
立法會秘書處

Legislative Council Secretariat

新聞稿 Press Release

LegCo to debate a motion on reviewing public finances policies

The Legislative Council will hold a meeting this Wednesday (January 19) at 11 am in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building. During the meeting, Members will debate a motion on reviewing public finances policies.

The motion, to be moved by Hon Paul CHAN, states: "That in the Budgets of the HKSAR Government in recent years, there have been big discrepancies in the forecasts of government revenue, budget surpluses and fiscal reserves, resulting in the incessant accumulation of fiscal reserves, but there are no clear criteria on what an appropriate level of fiscal reserves should be; at the same time, there are substantial accumulations in the Exchange Fund year over year, and the Government has set up, in different forms (e.g. fund), quite a number of 'small vaults' and owns many valuable assets (e.g. the shares of the MTR Corporation Limited and the Airport Authority), and that the financial strength of the Government can be described as enormous; however, despite the sustained economic growth of Hong Kong in the past decade or so, quite a number of low-income earners and the grassroots are completely unable to enjoy the benefits, giving rise to the phenomenon of the poor getting poorer and even the emergence of 'three have-nots' and 'five have-nots' in the society; in the past, the Government usually adopted across-the-board and one-off measures to return part of the surpluses to members of the public, but the relevant measures lacked long-term policy objectives and specific focuses, resulting in those who need help finding the measures insufficient to address their needs, and those who do not need help simply treating the measures

as nice-to-haves and not caring at all; the increasing hardship of the livelihood of low-income persons has created social grievances and conflicts; with the Mainland's acceleration of full scale opening up and intensification of reforms as well as economic globalization, the economy of Hong Kong needs to be restructured, but the tax policy of Hong Kong has lagged behind the changes in business and competitive environment, thus threatening Hong Kong's competitiveness as an international financial, commercial and trade centre; moreover, Hong Kong's narrow tax base and the Government's over-reliance on land-related revenue poses the risk of instability to public finances; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth review of Hong Kong's policies and measures on taxation, social welfare and public finances, to clearly set an appropriate level of fiscal reserves, and to set up within the government structure a tax policy group with the employment of full-time tax experts to study the use of tax measures to dovetail with the Government's policies on economy and industries, upgrade Hong Kong's competitiveness as an international financial, commercial and trade centre, address the problem of poverty and eradicate social and economic inequalities."

Hon WONG Kwok-hing, Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che and Hon Ronny TONG will move separate amendments to Hon Paul CHAN's motion.

Members will debate a motion on improving primary health care. The motion, to be moved by Hon LEE Wing-tat, states: "That the World Health Organization affirms in the Declaration of Alma-Ata on primary health care published in 1978 that the definition of health is not merely about the absence of diseases, but also refers to the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and primary health care seeks to attain the target of health for all; however, the health care system in Hong Kong at present is still based mainly on disease treatment and prevention, with a serious shortage of resources for primary health care work, and primary health care work is mainly confined to primary medical care, thereby failing to attain the target of promoting health for all; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to take measures to give effect to the Declaration of Alma-Ata, including:

(a) to comprehensively improve primary health care and allocate additional resources for primary health care;

(b) to set up a fund for promoting primary health care reform;

(c) to formulate a co-ordination mechanism to facilitate full co-operation between relevant government departments and local organizations in making improvements in areas such as labour, education, housing, public facilities and food safety, etc., so as to promote public health;

(d) focusing on various areas of health, to set 'Healthy People 10-year Indicators' and formulate work plans for individual health indicators;

(e) to promote a campaign on healthy community and, through community organizations and government departments, mobilize community members to take part in planning and improving primary medical care in their communities, and fully utilize community resources to promote residents' health; and

(f) having regard to the health problems and needs of different population groups, such as elderly persons, women, men, working people, youth and children, to devise various strategies and services and increase resources allocation, with a view to enhancing health education and services for disease prevention and control."

Dr Hon Joseph LEE, Hon CHAN Hak-kan, Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou, Hon Miriam LAU, Hon Alan LEONG, Hon CHAN Kin-por and Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau will move separate amendments to Hon LEE Wing-tat's motion.

Hon Miriam LAU will move a resolution under the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance to seek the Council's approval to extend the period for amending the Minimum Wage (Criteria for Approved Assessors) Notice and the Minimum Wage (Assessment Methods) Notice, which laid on the table of the Legislative Council on 12 January 2011, to the meeting of 2 March 2011.

Meanwhile, the Secretary for Food and Health will move a resolution under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance to seek the Council's approval to the Pharmacy and Poisons (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulation 2010 and the Poisons List (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulation 2010, which were made by the Pharmacy and Poisons Board on 28 December 2010.

During the meeting, Members will ask the Administration 20 questions on various policy areas, six of which require oral replies.

The agenda of the above meeting can be obtained via the LegCo InfoFax Service (Tel: 2869 9568) or the LegCo website (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>). Please note that the agenda is subject to change, and the latest information about the agenda could be found in the LegCo website.

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 web broadcast system on the Legislative Council homepage.

Ends/Monday, January 17, 2011

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