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# Affluent tenants fear subsidy cut

The Government has been asked not to introduce a policy that will cause hardship to the more affluent tenants in public housing estates.

The message comes from tenants in Sau Mau Ping estate who fear that a new policy of reducing the Government subsidy to better off public housing residents will affect them.

The Secretary for Housing, Mr David Ford, said at a Legislative Council meeting last month that a Green Paper on well-off tenants is to be published.

It is expected to propose cuts in subsidies for wealthier families in the estates.

A Housing Authority committee studying the matter has discussed the problem of defining "rich tenants."

It has been reported that the committee has considered subjecting families to means tests over a period of five to seven years.

The committee has also considered a proposal that families who exceed a certain income level

should be encouraged to buy Home Ownership Scheme flats or pay higher rents if they opt to stay in public housing.

The proposals are worrying Sau Mau Ping estate residents who have been there for more than 10 years.

A spokesman for the residents, Miss Yip Fung-ming, said yesterday because public housing is a social service, it is inappropriate to introduce a policy that will unsettle more than 2.5 million public housing tenants.

"Being the agent of this social service, Government has the responsibility to maintain the steadiness of the construction and rent of public housing."

"And if an attempt to define rich public housing tenants would shake the social stability, Government should shoulder any consequence," she said.

Miss Yip said it was not true that the Govern-

ment subsidised public housing tenants heavily, because rents should be enough to meet management expenses and maintenance and redevelopment.

She said the 1983 statistics from the Census and Statistics Department showed that 70 per cent of families in public housing had a monthly income of less than \$6,000.

Also, most public housing tenants are manual workers and there has been no significant increase in their wages in the past five or six years, she said.

If the new policy on rich tenants brought a hefty rise in rents, some people might lose their homes.

Miss Yip said the Government should stabilise rents in private and public housing, speed public housing construction, raise profit tax to meet the extra construction costs, relax the income limit on public housing applicants to benefit more people, and avoid unsettling tenants in attempting to define rich tenants.