

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services**

**Commitment for the Fight Against SARS**

**PURPOSE**

This paper reports on the funding position of the \$700 million commitment created for the fight against the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

**BACKGROUND**

2. On 31 March 2003, the Legislative Council Finance Committee (FC) approved the creation of a new commitment of \$200 million to provide additional funds for the fight against SARS. The commitment is to provide additional funding to the Hospital Authority (HA), the Department of Health (DH) and other bureaux/departments for the treatment of SARS patients, and to step up infection control and public health education. On 18 July 2003, FC approved an increase of the commitment by \$500 million to \$700 million, having regard to the committed and estimated funding requirements up to July 2003 and the need to make necessary preparations for the possible resurgence of SARS this Winter. In our submission to FC, we indicated that we might need to seek Members' approval to further increase the commitment depending on need.

3. As stated in our submission to FC, the commitment is administered by the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB). Government departments and HA in need of additional funding support to cope with the workload/activities associated with the fight against SARS need to file an application with HWFB. They are required to fully justify their funding requirements in their applications which are rigorously scrutinised by HWFB. The Secretary for Health, Welfare and

Food (SHWF) approves the applications having regard to their relevance to the scope of the commitment and their relative priority.

## **PRESENT FUNDING POSITION**

4. As at 30 November 2003, SHWF has approved a total of \$449.8 million under the commitment for the fight against SARS. This sum of funds can be accounted for as follows –

- (a) \$383.2 million was allocated to HA to meet its additional expenditure incurred up to June 2003 for recruiting some 1 080 additional healthcare and other staff; procuring 29.8 million pieces of mask and other protective items; procuring drugs and essential medical equipment; conducting rapid diagnostic tests and other laboratory tests; and stepping up cleansing and disinfection at public hospitals;
- (b) \$56.3 million was allocated to DH to meet its additional expenditure incurred up to July 2003 for implementing the enhanced port health measures, home confinement and isolation arrangements; performing tests on the confirmation of SARS infection; running a hotline service; and carrying out public health education programmes to enhance public understanding of the disease and their awareness of the precautionary measures needed;
- (c) \$10 million was allocated to the Government Logistics Department, Information Services Department, Constitutional Affairs Bureau and Health, Welfare and Food Bureau to cope with various activities relating to the fight against SARS, such as the procurement of daily necessities for use in isolation camps and temporary quarters for frontline medical staff and the production of public education material; and
- (d) \$0.3 million was allocated to the Auxiliary Medical Service, Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, Fire Services Department and Hong Kong Police Force to meet the payments of special recuperation grant to a total of seven civil

servants / public officers working in their departments who have infected with SARS while on duty.

5. Pending finalisation of the detailed funding applications, we have reserved a total sum of \$200.8 million under the commitment to meet the additional expenditure incurred for the treatment of patients, strengthening of infection control including the facility improvement works conducted on an emergency basis during the SARS outbreak at public hospitals and to cover the expenditure incurred on the provision of temporary quarters to frontline medical staff during the SARS crisis.

6. A detailed breakdown of the provision approved / reserved under the commitment to meet the additional expenditure incurred up to July 2003 is at Annex. As at 30 November 2003, the uncommitted balance of funds under the commitment stands at \$49.4 million.

## **OTHER EXPENSES**

7. While the SARS outbreak in Hong Kong was brought under control in less than four months, there is still much work to be done in the near future within the public health sector. For example, we need to maintain a high level of vigilance against the possible resurgence of SARS. In this connection, the Government is committed to continuing the enhanced port health measures to forestall the import of SARS cases from abroad until at least mid-2004. Public hospitals have put in place robust infection control measures during the SARS outbreak. These will have to be maintained for some time yet in view of the potential risk of SARS. In addition, we will need to follow up the recovered SARS patients and provide medical assistance where necessary. We are critically reviewing the extent to which the uncommitted balance will suffice to enable the HA and Government to meet legitimate calls for public resources for the coming months. We will also endeavour to meet the necessary expenditure from other existing resources. If necessary, we may have to invite FC to consider a further increase in the commitment.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

8. Members are requested to note the latest funding position for the fight against SARS.

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau  
December 2003**

**Funding Approved under the Commitment to meet  
Additional Expenditure incurred in the Fight against SARS up to July 2003**

**Funding Approved**

<b>Department / Organization and Purpose</b>	<b>Amount \$ Million</b>
<b>Hospital Authority (HA)</b>	
To meet additional expenditure on the following items up to June 2003 –	
(a) Recruitment of 1 081 additional staff and payment of leave encashment / additional allowances	27.4
(b) Procurement of 29.8 million pieces of surgical masks and N95/N100 respirators, and other protective items such as disposable gowns, eye shields, face shields and goggles	150.8
(c) Drugs such as ribavirin, steroid, antibiotics and immunoglobulin, and diagnostic services (including laboratory tests and radiological examinations)	50.3
(d) Procurement of essential medical equipment (including 181 ventilators to assist critically ill patients to breathe, 220 physiologic monitors to monitor the vital signs of severely ill patients, 261 pulse oximeters to monitor patients' blood oxygen saturation level, 824 infusion pumps for intravenous infusion and 19 mobile X-ray machines)	88.4
(e) Enhanced outreach support to elderly care homes	10.0
(f) Miscellaneous (including hospital supplies, medical consumables, consultancy and research fees for Chinese medicine services, transfer of infirmary patients to convalescent institutions)	56.3
<i>Sub-total (HA) :</i>	383.2
<b>Department of Health (DH)</b>	
To meet additional expenditure on the following items up to July 2003 -	
(a) Port Health Measures (including staffing support from AMS/CAS, printing and distribution of health declaration forms, and procurement of temperature measuring devices and equipment)	32.7
(b) Home Confinement & Isolation Arrangements (including additional cost for managing the isolation camps and Designated Medical Centres, and procurement of masks and other protective gear for use by staff in operations)	14.6
(c) Laboratory support to HA in performing tests for the confirmation of SARS infection	4.1
(d) Public Health Education Programmes	4.9
<i>Sub-total (DH) :</i>	56.3
	<b>\$ Million</b>

<b>Department / Organization and Purpose</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Information Services Department</b> Publicity programmes to raise public awareness on the prevention of SARS	3.5
<b>Government Logistics Department</b> Procurement of daily necessities for use in isolation camps and temporary quarters for frontline medical staff	6.2
<b>Constitutional Affairs Bureau</b> Arranging a chartered flight to bring home a quarantined Hong Kong tour group from Chinese Taipei	0.2
<b>Auxiliary Medical Service / Electrical and Mechanical Services Department / Fire Services Department / Hong Kong Police Force</b> Special recuperation grant to civil servants / public officers (not working in HA) infected with SARS while on duty	0.3
<b>Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)</b> Commission the University of Hong Kong to produce a report on Epidemiological and Modelling Study on SARS Epidemic	0.1
<b>Total amount of funding approved (I) :</b>	<b>449.8</b>