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Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2016-17

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Session No. : 6

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<u>S-CMAB01</u>	S0009	Joseph LEE Kok-long	144	(5) Subvention: Equal Opportunities Commission and Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-CMAB01

(Question Serial No. S0009)

Head: (144) GS: Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (5) Subvention: Equal Opportunities Commission and Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (CHANG King-yiu)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Question:

It is learnt that the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has set up an office to promote equal opportunities in education and employment for ethnic minorities. In this connection, has provision been earmarked for meeting the operational expenses (including rental)? If so, what are the details?

Separately, provision set aside for the EOC for 2016-17 is only 0.4% higher than the revised estimate for 2015-16. Is the provision meant for meeting all operational expenses of the Commission as well as the salary costs for all the staff in its establishment (including the Chief Operations Officer)? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Separately, the Government has implemented a 3-year measure in 2015-16 to contain expenditure. Under such a circumstance, has funding for the EOC been affected? If so, what are the details? Does the EOC need to tap into its reserves to cover the operational expenses in 2016-17? Has assessment been made to see if the EOC will run into a deficit? If it will, how can the EOC further implement the relevant policy when there are insufficient reserves?

Asked by: Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long

Reply:

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is a statutory body set up under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Cap. 480) to discharge functions and duties conferred on it under the SDO as well as three other pieces of anti-discrimination legislation, viz. the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487), the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 527) and the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) (Cap. 602).

2. Each year, the Government provides a subvention in the form of lump sum allocation to the EOC for it to draw up its estimates of operating expenditures under the principles of prudent fiscal management and efficient and economical use of resources to cover expenditures on manpower and salaries, office accommodation expenses, and expenditures for implementing the anti-discrimination ordinances, etc. In 2016-17, the Government provides a subvention of \$107 million to the EOC. In addition, the EOC may maintain a reserve for its own use, and the reserve stood at \$21 million as at 31 March 2015.

3. The EOC operates independently in discharging its statutory duties and functions, including the management of its resources and staff expenses provided that it exercises good governance and adheres to the principle of prudent fiscal management.

4. Since 2014-15, we have been providing \$4.69 million to the EOC specifically for strengthening its promotional and educational work relating to the RDO. The EOC has set up an Ethnic Minority Unit in 2014-15 for this purpose.

5. We will continue to work with the EOC to ensure that it has adequate resources to discharge its functions and duties.

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