
立法會秘書處

Legislative Council Secretariat

新聞稿 Press Release

LegCo to debate preventing the lower and middle classes from being trapped in hardship amid the financial tsunami

The Legislative Council will hold a meeting this Wednesday (November 5) at 11 am in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building. During the meeting, Members will debate a motion on preventing the lower and middle classes from being trapped in hardship amid the financial tsunami.

The motion, to be moved by Hon Albert HO, states: " That, as the free economy system of Hong Kong has caused the local economy to fluctuate with the external environment, the governance philosophy of a free market economy upheld by the Government also allows the disparity between the rich and the poor to persist for years in Hong Kong; the lower and middle classes are not able to benefit when the economy is growing and cannot save money or capital to fight against adversity, and the social security system is not comprehensive; as a result of the financial tsunami, the Hong Kong economy is now about to enter into recession and many people in the lower and middle classes may fall into hardship, which has become a major challenge to the Government's governance; while the Government has undertaken to fully support the financial and banking industries and take measures to support the small and medium enterprises, it should at the same time pay more attention to the impact of the financial tsunami on the lower and middle classes; this Council urges the Government to adopt various measures to protect the lower and middle classes from being trapped in hardship, including:

(a) setting up a special committee chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration to constantly monitor and assess the impact on the lower and middle classes when the Hong Kong economy is in times of financial crisis and to put forward corresponding measures;

(b) focusing on the over-reliance of the local economy on the financial and real estate sectors, developing eco-tourism and recycling industries etc, so as to create low-skilled jobs, and reduce the impact of the global financial conditions on the economy system of Hong Kong and its labour market;

(c) expeditiously implementing the 10 major infrastructure projects undertaken in the Policy Address of last year, accelerating the construction of infrastructures such as public housing estates and hospitals, expediting the redevelopment of old urban areas, repair and renovation of old buildings, inspection of buildings and removal of unauthorized building works, so as to expeditiously create employment opportunities to counteract the impact of the financial tsunami on the employment rate;

(d) promoting the development of social enterprises, assisting the disadvantaged in making effective use of social capital and creating employment opportunities through the improvement of legislation, funding allocation, training and education, and administrative support, etc, so as to alleviate the difficulties of the disadvantaged in seeking employment in times of economic recession; and

(e) strengthening the support to low-income families, including assisting the unemployed recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance in securing employment, creating temporary jobs in various sectors of social services, expanding the 'Transport Support Scheme' and extending the duration of subsidy, as well as expeditiously enhancing the food bank services, etc, so as to make up for

the inadequacies of the social security and employment protection systems."

Hon Tommy CHEUNG and Hon CHAN Kam-lam will move separate amendments to Hon Albert HO's motion.

Members will also debate a motion on old age allowance and universal retirement protection system. The motion, to be moved by Hon Fred LI, states: "That this Council reiterates that the Government should immediately increase the rates of the Old Age Allowance to not less than \$1,000 per month and fully adhere to the original intention of showing respect for the elderly, and should not introduce any new means test mechanism under the Old Age Allowance Scheme; at the same time, this Council urges the Government to commence studying the establishment of a universal retirement protection system to enable all elderly people to have comprehensive retirement protection and enjoy a dignified and comfortable life in their twilight years."

Hon Tommy CHEUNG, Hon WONG Sing-chi, and Hon TAM Yiu-chung will move separate amendments to Hon Fred LI's motion.

Meanwhile, Hon Mrs Regina IP will move a resolution under the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance to extend the period for amending the Employees Retraining Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 3) Notice 2008, laid on the table of the Legislative Council on 8 October 2008, to the meeting of 26 November 2008.

The Secretary for Food and Health will also move a resolution under the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance to amend the Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2008, laid on the table of the Legislative Council on 2 July 2008.

On bills, the Public Health and Municipal Services (Amendment) Bill 2008 will be introduced into the Council for

First and Second Readings. Second Reading debate on the bill will be adjourned.

During the meeting, Members will ask the Government 19 questions on various policy areas, six of which require oral replies. The agenda of the above meeting can be obtained via the Legislative Council InfoFax Service (Tel: 2869 9568) or the Legislative Council web site (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>).

Members of the public are welcome to observe the proceedings of the meeting from the public galleries of the Legislative Council Chamber. They may reserve seats by calling 2869 9399 during office hours. Seats will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. Members of the public can also listen to the meeting via the audio webcast system on the Legislative Council homepage.

Ends/Monday, November 3, 2008

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