

Yekaterinburg authorities had dialogue with residents on church before Putin said poll needed - Peskov



The Yekaterinburg authorities' decision to survey local residents on the issue of church construction following Russian President Vladimir Putin's reaction cannot be regarded as an indication of their inefficiency.

"The local authorities conducted dialogue with residents of Yekaterinburg before the president's statement. It's just that the president worded it more clearly and in this case they as the regional administration took heed of his opinion," Russian presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov said. Peskov had been asked by locals whether the survey of residents ordered following Putin's statements on the situation concerning the construction of a church in central Yekaterinburg indicates that the local authorities have turned out to be unable to resolve the region's problems independently.

"It seems to me it would be wrong to say that the authorities are inefficient based on that," he said.

Responding to a follow-up question as to whether it seems to the Kremlin that the

president's intervention is a transition to manual governance, the presidential press secretary said: "The president didn't intervene. Journalists asked him and the president commented; he talked to the journalists. They asked him a question and he did not intervene on his own initiative."

Peskov said he believes the words about the president's intervention in Yekaterinburg constitute "fact-rigging."

Decisions on whether a referendum or poll needs to be conducted on the issue of the church's construction should be made by the regional authorities, he said.

"It's their prerogative. The Kremlin cannot make a decision here," Peskov said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that a church is meant to unite rather than divide people. In this regard, "some steps are needed to resolve this issue for the benefit of those people who actually reside there," he said.

"There is an easy way, which is to hold a poll, and those in the minority must give way to the majority. That's the principle of democracy. But at the same time, we do have to take into account the opinion and interests of the minority," Putin said.

The Yekaterinburg City Hall said it intends to hold an independent poll, which begins on Friday.

Unauthorized protests against the construction of St. Catherine's Church in the park on Oktyabrskaya Square in the center of Yekaterinburg began on May 13. Dozens of protesters have been detained. A total of 30 people have been arrested.

— Source: [Interfax](#)