

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. FC158/02-03  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/F/1/2

**Finance Committee of the Legislative Council**

**Minutes of the 16th meeting  
held at the Legislative Council Chamber  
on Friday, 27 June 2003, at 2:30 pm**

**Members present:**

Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong (Chairman)  
Hon NG Leung-sing, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP  
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP  
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP  
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBS, JP  
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP  
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP  
Hon Margaret NG  
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon HUI Cheung-ching, JP  
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung  
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP  
Hon Bernard CHAN, JP  
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP  
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon SIN Chung-kai  
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP  
Hon WONG Yung-kan  
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP  
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP

Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS  
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP  
Hon LAU Kong-wah  
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP  
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP  
Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, GBS, JP  
Hon CHOY So-yuk  
Hon SZETO Wah  
Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP  
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP  
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP  
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung  
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip  
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok  
Hon WONG Sing-chi  
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP  
Hon LAU Ping-cheung  
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP  
Hon MA Fung-kwok, JP

**Members absent:**

Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP  
Hon James TO Kun-sun  
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo  
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP  
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP  
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

**Public officers attending:**

Mr Frederick MA Si-hang, JP	Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Mr Alan LAI Nin, JP	Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)
Mr Stanley YING, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) 1

Mr K K LAM	Principal Executive Officer (General), Finance Bureau
Mr Fred TING, JP Mr MA Fung-keung	Deputy Commissioner for Labour Departmental Secretary of Labour Department
Ms Irene YOUNG	Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower
Mr Lawrence KWAN	Project Co-ordinator of Education and Manpower Bureau
Mr Tony LEUNG	Acting Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs
Miss CHOI Suk-kuen, JP	Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
Mr YIP Chee-kuen	Chief Curator (Science) of Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Mrs Brenda FUNG	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Mrs Carrie LAM, JP Mr Thomas YIU, JP	Director of Social Welfare Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health)
Mr Robin GILL, JP	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Welfare)
Miss Joanna CHOI	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health)
Dr KO Wing-man	Director (Professional Services and Public Affairs) of Hospital Authority
Mr Alex LEUNG	Co-ordinator (Human Resources) of Hospital Authority
Dr YUNG Wai-hung, Raymond	Consultant Microbiologist of Hospital Authority

**Clerk in attendance:**

Ms Pauline NG	Assistant Secretary General 1
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**Staff in attendance:**

Miss Polly YEUNG	Chief Assistant Secretary (1)3
Mr Matthew LOO	Senior Assistant Secretary (1)3
Ms Caris CHAN	Senior Legislative Assistant 1
Mr Frankie WOO	Legislative Assistant 2

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**Item No. 1 - FCR(2003-04)29**

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT  
SUBCOMMITTEE MADE ON 11 JUNE 2003**

The Committee approved the proposal.

**Item No. 2 - FCR(2003-04)30**

**HEAD 90 – LABOUR DEPARTMENT  
HEAD 157 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT: ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR BUREAU (LABOUR BRANCH)**

2. Members noted that the present proposal sought members' approval for consequential changes to the 2003-04 Estimates with effect from 1 July 2003 to reflect the merging of the Labour Department and the Labour Branch of the Economic Development and Labour Bureau. The Establishment Subcommittee had endorsed the relevant staffing proposal on 11 June 2003.

3. The Committee approved the proposal.

**Item No. 3 - FCR(2003-04)31**

**LOAN FUND  
HEAD 252 – LOANS TO SCHOOLS/ TEACHERS**

**♦ Subhead 106 Start-up loan for post-secondary education providers**

4. Members noted that the Education and Manpower Bureau had circulated an information paper on the proposed start-up loan for post-secondary education providers to the Panel on Education on 11 June 2003.

5. The Committee approved the proposal.

**Item No. 4 - FCR(2003-04)32**

**HEAD 95 – LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
♦ Subhead 603 Plant, vehicles and equipment  
New Item “Replacement of the Planetarium Star Projector and Seating at  
the Space Theatre of the Hong Kong Space Museum”**

6. Members noted that the Home Affairs Bureau had circulated an information paper on the proposed replacement of the planetarium star projector and seating at the Space Theatre of the Hong Kong Space Museum to

the Panel on Home Affairs in June 2003.

7. The Committee approved the proposal.

**Item No. 5 - FCR(2003-04)33**

**HEAD 170 – SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT**

- ◆ **Subhead 179 Comprehensive social security assistance scheme**
- ◆ **Subhead 180 Social security allowance scheme**

8. Members noted that the Administration had briefed the Panel on Welfare Services on the proposal on 9 June 2003.

9. Dr LAW Chi-kwong said that Members of the Democratic Party (DP) supported the new residence requirement of at least seven years for eligibility under the Old Age Allowance (OAA) Scheme, but expressed reservation about the proposed arrangement for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. Noting that most of the new arrivals from the Mainland were spouses and children of Hong Kong residents, Dr LAW considered that increasing the residence requirement to seven years would send a highly undesirable message to the local and international communities that Hong Kong would not encourage the reunion of poor families as they would not be entitled to welfare benefits. While Members of DP agreed that length of residence in Hong Kong should be an eligibility criteria for CSSA, they were of the view that seven years were too long, notwithstanding that the Director of Social Welfare (DSW) might exercise her discretionary power to waive the residence requirement in cases of genuine hardship. In view of the above, Dr LAW said that Members of DP would abstain on the present proposal.

10. Mr Andrew WONG said that he would not support the present proposal in consideration of the problems faced by single parent families. He pointed out that under the existing One Way Permit (OWP) Scheme, the Mainland parent would not be accorded priority in obtaining OWP to Hong Kong to take care of their children even if their spouse in Hong Kong passed away. These children would be under the care of Po Leung Kuk or children's homes. Mr WONG considered that the current arrangement was inhumane, and urged that OWP should be granted to these Mainland spouses of Hong Kong residents on compassionate ground. In this connection, Mr WONG expressed his appreciation for DSW's discretion to grant assistance in some of the cases referred by him. Nevertheless, he reiterated his view that as a standard arrangement, the Administration should consider exempting single parents from the Mainland from the residence requirement for CSSA.

11. In response, DSW advised that residence requirement was one of the eligibility criteria for CSSA. Notwithstanding, the Administration would

explore other means to render assistance to families who did not meet the criteria, such as assisting them to obtain assistance from charity funds. She also stressed that in cases of genuine hardship, DSW had the discretionary power to grant assistance to a person who did not meet the residence requirement.

12. Notwithstanding DSW's discretionary power to grant assistance in deserving cases, Ms Cyd HO said that she could not support the present proposal as the residence requirement was a form of impediment or disincentive for potential immigrants. She also considered that the proposed arrangement was inconsistent with the policy objectives of preserving and strengthening the family as a social unit.

13. Mr Albert CHAN did not support the proposed seven-year residence requirement for CSSA, and considered that this arrangement was inhumane and would discourage family reunion. He pointed out that at present, immigrants from the Mainland for family reunion were not subject to any assets test. It was therefore highly unfair to impose a residence requirement as an eligibility criterion for CSSA, instead of providing social benefits on a need basis.

14. Mr TAM Yiu-chung conveyed the concern of some members of the public that the existing residence requirement for CSSA might be too lenient, in particular for new arrivals from the Mainland. While supporting that the eligibility criteria should be rationalized, Mr TAM asked whether the extension of residence requirement from one year to seven years might be too drastic.

15. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan stressed the need to make the public aware of the fact that only 14.9% of CSSA recipients were new arrivals. He would not support the present proposal as he considered that the proposed seven-year residence requirement would inevitably deter some Hong Kong residents from reuniting with their Mainland spouses and children. Mr LEE said that the importance of family reunion should not be overridden by welfare policy. He also urged that as a separate immigration issue, the existing OWP Scheme should be reviewed so that OWP holders could re-apply for their Mainland household registration in case they chose to return from Hong Kong to the Mainland. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung echoed Mr LEE's concern.

16. Mrs Sophie LEUNG said that Members of the Liberal Party supported the present proposal which was in line with the expectation of the public for a more rational approach to handle CSSA applications. She agreed that a sympathetic attitude should be adopted towards new arrivals in cases of genuine hardship. However, it was equally important to ensure a rational basis on which limited public resources should be allocated. On the social phenomenon that many Hong Kong residents married Mainlanders, Mrs LEUNG opined that the separation of family members in such marriages might give rise to many social and family problems. She also expressed the view

that consideration should be given to allowing OWP holders to re-apply for their Mainland household registration if necessary.

17. In response, DSW noted members' concern. While reckoning that matters relating to immigration policy was outside her purview, she pointed out that the Task Force on Population Policy had looked into the population characteristics of Hong Kong with a view to striking a balance between the interests and needs of various sectors of the community. In this connection, the Chairman advised that members might follow up their concerns about policy issues relating to the OWP Scheme at the relevant Panel(s).

18. In reply to Mr TAM Yiu-chung's enquiry about the factors which DSW would take into consideration when exercising her discretionary power to grant assistance, DSW informed members that DSW had exercised discretion in some 800 cases last year. The authority to grant assistance under discretionary power had also been delegated to certain officers of the Social Welfare Department (SWD). In this respect, internal guidelines were in place for authorized officers to grant CSSA to applicants who did not meet the existing one-year residence period. Considering that OWP holders would not be able to return to the Mainland as their household registration would be cancelled once their OWPs were issued, these new arrivals would normally be granted CSSA if they failed to obtain financial assistance from their relatives in Hong Kong, and their total assets were less than the amount of CSSA for two months. DSW added that these internal guidelines would still be applicable when the seven-year residence requirement was implemented. She stressed that in addition to CSSA, new arrivals could also avail themselves of assistance in housing and employment.

19. In response to Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's comment that some frontline SWD staff had not taken a sympathetic and helpful attitude towards CSSA applicants, especially new arrivals from the Mainland, DSW said that advice and on-the-job training was provided to staff to ensure the standard and quality of service. She would welcome members' feedbacks on the service of SWD and the department would follow up as appropriate.

20. In response to Mr NG Leung-sing's enquiry about the 56-day absence period for OAA and CCSA applicants and recipients, DSW explained that absence from Hong Kong up to a maximum of 56 days in the 12-month period prior to the date of application would still be regarded as residence in Hong Kong. This arrangement was to facilitate applicants to travel and visit their relatives overseas or in the Mainland. This requirement was adopted in the existing eligibility requirement for social security benefits.

21. The Committee approved the proposal.

**Item No. 6 - FCR(2003-04)16**

**HEAD 177 – SUBVENTIONS : NON-DEPARTMENTAL PUBLIC BODIES**

**New Capital Account Subhead “Training and Welfare Fund for the Hospital Authority”**

**HEAD 149 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD BUREAU**

◆ **Subhead 846 Financial assistance for family members of those who sacrifice their lives to save others**

22. Members noted that the Panel on Health Services had been consulted on the proposal to set up the Training and Welfare Fund on 7 May 2003. They also noted that the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food had issued a letter to inform the Panels on Welfare Services and Health Services on 19 June 2003 regarding the proposed supplementary provision to Subhead 846 of Head 149.

Recuperation grant

23. Mr TAM Yiu-chung expressed support for the present proposal. On the one-off recuperation grant of \$50,000, Mr TAM considered that for the sake of equity, employees of the contractors of the Hospital Authority (HA) who had contracted the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in the course of work should also be entitled for the grant. Mr Fred LI also referred to workers employed by HA's cleaning contractors who had contracted SARS while at work, and enquired about their entitlement to the proposed grant.

24. In response, the Director (Professional Services and Public Affairs) of HA (Director of PSPA/HA) confirmed that while the proposed one-off recuperation grant of \$50,000 would be payable to HA staff confirmed to have contracted SARS while on duty, HA was fully aware of the hardship of the employees of its contractors who were also infected by SARS in their course of work. Hence, HA had decided that upon approval of the present proposal, HA would also provide one-off recuperation grants of \$50,000 to SARS-infected employees of its subcontractors out of its Charity Fund.

25. Noting that the \$70 million welfare fund to be set up under the Training and Welfare Fund would be administered by the Central Committee chaired by the Chief Executive of HA, Dr TANG Siu-tong asked whether the membership of the Central Committee would include external members. In reply, the Director of PSPA/HA said that the membership of the Central Committee had not been finalized and HA would welcome suggestions in this respect.

26. Mr Michael MAK declared his interest as an employee of HA who might be eligible for training under the proposed Training and Welfare Fund. While expressing support for the present proposal, Mr MAK questioned the



basis for setting the level of recuperation grant at \$50,000. He considered the amount of grant inadequate for the purpose of giving due recognition to the staff inflected by SARS and asked whether the amount could be increased.

27. In response, the Director of PSPA/HA recognized the physical and psychological trauma experienced by staff who had suffered from SARS. He stressed that the proposed recuperation grant was not a form of compensation, but a token of appreciation for the staff and their family members. As such, there was no precise formula for working out the amount of the grant. However, PSPA/HA said that the proposed amount of \$50,000 per grant was considered reasonable and affordable.

28. As regards the formula for calculating the financial assistance provided to family members of those who sacrificed their lives to save others (with the minimum and maximum levels set at \$3 million and \$6 million respectively), the Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Welfare) advised that the formula was as follows:

Median monthly employment earnings x 12 x the number of years between the date of death and the retirement age of the deceased (where the retirement age was not known, 65 years of age was taken as the retirement age)

29. Mr NG Leung-sing supported the present proposal. On the adequacy or otherwise of the proposed amount of \$50,000 per recuperation grant, Mr NG considered that as the grant was meant to be a token of appreciation, he could accept the Administration's proposal unless there was evidence that the currently proposed amount was inappropriate.

30. As one of the eligibility criteria for the proposed special recuperation grant was that the staff concerned had contracted SARS while on duty, Ms LI Fung-ying pointed out that it might be difficult for the employees to substantiate their claims. She enquired whether HA had any objective guidelines in ascertaining that the disease had been contracted by the employee while on duty.

31. In response, the Director of PSPA/HA said that so far, HA had reported to the Labour Department (LD) more than 320 cases of employees infected by SARS while on duty. He assured members that while doubtful cases would be referred to LD for advice, HA was prepared to accept responsibility as long as it could be proved that the employee concerned had contracted SARS in the course of his work.

Financial assistance for family members of those who sacrificed their lives to save others

32. Referring to the work of the "Committee on Financial Assistance for Family Members of those who Sacrifice their Lives to Save Others", Mr NG Leung-sing opined that the gallant acts of the individuals, positive attempts to save or protect others and the dedicated service of HA staff should be more widely publicized and commended. He looked forward to greater efforts in this regard through existing channels such the Radio Television Hong Kong. Admin The Administration noted his views.

33. Ms Audrey EU pointed out that the gallant acts of those who sacrificed their lives to save or protect others should be commended and given due recognition. The present proposal could only be taken as a form of financial assistance to the employees concerned or their family members. It was by no means full compensation or full recognition for their gallant acts.

Training

34. Noting that the SARS Expert Committee appointed by the Chief Executive to look into the outbreak of SARS would submit its recommendations in September 2003, Ms LI Fung-ying was concerned whether there was any overlap of work and resources between the Expert Committee and the proposed Training Centre, and whether it was more appropriate for the Administration to put up a consolidated funding request at a later stage to also cover the recommendations of the Expert Committee.

35. In response, the Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health) (DS(HWF)H) explained that the proposed Training Centre would focus its work on the development of training at the organizational level and would lead a full-scale study on the competency gap in infectious disease control and management within HA. The Expert Committee on the other hand would examine issues at the macro-level. Where appropriate, some of its future recommendations might be adopted by the Training Centre. As such, DS(HWF)H stressed that the work of the Expert Committee and the Training Centre was complimentary to each other and the question of overlapping resources would not arise.

36. Ms Cyd HO noted that according to HA's forecast, in five years' time, about 5% of HA doctors, nurses and allied health professionals would have undergone more intensive and in-depth training in infectious disease control. She asked whether HA had any long-term target on the proportion of health care professionals who had been trained in infectious disease control.

37. In reply, the Consultant Microbiologist of HA and the Director of PSPA/HA said that the 5% in question referred to those HA staff who would

become experts in infectious disease control after undergoing specialized training. As regards basic induction training, the Director of PSPA/HA advised that HA's plan was to train an average of 10 000 health care workers across different disciplines each year in a span of five years.

38. In reply to Dr LO Wing-lok's enquiry on the timeframe for achieving the target number of trained Infection Control Nurses (ICNs), the Director of PSPA/HA advised that it was HA's plan to meet the international standard in the target number of ICNs in five years' time.

39. As it was HA's plan that its Institute of Health Care (HAIHC) would eventually absorb the work of the Training Centre, Ms Cyd HO enquired about the financial implications of such an arrangement on HA, in particular its recurrent expenditure. In response, the Director of PSPA/HA advised that all along, the provision of on-the-job training was the responsibility of the HAIHC although the outbreak of SARS had highlighted the need for more advanced and in-depth training in infectious disease control. As such, he confirmed that in future, the costs for the provision of training on infectious disease control would be absorbed in the recurrent expenditure of the HAIHC.

Other concerns

40. Mr Albert CHAN expressed support in principle for additional resources to deal with the aftermath of SARS, such as the proposed \$22 million for providing financial assistance to family members of those who sacrificed their lives to save others. However, he expressed reservation on the future use of the new commitment of \$200 million and was concerned about ways to ensure that the funding would be used in a most cost-effective manner.

Admin

41. In response, the Director of PSPA/HA assured members that the proposed \$200 million Training and Welfare Fund was a major initiative of HA and would be coordinated by centrally by HA. DS(HWF)H supplemented that while the Fund would be administered by a Central Committee chaired by the HA Chief Executive, HA would report on a half-yearly basis to the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau on the utilization of the Fund. The Bureau in turn would provide the Panel on Health Services with an annual report on the utilization of the Fund by HA.

Admin

42. In this connection, Mr Albert CHAN urged HA to increase the transparency in the process of setting up the Training Centre. While taking note of his view, DS(HWF)H confirmed that as major decisions on the proposed Training Centre would need to be endorsed by the HA Board, he believed that HA would keep the public informed of the progress.

43. Regarding Mr Albert CHAN's concern about the lack of coordination among different hospital clusters, the Director of PSPA/HA said that while

individual clusters might differ on certain issues, they were capable of collaborating with each other on major issues of common concern.

44. The Committee approved the proposal.
45. The Committee was adjourned at 3:40 pm.

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
29 August 2003