

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

HEAD 53 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT: HOME AFFAIRS BUREAU

Subhead 700 General non-recurrent

New item “Injection into the Cantonese Opera Development Fund”

Members are invited to approve a new commitment of \$69 million for injection into the Cantonese Opera Development Fund.

PROBLEM

After deducting the foreseeable commitments, the remaining balance of the Cantonese Opera Development Fund (CODF) will only be sufficient to meet the funding requirements for about one year. We need to make an injection into the CODF to enable it to continue sponsoring projects and activities relating to the study, promotion and sustainable development of Cantonese opera. In addition, this will provide room for greater support for the development of Cantonese opera in Hong Kong.

PROPOSAL

2. To further promote the development of Cantonese opera, the Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA) proposes to inject \$69 million into the CODF in 2010-11 to support more projects on the preservation, promotion and development of Cantonese opera.

JUSTIFICATION

Supporting the development of Cantonese opera

3. Cantonese opera is one of the important forms of Hong Kong’s traditional arts and culture. For many years, while the Cantonese opera sector has been making sustained efforts to foster the development of Cantonese opera, the Government has also been supporting the preservation, study, promotion and development of Cantonese opera in the following ways –

/(a)

- (a) developing performance venues for Cantonese opera;
- (b) nurturing Cantonese opera professionals, promoting creative works and preserving the traditions;
- (c) promoting Cantonese opera education, audience building and community participation;
- (d) fostering cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao to promote cultural exchange on Cantonese opera; and
- (e) preserving the essence of Cantonese opera and showcasing treasures of our cultural heritage.

Cantonese opera was officially inscribed onto the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on 30 September 2009.

4. There are three main sources of funding for developing Cantonese opera, namely direct or indirect recurrent support from the Government¹, the funding of works projects² and the CODF.

Objectives of the CODF

5. The CODF was set up to provide funding support to projects and activities relating to the study, promotion and sustainable development of Cantonese opera, which include –

/(a)

¹ In the 2010-11 financial year, we estimate that about \$31 million will be put into the preservation, promotion and development of Cantonese opera, including Cantonese opera programmes and promotional activities organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD); Cantonese opera performances and programmes funded by either the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) or the LCSD for the purposes of professional enhancement and training of budding artists, preservation and study on Cantonese opera heritage and materials as well as audience building; and Cantonese opera courses run by the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA). The above sum does not include funding granted by the CODF.

² We have separately submitted an application to the Finance Committee (FC) for funding approval of the proposed construction of an annex building at the Ko Shan Theatre, in addition to the Yau Ma Tei Xiqu Activity Centre. The total cost for these two projects is about \$870 million.

- (a) supporting those Cantonese opera performances which are experimental/creative or highly worthy of preservation;
- (b) sponsoring researches and studies, seminars, talks or workshops in relation to the development and preservation of Cantonese opera;
- (c) collecting, preserving, compiling or publishing literature on Cantonese opera in Hong Kong, Cantonese opera scripts or other related materials worthy of preservation, including oral history and audio-visual materials of Cantonese opera, etc.;
- (d) promoting and sustaining the development of Cantonese opera in the community and among the disadvantaged;
- (e) developing educational resources on Cantonese opera and Cantonese opera education programmes for schools;
- (f) building young audience and participants;
- (g) nurturing budding artists and sponsoring professional training programmes for Cantonese opera practitioners;
- (h) promoting visits and cultural exchanges on Cantonese opera, especially those cultural exchanges with the Mainland; and
- (i) supporting other new projects in sustaining and promoting the development of Cantonese opera.

Projects funded by the CODF

6. Since its establishment in 2005, the CODF has granted a total of about \$30 million to support some 300 Cantonese opera performances, professional training programmes, community promotional projects, arts education and cultural exchange programmes as well as research and archival projects, including –

- (a) supporting The University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Lingnan University and Theatre Action (organised by a lecturer of Baptist University) to embark on five projects on the translation of Cantonese opera scripts or synopses, so as to promote Cantonese opera to tourists by providing English-speaking audience with English synopses or subtitles;

/(b)

- (b) subsidising the “Cantonese Opera Advancement Course for Performers” organised by the Society of Continuing Education for Cantonese Opera Professionals to enhance the professional level of performers in the profession;
- (c) supporting the “Integrating Cantonese Opera with New Senior Secondary Chinese Language Curriculum and Assessment: A Seed Project” organised by the Centre for Advancement of Chinese Language Education and Research, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong;
- (d) supporting the “Cantonese Opera Promotion Scheme for Tertiary Institutions” organised by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology;
- (e) supporting an education pilot project on Cantonese opera carried out by the Music Division of the Department of Creative Arts and Physical Education in the Hong Kong Institute of Education;
- (f) supporting projects aimed at collecting, preserving, arranging or publishing literature on Cantonese opera in Hong Kong and other related materials worthy of preservation including “Six Decades of Cantonese Opera”, “Learning and Singing Cantonese Operatic Songs”, “A Life of Theatre – Cantonese Operatic Artist Leung Hoi-wai”, “The Legend of the San Yim Yeung Opera Troupe” (i.e. Fong Yim-fun’s biography) and “Oral History Series: Cantonese Operatic Artists of the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong”;
- (g) funding the “18 Districts Cantonese Opera Singing Contest” and the “Cantonese Opera Singing Contest”;
- (h) supporting various groups to promote Cantonese opera in schools by conducting 80 touring performances in primary and secondary schools; and
- (i) implementing the “Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Troupe for New Talent” three-year grant scheme from February 2008 to January 2011 to nurture local budding artists in Cantonese opera and develop talents for performing and non-performing work in a systematic manner through providing training and performance opportunities to raise their professional standards, thereby sustaining the development of Cantonese opera.

Proposed injection

7. At present, the uncommitted balance of the CODF is about \$17 million. The CODF plans to commit \$9 million for the “Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Troupe for New Talent” three-year grant scheme to nurture new Cantonese opera talents. After deducting the amount of grant required for this scheme, the remaining balance of CODF will only be sufficient to meet the funding requirements for about one year. Hence, the Government proposes to inject \$69 million into the CODF. Apart from providing further support to projects relating to the preservation, promotion, study and development of Cantonese opera as mentioned in paragraph 5 above, with the proposed injection, CODF can encourage and support more applications from the Cantonese opera sector and other organisations/individuals to cater for the long-term development of Cantonese opera. Moreover, the proposed injection will enhance the sustainable development of the CODF through the generation of revenue from prudent investments. We will consult the CODF Advisory Committee³ and its Executive Committee⁴ on the detailed plans for the future use of the CODF and the detailed investment arrangements.

Management and monitoring

8. To ensure proper use of its resources, the CODF has established the following mechanism to monitor sponsored projects –

- (a) after the completion of a project, a grantee is required to submit a report comprising self evaluation, opinion surveys of audience/participants or written comments by members of the sector, supporting documents of income and expenditure and records of activities (photos/videos, etc.);

/(b)

³ The CODF Advisory Committee advises the Trustee of the CODF generally on matters relating to the administration and management of the CODF including –

- (a) encouraging community support for the CODF;
- (b) formulating policies on the use, custody and investment of the CODF;
- (c) monitoring the operation of the CODF; and
- (d) reviewing the effectiveness of the researches, projects, services and other activities funded by the CODF.

⁴ The CODF Executive Committee advises the CODF Advisory Committee on specific matters including –

- (a) drawing up application procedures and the direction of funding;
- (b) drawing up guidelines for assessing applications and criteria for making allocations;
- (c) assessing applications as well as monitoring and evaluating the progress and effectiveness of projects funded by the CODF; and
- (d) assisting the Advisory Committee in encouraging community support for the CODF.

- (b) members of the CODF Executive Committee or staff of the Secretariat will attend the performances or other educational or promotional activities to assess the effectiveness of each sponsored programme against its objectives. If necessary, the Committee will invite other experts to assist in the assessment of projects involving research programmes or academic publications; and
- (c) grantees are required to use the funds granted in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the CODF and submit audit reports⁵. Any unused funds have to be returned to the CODF. Moreover, the CODF Secretariat will submit income and expenditure accounts of the CODF on a regular basis for inspection by the CODF Executive Committee. At the end of each financial year, the financial report of the CODF audited by the Audit Commission will be tabled at the Legislative Council (LegCo) along with the audited financial reports of other funds set up under the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporation Ordinance.

The CODF Advisory Committee and its Executive Committee will review the above monitoring mechanism from time to time, and suggest amendments if required.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. Subject to FC's approval, we will inject \$69 million into the CODF in 2010-11. The proposal will not give rise to recurrent financial commitments.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

10. The CODF Advisory Committee, the CODF Executive Committee and the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee (COAC)⁶ support the proposed injection into the CODF to provide further support for the projects on the preservation, promotion and development of Cantonese opera. The CODF Executive Committee and the COAC also support the continued implementation of a grant scheme similar to the "Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Troupe for New Talent" Scheme to nurture more budding artists with good potential.

/11.

⁵ For projects which have been granted funds of over \$100,000.

⁶ In May 2004, the COAC was set up by the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) to advise the SHA on policies and issues relating to the promotion, preservation, study and development of Cantonese opera.

11. We held a “Round-table Talk on the Development of Cantonese Opera” on 29 April 2010 to discuss the further development of Cantonese opera with the parties concerned. Participants of the event include individuals from various fields of the sector (such as Cantonese opera artists, troupe operators, playwrights, trainers and representatives of various organisations in the sector) as well as institutions or individuals involved (such as academics and representatives of the HKADC, the HKAPA and the Hong Kong Tourism Board) in the promotion of the development of Cantonese opera. They generally supported the Government’s proposed injection into the CODF and considered that further support for the development of Cantonese opera should be focused on areas such as enhancing professional training, nurturing budding artists, broadening the audience base, preservation and research (including playwriting). These views will be considered by the Government and the CODF Advisory Committee and its Executive Committee in formulating the details on the future use of the CODF.

12. We consulted the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs on 14 May 2010. Members supported the proposal.

BACKGROUND

13. The CODF was set up by the HAB in November 2005 pursuant to the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporation Ordinance (Cap. 1044). So far, the CODF has received a total of over \$47 million of funding, including over \$10 million from private donations, \$9 million from the Board of Management of the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries, \$7 million from the Chinese Temples Committee, \$15 million from the Sir Murray MacLehose Trust Fund, and an injection of \$5 million from the HAB.

14. In his 2010-11 Budget, the Financial Secretary announced that a sum of \$69 million would be earmarked for the proposed injection into the CODF to further preserve Cantonese opera as an art form.
