

Legislative Council Secretariat

新聞稿 Press Release

Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council stresses the Committee's prudence in scrutinizing funding proposals

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Hon Emily LAU, Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (FC), when looking back on the work of FC in the current legislative session today (July 15), pointed out that in scrutinizing various government proposals in relation to "supporting enterprises, preserving jobs", FC members were eager to provide timely and effective measures to relieve the difficulties faced by enterprises and create job opportunities for different sectors on the one hand, and examine critically whether adequate mechanisms were in place to guard against abuse of public funds on the other.

Over the past year, Hong Kong experienced an economic downturn and persistent increase in the unemployment rate. To tie in with the relief measures proposed by the Administration, FC examined four funding proposals on the loan guarantee schemes for enterprises and two on Operation Building Bright, and those on the Internship Programme for University Graduates, as well as the enhanced and integrated employment and training programmes during the year.

Hon Emily LAU said that the economic downturn had added further burden to the disadvantaged groups. In this session, the Administration had put forward various funding proposals to assist them, such as creating a new commitment of \$100 million to provide short-term food assistance and increasing the rates of the Old Age Allowance under the Social Security Allowance Scheme to \$1,000 per month, etc. While supporting these funding proposals in general, FC members were particularly concerned whether the assistance and services could serve the intended purposes, and whether the needs of certain groups in the community might have been overlooked.

During the current legislative session, FC held a total of 31 meetings, examined and approved 67 individual financial proposal items, including those to implement a number of major infrastructure projects such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the West Island Line, and the Central-Wan Chai Bypass. The public works and infrastructure projects approved by FC

this year amounted to over \$126 billion. Hon Emily LAU considered these infrastructure projects important for the long-term development of Hong Kong and conducive to improving the employment situation.

When summing up, Hon Emily LAU said that under section 8 of the Public Finance Ordinance, proposals to change the approved Estimates of Expenditure must come from the Financial Secretary. FC members cannot amend the Financial Secretary's proposals. As such, members could only do their best to reflect their views to the Administration, in particular the aspirations of the public, hoping to convince the Administration to make appropriate amendments or arrangements to its proposals to ensure proper use of public funds. She stressed that as the FC Chairman, her responsibility was to enable members to obtain sufficient information as far as practicable and fully express their views before deciding whether a funding proposal should be approved. Policy issues or implementation details should be referred to the relevant Panels for discussion and follow-up.

Ends/Wednesday, July 15, 2009  
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