

**Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee
Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08**

**Controlling Officer : Director of Administration/Director of Legal Aid
Session No. : 7**

Reply Serial No.	Question Serial No.	Name of Member	Head	Programme
S-CSO01	SV007	CHOY So-yuk	142	CSO – Administration Wing
S-CSO02	SV010	NG Margaret	142	Subvention: Duty Lawyer Service, Legal Aid Services Council
S-CSO03	SV006	NG Margaret	94	Litigation Services

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-CSO01

Question Serial No.

SV007

Head: 142 – Government Subhead (No. & title):
Secretariat: Offices of the
Chief Secretary for
Administration and the
Financial Secretary

Programme: (3) CSO - Administration Wing

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question :

At the request of Hon. CHOY So-yuk, the Administration agreed to provide the following information:

- (a) details of meetings held by the Council for Sustainable Development in 2006-07, including the number and dates of meetings and the efficacy of the work of the Council in promoting sustainable development; and
- (b) given that children born in Hong Kong whose parents were not Hong Kong permanent residents would also be eligible for the proposed child development fund, whether the Administration had assessed the implications of including these children under the fund and whether the resources earmarked for the fund would be sufficient to meet the additional expenditure incurred?

Asked by: Hon. CHOY So-yuk

Reply:

- (a) In 2006-07, the Council for Sustainable Development held two meetings for the full Council (2 May and 17 November 2006), two meetings for the Strategy Sub-committee (6 April and 5 October 2006), three meetings for the Education and Publicity Sub-committee (11 April, 15 September and 28 November 2006), three meetings for the Support Group on Population Policy (14 September, 7 December 2006 and 15 January 2007), two meetings for the Study Group on Better Air Quality (7 and 21 April 2006), and five meetings for the Support Group on Better Air Quality (14 December 2006, 31 January, 12, 13 and 15 February 2007).

In 2006-07, the Council continued its efforts in engaging the public in the formulation of long-term sustainable development strategies for Hong Kong. During the engagement process on Population Policy that took place from June to October 2006, the Council organised three regional forums, five regional workshops and 15 engagement events together with partner organizations. The Council hosted a Strategy Summit on 20 December 2006 as a finale to wrap up the engagement process. During the process, the Council received over 3,000 responses from the community. There were over 1,700 attendances at various engagement events, and another 20,000 members of the public visited the roving exhibitions that toured around ten public locations during the same period.

The Council promotes the concept and practice of sustainable development through awarding grants from the \$100 million Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). So far, 18 projects have been approved, involving total grants of \$14.5 million.

The Council has also continued to reach out to the general public and students through its School and Community Outreach Programmes. During 2006-07, 45 school visits, involving over 12,000 secondary school teachers and students, were arranged under the School Outreach Programme. Under the Community Outreach Programme, three activities were co-organised with District Councils and SDF recipients in 2006-07.

The Council has been working with stakeholder partners and SDF recipients in promoting the concept and principles of sustainable development to different sectors of the community, and in turn building up a critical mass of community participation and engagement in sustainable development endeavours. The Council will continue with its efforts to this end, in partnership with the community at large, to promote sustainable development in Hong Kong.

- (b) The Government keeps an open-mind on how best to make use of the additional resources to promote child development, and has not formed definitive views on the detailed operation of the fund.

In the past few months, the Commission on Poverty (CoP) has examined local and overseas experience in promoting child development, and supports setting aside additional resources for trial child development projects which target at the needs of children and youth from a disadvantaged background and help tackle intergenerational poverty.

The CoP considers that resources should be used in a targeted manner and should not overlap with the existing services and programmes. Currently, different kinds of services and programmes have been put in place to address the needs of children and their families, including those from a disadvantaged background, like providing financial support or funding extra-curricular activities. On the mode of operation of the fund, the preliminary view is to invite non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to apply for the fund to organise trial child development projects which encourage development of personal development plans for the disadvantaged children and help them to develop asset-building habits. The NGOs should also provide basic training and on-going guidance and mentorship to the children to achieve the targets in their personal development plans.

The CoP will further discuss the fund's detailed operation. The Government will also consult the Legislative Council on the detailed operation of the fund. We expect that the \$300 million earmarked for the fund should be adequate for supporting a range of trial child development projects during the first few years of its operation.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Miss Elizabeth Tse

Post Title Director of Administration

Date 23 March 2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-CSO02

Question Serial No.

SV010

Head: 142 – Government Subhead (No. & title):
Secretariat: Offices of the
Chief Secretary for 000 Operational expenses
Administration and the
Financial Secretary

Programme: (5) Subvention: Duty Lawyer Scheme, Legal Aid Services Council

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question : Regarding the Legal Advice Scheme, the Administration to provide a detailed breakdown of the expenditure allocated for the Scheme, as well as the operation of the Scheme (e.g. the service hours, the scope of advice provided, and changes, if any, made to the Scheme) in the past three financial years.

Asked by: Hon. NG Margaret

Reply: The actual expenditure of the Legal Advice Scheme (the Scheme) in the past three financial years is set out below. It covers honorarium for staff supporting the legal advice sessions –

	<u>2003-04 (\$)</u>	<u>2004-05 (\$)</u>	<u>2005-06 (\$)</u>
Actual expenditure	531,045	443,549	444,120

The decrease in the actual expenditure in 2004-05 when compared with that of 2003-04 is attributable to the following –

- (a) instead of deploying dedicated typists to the Legal Advice sessions conducted by the volunteer lawyers, the Head Office of Duty Lawyer Service (DLS) has since 2004-05 absorbed the typing work of four centres; and
- (b) the rates of honorarium payable to the supporting staff were reduced in line with the reduction in civil service salary.

Notwithstanding the cost savings, the number of cases handled under the Scheme has increased in recent years –

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
Number of cases under the Scheme	6036	6089	6407	6422

Concerning the operation of the Scheme, the nine Legal Advice centres run a total of ten sessions each week (eight centres run one session each week, and one centre runs two). The number of volunteer lawyers for each session ranges from two to four, totalling 31 lawyers per week. Each session starts at 6:25 pm and ends at around 8:30 pm. Depending on the circumstances, the duration may be longer. The scope of Scheme has remained the same over the past three financial years.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Miss Elizabeth Tse

Post Title Director of Administration

Date 23 March 2007

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

S-CS003

Question Serial No.

SV006

Head: 94 Legal Aid Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Litigation Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Legal Aid

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question: Regarding the Legal Aid Department, an explanation for the lower-than-anticipated expenditure on legal aid cases as reflected in the revised estimate for 2006-07, as well as the number of civil and criminal cases involved and the average expenditure per case.

Asked by: Hon. NG Margaret

Reply: Section 10 of the Legal Aid Ordinance stipulates that legal aid must be granted to any person who passes the means and merits test. It is therefore incumbent upon the Department to continue funding a case so long as the case has merits to ensure access to justice by the aided person. There are many different factors that might have caused the expenditure on legal aid cases to be lower-than-anticipated, including the nature, complexity and length of the cases concerned, and the willingness of the parties to settle. Moreover, it was apparent at the time when the revised estimate for 2006-07 was prepared that there was an obvious drop in the actual number of new and concluded cases for assigned out and in-house criminal cases and for in-house insolvency cases. Hence, the lower revised estimated provision as compared with the original estimate cannot be attributed to any specific group of civil and criminal cases.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Benjamin CHEUNG

Post Title Director of Legal Aid

Date 23 March 2007