

Agents say draft law unworkable

By Clara Chan

REAL-ESTATE agents say they will be unable to provide technical information required under a proposed law aimed at regulating the quality of their service.

During a seminar yesterday, the chairman of the Hong Kong Real Estate Agencies Association, Stephen Ng, maintained they "in principle supported the measures".

But he said even the Land Registry did not require lawyers to provide information like floor area and permitted use of the property on sale.

"How can we know the information? If we could, we would have opened a small-scale surveying office."

Mr Ng added that even lawyers found it difficult to obtain the age of a property from the Land Registry.

"How can we, with less resources and money, find out information that the government doesn't have?" he asked.

Yesterday's seminar was attended by more than 200 estate agents and salespeople who blamed property owners for providing them with false information.

The acting Deputy Secretary of the Planning, Environment and Lands Branch, William Shiu, responded: "In the Land Registry and Rating and Valuation Department, one needs only to spend \$20-\$30 to check the information, and it doesn't take long either."

The agents also asked for the inclusion in the proposed law of a clause setting standard commissions for agents of at least 1 per cent of the value of the property from both the buyer and the owner.

But their suggestion was shot down by Consumer Council chief executive Pamela Chan.

"We should consider the consumers' interests," she said. "The unified commission will go against competition. To standardise it will also affect some small agents."