduced the definition of estate agency work, the EAA's licensing regime, and points to note when arranging for Mainlanders or foreigners to view properties in Hong Kong.

The EAA reminded the representatives from immigration consultants that they have to apply for a licence if they carry out estate agency work during the course of business. Otherwise, they may be liable for a criminal offence.

EAA Director of Operations Mr Anthony Wong said, "An increasing number of Mainland people are immigrating to Hong Kong through buying properties here. Immigration consultants have organised tours arranging for their Mainland clients to view properties in Hong Kong. Through this forum, the EAA wishes to explain clearly the laws and regulations immigration consultants must follow when they arrange for Mainlanders to



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view flats in Hong Kong, so as to protect consumers' interests.”

EAA Director of Regulatory Affairs and General Counsel Ms Eva Lau pointed out that under the Estate Agents Ordinance, save for some exceptions, any individual or company conducting estate agency work in Hong Kong has to hold a licence issued by the EAA. Estate agency work has a wide definition. It refers to any work done in relation to introducing to the client (including Mainlanders) a third person who wishes to sell or lease a property, subsequent negotiations, or any work done afterwards to effect the sale or lease of the property. Conducting unlicensed estate agency work is an offence and offenders are liable for a maximum fine of \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment.

At the forum, the Immigration Department explained the conditions of stay for visitors (including Mainland staff of immigration consultancies who come to HK as visitors), channels for reporting immigration offences and application procedures for an employment visa/entry permit.

The Consumer Council explained how Mainland and foreign purchasers of Hong Kong properties are protected by Hong Kong law and how to lodge a claim or complaint if they are dissatisfied with the sales practices. The Joint Financial Intelligence Unit briefed forum attendees on how immigration consultants can identify money laundering activities, management's responsibilities and the channels they can use to report such activities.

Mr Anthony Wong added that the EAA was concerned about immigration consultants who arrange for potential Mainland or foreign purchasers to view properties in Hong Kong and related activities conducted by estate agencies. He said the forum had enhanced



communication between the regulatory bodies and the participants, and strengthened the participating companies' understanding of the relevant laws. It had also increased their vigilance against money laundering activities, improved awareness of the importance of protecting consumers' rights, therefore consolidating Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre.

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EAA Director of Operations Mr Anthony Wong and Director of Regulatory Affairs and General Counsel Ms Eva Lau explain the relevant laws and points to note when arranging for Mainlanders or foreigners to view properties in Hong Kong at the forum.



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Attendees have a useful exchange of views on the subject.