



落實空置稅 符港長遠利益

Proposed vacancy tax in line with long term interests of Hong Kong

原文

空置稅條例草案9月13日刊憲，獲得不同黨派支持，地產建設商會則認為，現時市況推空置稅會加劇樓價下調，呼籲政府暫緩。本港近期受本地反修例風波和中美貿易糾紛打擊，樓市的確出現回落跡象，但樓價調整幅度仍小，落實空置稅值得支持。面對社會深層次矛盾，地產商必須顧全大局，考慮社會整體和長遠利益，加快推售樓盤滿足市場需求，特區政府更積極考慮所有可以增加土地房屋供應的選項。

過去香港一直沒有政策規管發展商賣樓進度，私人樓宇建成後，發展商可以擠牙膏式分批出售，過程動輒以年計算。運房局數字顯示，本港空置一手樓數目由2013年3月底約4,000伙，增加至今年6月底突破1萬伙，是2008年以來最高水平，足見空置問題日益嚴重，是本港樓價居高不下的主要原因之一。

政府建議獲發入伙紙達12個月的一手樓須每年向

政府申報單位狀況，須繳交額外差餉，可加快發展商賣樓進度，提升樓市流轉的效率。不同黨派均支持開徵空置稅。從初步效果而言，空置稅條例一刊憲，各大發展商隨即爭相推盤清貨，可見對打擊囤積居奇確有效果。

發展商要求政府暫緩的理據，是近月本港樓市氣氛轉淡。但觀乎最新公佈的樓價指數，只是較上月累積下跌1%至2%，仍在高位徘徊。正如財政司司長陳茂波所指，這種有秩序的調整完全不是問題。如果因為樓價輕微回調，就暫緩空置稅，只會向市場釋放錯誤的信息，認為政府刻意推動高樓價政策，刺激樓市進一步上升。

事實上，香港樓價長期高居全球首位，國際公共政策顧問機構Demographia發表2018年全球樓價負擔能力報告，香港已經是連續第九年成為全球最難負擔的地方，樓價對家庭收入中位數比例進一步惡化，由2017年的19.4倍上升至20.9倍，即是說要不吃不喝不消費20.9年才能買樓，再次成為該調查歷

來最高水平。以全球而言，排在香港之後最難負擔城市為溫哥華以及悉尼，兩地樓價對入息中位數比例是12.6倍及11.7倍。香港是20.9倍，水平遠超其他城市。高樓價令市民的生活質素每況愈下，年輕人上樓艱難，導致民怨，已成為影響香港社會和諧穩定的「計時炸彈」。

特區政府更應該主動作為，壓抑過高的樓價，緩解社會矛盾。發展商不能只是在商言商，只顧業界的利益，更要考慮全社會的利益，對年輕人、對香港的未來負責。

除了私人住宅單位供應短缺，本港公營房屋亦缺6.7萬個單位。釋放土地、加快建屋不能再拖。日前有政黨建議政府引用《收回土地條例》，徵收土地興建公屋，獲得主流民意支持。行政長官林鄭月娥亦強調政府增加房屋供應的措施只會陸續有來，絕不走數。市民期待社會凝心聚力，用盡一切可行方法，滿足市民居住需求，建設宜居、快樂的香港。

（摘錄自香港《文匯報》社評14-9-2019）



政府將推動徵收房屋空置稅。 資料圖片

Q&A

1. 地政總署
2. 差餉物業估價署
3. 差餉
4. 地租
5. 土地註冊處

1. the Lands Department 2. the Rating and Valuation Department 3. rates 4. government rent 5. the Land Registry

Answer

譯文

The vacancy tax bill gazetted on 9-13-2019 has been well received by various political parties. However, the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong urged the government to withhold the bill, as they fear the move would add fuel to the fire amid the downward trend for property prices. Affected by the anti-extradition protests and the Sino American trade war, the local property market did show signs of downward adjustment. However, the extent of such an adjustment is still limited. The vacancy tax bill is still worthy of support. In the face of deep-rooted social conflicts, property developers must take account of the overall situation and the long-term interests of the society. Developers should speed up the pace of selling to meet market demands, and the SAR government should also proactively consider any options that could increase land and housing supply.

In the past, no measures have been put in place to regulate property developers' pace of flat sales. Like how toothpaste is squeezed out of the tube, private housing projects are often sold in batches, and it

could take years to complete the sales of a housing project. According to official data from the Transport and Housing Bureau, the number of vacant new flats has more than doubled in five years — from around 4,000 units in March 2013 to over 10,000 units in June 2019. This record high number since 2008 shows that the severe vacancy problem is one of the major culprits of the persistently high home prices.

The government proposes that the first-hand building with a 12-month occupation permit should be reported to the Government on an annual basis. Additional rates should be paid to speed up the progress of the developers selling the flats and enhance the efficiency of the property market. Different parties such as the DAB support the levy of vacant taxes. From the preliminary results, the vacant tax regulations were gazetted, and the major developers immediately rushed to release the goods. This shows that it is indeed effective in combating hoarding.

According to government proposals, property developers of first-hand private residential units with occupation permit is-

sued for 12 months or more must report annually to the government the status of these units. Special rates will be collected (if the units have not been rented out for more than six months). The proposed measure could speed up new flats' sales and enhance the efficiency of the property market's flow, and was well received among local political parties. As property developers scrambled to offload stock after the vacancy tax bill was gazetted, the new measure has proven to be effective in tackling land hoarding.

The rationale for property developers in asking the government to shelve the vacancy tax bill is that the property market in Hong Kong has turned weak in recent months. However, according to the latest property price index, there is only an accumulative drop of 1-2 per cent from the previous month. Home prices overall still remain high. As Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po said, the adjustment has been in an orderly manner, and is not a problem at all. If the vacancy tax bill is withheld just because of a slight adjustment in property prices, it will only send out a wrong signal to the market that the

government maintains a policy of high property prices, and is therefore deliberately pushing up property prices.

Hong Kong has long been the world's least affordable city in the world in terms of housing. In the 15th Annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey, Hong Kong was ranked the least affordable city in the world for the ninth year in a row. Average home prices rose from 19.4 times the gross annual median household income in 2017 to a record high of 20.9 times in 2018, meaning that it would take an average household 20.9 years to be able to afford an apartment if there were no other expenses. The house price-to-income ratio of the next two least affordable cities around the world after Hong Kong, namely Vancouver and Sydney, are 12.6 and 11.7 respectively. At 20.9, the ratio of Hong Kong is way higher than its counterparts. With the persistently high property prices, the quality of life of the Hong Kong people has been deteriorating, and Hong Kong's youth has found it nearly impossible to own a home. The resultant social discontent has now become a ticking time

bomb that adversely affects the social harmony and stability of Hong Kong.

The SAR government should take a more active stance to bring down the property prices in order to ease the conflicts in our society. Meanwhile, property developers should not only consider their industry's business interests, but also the interests of the whole society. They should also be responsible for our young people and the future of Hong Kong.

Apart from private residential units, there is also a shortfall of 67,000 public housing units in Hong Kong. There is no time to lose in releasing land for housing. A Recent suggestion from local political parties that called for the government to invoke the Lands Resumption Ordinance to take back hoarded lands for public housing has been well received by the public. The Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor has also promised that the government's measures to tackle housing shortage will keep coming. It is hoped that the society will come together to do whatever it takes to fulfil every Hong Kong citizen's living needs, and build a more liveable and happier Hong Kong.

字句意義多變 靠背誦難掌握

明師語趣

上課時，我給學生做「短語動詞」（Phrasal Verbs）練習。以下為其中一句：

The plane will take _____ soon.

答案是 off，整句意思是：「飛機將要起飛。」一名學生提出，off 不是指「關掉」嗎？為何和飛機有關？

原來她把句子裡的「take off」與「turn off」混淆。她以前學過「turn off the light」（把燈關掉），所以一直只懂 off 代表「關掉」。The plane will take off 雖然也有 off，但意思完全不同，她從來沒有聽說過。

這件事反映了一個問題：同學在過去的英文課上，記憶點似乎只在單字，忽略了單字在不同句子、不同情況的運用，不知單字與其他字詞配搭成為一個句節（phrase）後，可衍生不同意思。我聽過不少大專同學憶述中小學學習英文的方法，不少人說要背誦生字，應付默書考試。然而背誦過程往往死板，像 1 + 1 = 2 一樣，on = 開，off = 關，碰上稍為變化的句子或字詞配搭，腦海中單一的「公式」便無法應對。因此，學生總對眼前的句子或文章不明所以。

沒錯，學習語言固然從記憶單字開始。在幼兒階段，我們都學過 A for apple B for boy，裡面也涉及一種「背誦」。然而，如果永遠停留在背誦單字的階段，你學到的只會很有限。有些人說，那連相關短語都背了

吧。但試想，一個 off 都變化萬千，turn off 是關掉，take off 是起飛，get off 是下車，off-balance 是失平衡，還有語句如「Off she goes!」中的 off 卻是「啟程」或「遠去」。如果要背，又背得了多少？

與其背誦，倒不如「接觸」。說到底，學生不懂 turn off 和 take off 的分別，是因為接觸英語太少，很多日常情況的說法都不認識。要尋求進步，我有兩個建議：第一，不要只學單字，要認識句節（phrases）和句子（sentences）。好像以上的 off，和很多其他字一樣，我們要知道的，不是一個單一的解釋，而是它與不同短語如何配搭成多元的意思。第二，正因為意思和情境多元，我們需要的更不是徒勞的背誦，而是日常對英語的接觸、累積和浸淫。我們應多從日常生活觀察，例如留意英文廣播、電影字幕、廣告標語等，增加對英語的接觸面，再逐步嘗試閱讀簡單文章。在長期累積下，就會吸收很多慣常用語，掌握千變萬化的情境，即使沒有刻意背誦，也能與人流利溝通。



■Take off 解作起飛，off 配不同的字，就會有不同的意思。 資料圖片

流行歷史

上回介紹過 19 世紀英國城市下層階級的慘況，惡劣的居住環境、食物和水，永無止境的工作，看不到希望和改善的機會，大概只能說他們是「生存」而不是「生活」。不過，這卻是工業化初期的必經階段，因為經濟和社會的改變，使貧富不均的問題日益嚴重。這回我們會介紹同一時代中層階級生活，這些人的職業包括教師、軍警、醫生、律師、工程師等，相當於《美麗新世界 1800》中第四級的居民——工程師。他們的生活質素比下層階級好多少呢？

• 食

相較於下層階級，中層階級的食物種類和分量都較多，但晚餐仍然從簡，通常有紅茶、蛋糕、牛油、果醬，有時會改吃芝士通心粉、鳳尾魚多士，或者是布丁和芝士。若果家中小孩在晚餐前已覺肚餓，會在晚餐前給他們一杯紅茶、小量蛋糕或者是牛油麵包。雖然相比下層家庭已改善了不少，但還是無法負擔天天有菜有肉。

• 住

住屋方面，很少中層階級能夠「上車」，大部分人都是租屋住，租期為三年到七年不等。情況與香港一樣，因土地問題，房屋建得又高又窄，大多樓高四層、共七八間房。第一層有一半在地面水平線以下，這層有多個區域，大門口是用作收貨收信的入口大廳，另有僕人工作區，如洗碗區、儲藏室、廚房，也有家人使用的飯廳、讀書室 / 圖書室。如果主人是從事醫務或法律工作，也會在這層接待來客。第二層是給家人



■《美麗新世界 1800》以 19 世紀的英國為背景。

遊戲截圖

使用的休閒及娛樂的房間；第三層有育嬰房、小孩睡房、夫婦套房及更衣室；第四層是僕人的睡房及大儲藏室。

• 工作

維多利亞的中層階級相信只要辛勤工作，他們便可以得到財富和社會地位，這些東西在舊時代都是由貴族所壟斷，而中層階級的目標就是要取代這些貴族的地位。他們從事多種工作，從公共服務的軍公教，到民間企業的文員、裁縫，或者成為專業領域的一員，例如醫生、律師。

以當時的銷售員為例，工作由早上 8 時開始，但之前已要到店內拆拆貨物的包裝和清潔櫥窗，再吃一塊牛油麵包，便要開始一天的工作。之後就是貨物上架，裝飾擺設，然後一直工作到晚上 8 時半，才完成一天的工作，工作時間足足 12 小時以上，當然不用想什麼加班費還是補貼。辛勤工作一天後，晚餐就吃牛油麵包、芝士和一杯小小的啤酒。

作為僱主的一群，工作沒有比員工輕鬆很多，不但工作時間完全一樣，還得經常跟學徒吃一樣的東西。賺到更多錢，但也承受着風險，以及承擔對家庭和員工的責任。

中層階級在社會上各領域辛勤工作，為國家帶來各方面的進步和活力，有人將他們評價成「他們使得橋樑和道路出現」，這一點都不為過。

另一方面，他們透過辛勞工作為自己帶來財富和名望，也真正挑戰貴族流傳下來的固有權威。

總括來說，中層階級就是比上不足比下有餘，每天辛勤工作希望能向上爬的一群人：雖然工時長，但不管是工作環境，還是薪酬待遇都比下層階級好得多，至少不會時刻受到生命威脅；雖然沒辦法大魚大肉，但至少三餐不愁沒飯開；沒錢上車但也不需住劏房。

下一回我們再來介紹人人都夢想爬上去的上流社會生活。

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星期一

• 通識博客（一周時事聚焦、通識把脈）
• 百搭通識

星期二

• 通識博客 / 通識中國

星期三

• 中文星級學堂
• STEM 百科啓智

星期四

• 通識文憑試摘星攻略

星期五

• 文江學海