

**Replies to questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the
Draft Estimates of Expenditure 2001-02**

**[Bureau Secretary/Controlling Officer : The Ombudsman]
[Session No. : 18]**

Bureau Serial No.	Question Serial No.	Member	Head	Programme
<u>OMB001</u>	0294	NG Leung-sing	114	Complaints Administration
<u>OMB002</u>	0664	HO Sau-lan	114	Complaints Administration

Bureau Serial No.

OMB001

Question Serial No.

0294

Examination of draft Estimates of Expenditure 2001-02
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
WRITTEN/SUPPLEMENTARY WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 114 – Office of The Ombudsman

Programme : Complaints Administration

Controlling Officer : The Ombudsman

Bureau Secretary : ---

Question : The provision for the Office of The Ombudsman in 2001-02 is \$47.5m (80%) higher than the revised estimates for 2000-01. What are the expenses arising from the payment of contract gratuities, fringe benefits and cash allowances to non-civil service contract staff employed to replace seconded civil servants? How many non-civil service contract staff will be recruited and how many seconded civil servants will be replaced?

Asked by : The Honourable NG Leung-sing

Reply : The 2001-02 estimates were drawn up on the basis that the Office would operate with existing level of financial provision. The 80% increase in provision is for expenses that are required to support the operation of the Office but were hitherto not reflected in Head 114. These “hidden” expenses which were not under The Ombudsman’s direct control include the pension and fringe benefits payable to seconded civil servants, office rental and central support services provided by the Government. No provision is included into the 2001-02 estimates for additional staff.

About 58% of the “additional” provision for 2001-02 represents the pension and fringe benefits payable to seconded civil servants currently serving in the Office. This provision will be used to pay for contract gratuities, fringe benefits and cash allowances of the contract officers recruited to replace the civil servants.

The remaining 42% of the “additional” provision are for meeting the office rental and support services as well as the acquisition of the Office’s own financial and administrative systems. Provisions for these have hitherto been provided under different heads of expenditure controlled centrally by the Government.

At present, there are 78 civil servants in the Office. Our plan is to replace all these civil servants by stages within the 2001-02 and 2002-03 financial years. A phased withdrawal plan is necessary to ensure that the operation of the Office will not be disrupted.

Signature	_____
Name in block letters	Alice Tai
Post Title	The Ombudsman
Date	19 March 2001

Bureau Serial No.

OMB002

Question Serial No.

0664

Examination of draft Estimates of Expenditure 2001-02
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
WRITTEN/SUPPLEMENTARY WRITTEN QUESTION**

Head : 114 – Office of The Ombudsman

Programme : Complaints Administration

Controlling Officer : The Ombudsman

Bureau Secretary : ---

Question : It is indicated in the Draft Estimates that there will be a phased replacement of seconded civil servants by contract staff. Will the Administration inform us :

- (a) How many seconded civil servants were on the staff of the Office of The Ombudsman in 1999 and 2000 respectively? What were their main duties?
- (b) How many contract staff posts will be created as a result of the estimated 80% increase in expenditure? and
- (c) How long does the Office of The Ombudsman expect it would take to achieve complete independence?

Asked by : The Honourable Cyd HO Sau-lan

Reply : (a) There were 79 civil servants in the Office on 31 March 1999 and 31 March 2000. As at today, the number is 78. About one-third, i.e. 27, are directly involved in complaints investigation. The remaining are involved in providing various administrative and supporting services as well as conducting the Office's community relation and publicity work.

- (b) The 2001-02 estimates were drawn up on the basis that the Office would operate with existing level of financial provision. The 80% increase in provision is for expenses that are required to support the operation of the Office but were hitherto not reflected in Head 114. These “hidden” expenses which were not under The Ombudsman’s direct control include the pension and fringe benefits payable to seconded civil servants, office rental and central support services provided by the Government. No provision is included into the 2001-02 estimates for additional staff. Our plan is to replace all 78 civil servants currently serving in the Office within the years 2001-02 and 2002-03.
- (c) Starting from 1 April 2001, the Office will operate under its own administrative and staffing systems. We shall seek amendments to the Ombudsman Ordinance within the next couple of months to enable the Office to operate completely independent of the Administration.

The Office has already started its recruitment programme. The plan is to replace all serving civil servants seconded to the Office by phases within the years 2001-02 and 2002-03. The Office has formulated a phased withdrawal plan for this purpose. To ensure that the operation of the Office is not affected, the timing of the plan is not rigid and will be adjusted as and when suitable candidates become available to take up appointment.

Signature	_____
Name in block letters	Alice Tai
Post Title	The Ombudsman
Date	19 March 2001