

LWB/W 18/36 (04)

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11 September 2007

Clerk to Subcommittee on Review of the
Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme
(Attn: Miss Betty Ma)
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Miss Ma,

Requests for additional information

I refer to the minutes of the meeting of the LegCo Subcommittee on review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme held on 19 December 2006, wherein the Administration was requested to provide response to the requests of the Members. The requested information on the follow up actions is as follows:

- (a) With reference to paragraph 27(a) of the minutes, CSSA recipients can make use of the herbalist service offered free of charge or at low cost at some designated clinics under Hospital Authority or other charitable organizations. Up to now, there are nine public Chinese medicine clinics (CMCs) in operation. Five new CMCs will be set up by phases before the end of March 2009. Apart from public CMCs, there are now a number of Chinese medicine clinics operated by non-governmental organizations offering Chinese medicine services free of charge or at low cost.

- (b) In response to paragraph 30 of the minutes, we have collected up-to-date information on the proportion of air-conditioned licensed buses via-a-vis non-air-conditioned licensed buses. According to the information provided by the then Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, there were 5 852 licensed buses, out of which 95.5% (i.e. 5 588) were air-conditioned buses as at end of December 2006.

The CSSA Scheme is a non-contributory scheme, which is entirely funded by the general revenue. It aims to provide a safety net of last resort to those financially vulnerable to meet their basic and special needs.

In the cases where it is impracticable for the CSSA students to take non-air-conditioned buses in certain routes, we will grant them actual expenses for taking air-conditioned buses in the light of the actual situation.

- (c) For paragraph 36 of the minutes, the aim of the CSSA Scheme is to provide financial assistance to individuals or families in need to meet their basic and essential needs. A list of major groups of goods and services reflecting the overall consumption made by the CSSA households and CSSA recipients is compiled from findings of the 1994-95 Household Expenditure Survey (HES) on CSSA Households and the 2004-05 HES on CSSA Households. The list is enclosed at Annex A and it includes items that are covered by CSSA standard payment rates unless otherwise indicated with notes showing that the items are either provided by special grants or free by the government. Standard payment rates are adjusted with reference to the movement of the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices (SSAIP) which is compiled to reflect the price changes of goods and services covered by the list. While showing the expenditure pattern of the CSSA households and recipients, the list also reveals that with CSSA as a cash-assistance the CSSA recipients could choose to spend the money on goods and services based on their personal preference.

Under the CSSA Scheme, different standard rates are applicable to different categories of recipients. (Details are at Annex B.) In addition, an annual long-term supplement is paid to those who are old, disabled or medically certified to be in ill-health and have been receiving assistance

continuously for 12 months or more for the replacement of household and durable goods. Monthly supplements are also paid to single parents in recognition of the special difficulties they face in bringing up families on their own without the support of spouses and to severely disabled persons who are not living in residential institutions in recognition of the heavier expenses they may incur while living in the community. (Details are at Annex C.) Apart from these standard payments, a wide range of non-standard payments in the form of special grants are payable to meet the specific needs of an individual or family. They include payments to cover such expenses as rent, school fees and other educational expenses, medically recommended diets, spectacles and dentures. (Details are at Annex D.)

Yours sincerely,

(D. C. Cheung)
for Secretary for Labour and Welfare

c.c. Secretary for Food and Health (Attn : Ms. Ivy Chan)
Director of Social Welfare (Attn : Miss Nancy Law
Mr. Wu Kin-sing
Mr. Ng Wai-kuen
Mr. Kenneth Ng)

Expenditure of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Households ^(A)
Comparison of Findings from the Household Expenditure Survey on CSSA Households, 1994-95 and 2004-05

<i>Major commodity/service group (at 1994 - 95)</i>	<i>Major commodity/service group (at 2004 - 05)</i>
Food	Food
<i>Meals bought away from home</i>	<i>Meals bought away from home</i>
Cafés	Cafés
Cantonese restaurants/fan-tims	Cantonese restaurants/fan-tims
Fast food / snack shops	Fast food shops
Rice, noodle and rice-stick stalls	Rice, noodle and rice-stick stalls
Others	Others
<i>Food (excluding meals bought away from home)</i>	<i>Food (excluding meals bought away from home)</i>
Salt-water and fresh-water fishes	Salt-water / fresh-water fishes
Pork, locally slaughtered	Pork
Fresh vegetables	Fresh vegetables
Fresh fruit	Fresh fruit
Others	Others
Housing ^(B1)	Housing ^(C1)
Rent, including rates	Rent, including rates and government rent
Water and sewage charges ^(B2)	Others
Others	

<i>Major commodity/service group (at 1994 - 95)</i>	<i>Major commodity/service group (at 2004 - 05)</i>
Fuel and light	Electricity, gas and water
Electricity	Electricity
Liquefied petroleum gas and towngas	Towngas
Kerosene	Liquefied petroleum gas and other fuel
	Water and sewage charges ^(C2)
Alcoholic drinks and tobacco	Alcoholic drinks and tobacco
Cigarettes	Cigarettes
Chinese wines	Chinese wines
Others	Others
Clothing and footwear	Clothing and footwear
Men / Women's outerclothing	Men / Women's outerclothing
Children's outerclothing ^(B3)	Children's outerclothing ^(C3)
Men / Women's footwear	Men / Women's footwear
Children's footwear ^(B4)	Children / infants' footwear ^(C4)
Others	Others

<i>Major commodity/service group (at 1994 - 95)</i>	<i>Major commodity/service group (at 2004 - 05)</i>
Durable goods	Durable goods
Electrical appliances ^(B5)	Home appliances, electric and gas
Video and sound equipment	Video and sound equipment
	Watches, clocks, cameras and optical goods
Spectacles ^(B6)	<i>Spectacles</i> ^(C5)
	<i>Others</i>
Furniture ^(B7)	Furniture
Personal computer and related items ^(B8)	Personal computer set ^(C6)
	Mobile phone
Telephone ^(B9)	Telephone ^(C7)
Travel and sports goods ^(B10)	Others ^(C8)
Others	
Miscellaneous goods	Miscellaneous goods
	Textbooks ^(C9)
Proprietary medicines and supplies	Proprietary medicines and supplies
<i>Chinese medicines</i>	<i>Chinese medicine</i>
<i>Others</i> ^(B11)	<i>Others</i> ^(C10)
Newspapers	Newspapers
Soap and detergent	Cosmetics and personal care products
Toilet requisites	Household cleansing tools and supplies
Stationery ^(B12)	Stationery ^(C9)
Others ^(B13)	Books and periodicals ^(C9)
	Others

<i>Major commodity/service group (at 1994 - 95)</i>	<i>Major commodity/service group (at 2004 - 05)</i>
Transport^(B14)	Transport^(C11)
Bus fares	Bus fares
Public light bus fares	Public light bus fares
Taxi fares	Taxi fares
Others	Mass Transit Railway fares
	Train fares
	Light Rail fares
	Inbound and outbound transport fares
	Others
Miscellaneous services	Miscellaneous services
Educational related expenses ^(B15)	School fees / other educational charges ^(C12)
Telephone services ^(B16)	Telephone services ^(C13)
Medical services	Medical services
<i>Services of physicians and hospital care^(B17)</i>	<i>Out-patient / in-patient services of physicians^(C14)</i>
<i>Services of herbalists</i>	<i>Services of Chinese medicine practitioners</i>
<i>Services of dentists^(B18)</i>	<i>Dental services^(C15)</i>
<i>Others^(B17)</i>	<i>Others^(C14)</i>
Others ^(B19)	Household services ^(C16)
	Others ^(C17)

Note A : All items listed are covered by standard payment rates unless otherwise indicated in Notes B and C below.

Standard payment rates are adjusted by making reference to the rate of change in the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices (SSAIP) which is compiled to reflect the price changes of goods and services covered by standard payment rates in the list.

Note B

Housing

- (B1) All housing and related expenses (including rent and rates, housing maintenance and repair charges) are covered by special grant
- (B2) Water and sewage charges are covered by special grant

Clothing and footwear

- (B3) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, school uniforms and accessories are covered by special grant
- (B4) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, children's footwear are covered by special grant

Durable goods

- (B5) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, calculators are covered by special grant
- (B6) Spectacles are covered by special grant
- (B7) Baby beds are covered by special grant
- (B8) Personal computer and related items for students are provided by schools
- (B9) Fixed-line telephone sets are covered by special grant
- (B10) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, carrying cases for students are covered by special grant

Miscellaneous goods

- (B11) Therapeutic equipment (such as wheel-chair, hearing-aid, stoma bags and disposable diapers) for elderly, disabled persons and persons medically certified to be in ill-health are covered by special grant
- (B12) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, stationery for students are covered by special grant
- (B13) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, reference books and dictionaries for students are covered by special grant

Transport

- (B14) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, fares to and from school for CSSA students are covered by special grant

Miscellaneous services

- (B15) School fees for kindergarten to secondary / technical institutes; educational charges (including textbooks, examination and lodging fees) are covered by special grant
- (B16) Domestic telephone lines and telephone installation charges are covered by special grant
- (B17) Medical services are provided free by Hospital Authority and Department of Health
- (B18) Dental services (denture, scaling, fillings and root canal treatment) are covered by special grant
- (B19) Burial expenses are covered by a burial grant up to \$9,000

Note C

Housing

- (C1) All housing and related expenses (including rent, rates, government rent, management fees, maintenance and repair charges) are covered by special grant

Electricity, gas and water

- (C2) Water and sewage charges are covered by special grant

Clothing and footwear

- (C3) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, school uniforms and accessories are covered by special grant
- (C4) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, children's footwear are covered by special grant

Durable goods

- (C5) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, spectacles for elderly, disabled persons, persons medically certified to be in ill-health and students are covered by special grant
- (C6) Personal computer set for students are provided by schools
- (C7) Fixed-line telephone sets for elderly, disabled persons and persons medically certified to be in ill-health are covered by special grant
- (C8) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, computer-related items (such as software) are provided by schools. Carrying cases for students and calculators are covered by special grant

Miscellaneous goods

- (C9) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, school related expenses including textbooks, reference books, dictionaries and stationery for students are covered by special grant
- (C10) Medical supplies / equipment (such as wheel-chair, hearing-aid, stoma bags and disposable diapers) for elderly, disabled persons and persons medically certified to be in ill-health are covered by special grant

Transport

- (C11) In addition to CSSA standard payment rates, fares to and from school for CSSA students (including school bus and nanny bus fare) are covered by special grant

Miscellaneous services

- (C12) School fees for kindergarten to secondary including craft and technician level and examination fees are covered by special grants. Tuition fee of project Yi Jin can be reimbursed from SFAA
- (C13) Residential telephone line and telephone installation charges for elderly, disabled persons and persons medically certified to be in ill-health are covered by special grant
- (C14) Medical services are provided free by Hospital Authority and Department of Health
- (C15) Dental services (dentures, crowns, bridges, scaling, fillings and root canal treatment) for elderly, disabled persons and persons medically certified to be in ill-health are covered by special grant
- (C16) Some of the household services, e.g. nursery charges; charges of residential care home services for elderly; charges of home help services, are covered by special grant
- (C17) Burial expenses are covered by a burial grant up to \$10,430. Emergency alarm system for the elderly are covered by special grant either on a one-off installation fee up to \$2,500, or a monthly service charges up to \$100 per month

Standard rates

Standard rates, as shown below, are paid to different categories of recipients to meet their basic needs.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Standard Rates</u>			
	(\$ per person per month)			
	<u>Single person</u>	<u>Family member</u>		
<u>Elderly person aged 60 or above</u>				
Able-bodied/50% disabled	2,305	2,175		
100% disabled	2,795	2,470		
Requiring constant attendance	3,930	3,605		
<u>Ill-health/Disabled adult aged under 60</u>				
Ill-health/50% disabled	1,955	1,770		
100% disabled	2,440	2,110		
Requiring constant attendance	3,570	3,245		
<u>Disabled child</u>				
50% disabled	2,600	2,265		
100% disabled	3,085	2,760		
Requiring constant attendance	4,215	3,895		
		In a family comprising not more than 2 able-bodied adults/ <u>children</u>	In a family comprising 3 able-bodied adults/ <u>children</u>	In a family comprising 4 or more able-bodied adults/ <u>children</u>
	<u>Single person</u>			
<u>Able-bodied adult aged under 60</u>				
Single parent/Family carer	—	1,770	1,600	1,415
Other adult	1,630	1,450	1,310	1,165
<u>Able-bodied child</u>				
	1,955	1,620	1,455	1,295

[Note : For the purpose of payment of standard rates, a child is defined as one aged below 15 or aged 15-21 receiving full-time education (students receiving post-secondary education are normally not eligible under the Scheme), while an ill-health or disabled person must obtain medical certification on his/her health condition from a doctor of a public hospital or clinic.]

Supplements

(a) Long-term supplement

An annual long-term supplement is payable to families involving any member who is old, disabled or medically certified to be in ill-health for the replacement of household and durable goods if they have received assistance continuously for 12 months or more. The amount payable depends on the number of such eligible members in the family. The rates are as follows :

	<u>Amount of Supplement</u> (<u>\$</u>)
Single person	1,445
Family comprising 2-4 such members	2,900
Family comprising 5 or more such members	3,825

(Note: Able-bodied adults/children are not entitled to long-term supplement.)

(b) Single parent supplement

A monthly supplement of \$230 is payable to single parent families to recognize the special difficulties which single parents face in bringing up a family.

To be eligible for this supplement, the single parent must be living with at least one child aged below 18 or aged 18-21 receiving full-time education who must be unmarried and eligible for the assistance. The single parent must also satisfy either of the following conditions :

— he/she is widowed or divorced or separated, or is an unmarried mother or father;

or

— his/her spouse is :

- (i) receiving medical treatment in a hospital and the period of hospitalization has been lasting or is expected to last for six months or over; or

- (ii) serving a sentence of at least nine months in prison or any penal institution; or
- (iii) being prevented by law from entering Hong Kong; or
- (iv) living apart physically for other reasons by virtue of which the payment of single parent supplement is considered appropriate by the Director of Social Welfare.

(c) Community living supplement

A monthly community living supplement of \$100 is payable to severely disabled persons who are medically certified to be 100% disabled or in need of constant attendance and who are not living in institutions to recognize the heavier expenses they may incur while living in the community.

Special grants

- (a) Special grants payable to elderly, disabled persons and persons medically certified to be in ill-health

<u>Types of grant</u>	<u>Payment rate</u>
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- (i) Housing and related grants

- a) Rent allowance Up to a maximum of :

<u>No. of eligible members in the household</u>	<u>Maximum level per month (\$)</u>
1	1,265
2	2,550
3	3,330
4	3,545
5	3,550
6 or above	4,435

[Rent allowance above the maximum level can be considered to cover the actual rent if an elderly applicant has been waitlisted for compassionate re-housing or a subvented residential institution (not applicable to those residing in a private elderly residential institution).]

- b) Water/sewage charge allowance Amount of allowance depends on the number of persons sharing the water meter

<u>Number of persons sharing the water meter</u>	<u>Amount of allowance per person per month (\$)</u>
1	Nil
2	6.80
3	9.40
4	11.00
5	13.00
6	14.80

7	16.80
8	18.30
9	19.30
10 or above	20.30

[For example, if a family of four is sharing a water meter with six other tenants, the family will be entitled to a water/sewage charge allowance of \$81.2 (\$20.3 x 4) a month.]

- c) Grant for rent deposit Up to two times of the appropriate maximum rent allowance

- d) Grant for electricity, water and gas/LPG deposits for accommodation in public housing Actual expenses

- e) Domestic removal grant Permanent public housing or interim housing

From \$2,750 up to a maximum of \$9,023 depending on the number of eligible members to cover removal cost, basic fitting out expenses and telephone installation fees

Private housing

From \$1,019 up to a maximum of \$2,613 depending on the number of eligible members

Housing for Senior Citizens

Single person : \$2,750
Couple : \$5,551
(The grant covers the costs of removal, telephone installation and essential household items in connection with the removal.)

Institutions for the elderly

\$510

- f) Grant to cover telephone installation fees Actual fees charged for installing a standard telephone set
(Payable to cases demonstrating a genuine need for a telephone, e.g. elderly/disabled persons living alone who are in need of a telephone for communication at times of emergency.)

 - g) Grant to cover monthly telephone charges Actual fees for renting a residential telephone line and a standard telephone set
(Payable to cases demonstrating a genuine need for a telephone.)

 - h) Grant for emergency alarm system for elderly recipients Installation fee on a one-off basis : up to a maximum of \$2,500; or
Monthly service charges : up to a maximum of \$100 per month

 - i) Grant for renewal of electrical fittings Actual expenses
- (ii) Family grants
- a) Grant to cover fares to and from hospital/clinic and other essential travelling expenses Actual expenses (usually by the cheapest means of available transport)

 - b) Burial grant Up to a maximum of \$10,610
- (iii) Medical and rehabilitation grants
- a) Special diet allowance Medical recommendation from a doctor of a public hospital or clinic is required.

Higher rate : \$720 per month
(For those certified as suffering from anaemia, malignancy, diabetes, tuberculosis (under treatment), or as requiring a fluid diet, or under a post-operative condition or those with stoma.)

Lower rate : \$380 per month
(For those certified as suffering from liver disease, kidney disease, disseminated lupus erythematosus or as requiring an ulcer diet.)

- b) Grant to cover costs of medical, rehabilitation, surgical appliances and hygienic items (e.g. wheel-chair, hearing-aid, stoma bags, disposable diapers) Actual expenses subject to medical recommendation (where appropriate, the recommendation of an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist is also acceptable)
- c) Grant to cover costs of glasses Actual expenses
- d) Grant to cover costs of dental treatment (dentures, crowns, bridges, scaling, fillings and root canal treatment) Actual expenses or the ceiling amount of the dental treatment item set by the Social Welfare Department
(The applicant should approach one of the dental clinics designated by the Social Welfare Department to provide such service. He/She is free to turn to a registered dentist of a non-designated clinic for the same service after he/she has approached one of these designated clinics for an estimate of cost. A grant will be paid to meet the cost charged by the non-designated clinic, up to the cost estimated by the designated clinic or the ceiling amount set by the Social Welfare Department.)
- e) Care and attention allowance Up to a maximum of \$4,352 per month (or more in exceptional cases), subject to medical certification and a social worker's recommendation
- f) Grant to cover the charge for respite service Actual fees charged less a portion of the standard rate

- g) Grant to cover the medical examination fee for admission to a subvented residential institution Actual fees
- h) Grant to cover the annual medical examination fee for elderly recipients in elderly residential institutions Up to a maximum of \$200
- i) Grant to cover fees for Home Help Service/ Integrated Home Care Service Actual service fees (cost of meals excluded). The grant is not payable to customers in receipt of a higher standard rate or miscellaneous expenses rate for being in need of constant attendance.
- j) Grant to cover costs of Occupational Therapy Service Actual expenses (only applicable to occupational therapy service provided by the designated Home-based Training and Support Teams)
- k) Grant to cover costs of Community-based Support Projects for People with Disabilities and Their Families and Enhanced Home and Community Care Services Actual expenses in general (cost of meals excluded). The grant is normally not payable to customers in receipt of a higher standard rate or miscellaneous expenses rate for being in need of constant attendance.

(iv) Child-care grants

- a) Grant to cover fees for attending a child care centre
 - Group aged 0-2: up to a maximum of \$4,680 per month
 - Group aged 2-3: up to a general maximum of \$2,779 per month
- b) Grant to cover charges for occasional child care services Actual expenses (cost of meals excluded) of occasional child care services provided by the designated pre-primary institutions

(v) School grants

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| a) | Grant to cover school fees | Actual fees except for kindergarten fees of which the maximum levels are :
full-day kindergarten : \$2,301
per month
half-day kindergarten : \$1,379
per month |
| b) | Meal allowance for students | \$195 per month for full-time students who have to take lunch away from home |
| c) | Grant to cover fares to and from school | Actual expenses (normally by the cheapest means of available transport) |
| d) | Grant to cover Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination fees | Actual fees |
| e) | Grant for selected items of school related expenses (i.e. books, stationery, school uniforms, miscellaneous and minor one-off expenses) | A flat-rate grant is payable to full-time students up to the upper secondary level for selected items of school related expenses. The rates are as follows : |

<u>Education level</u>	<u>Full grant per student per school year</u>
	(\$)
Child Care Centre (Group aged 0-2/ Group aged 2-3)	1,245
Kindergarten (Nursery/Upper/ Lower)	2,845
Primary (Primary 1-6)	2,505

Lower secondary (Secondary 1-3)	3,810
Upper secondary (Secondary 4-7/ technical/commercial institutes)	3,210

- Note:
- (1) The grant is normally paid before the commencement of the school year.
 - (2) If the family is eligible for CSSA after the commencement of the school year, the amount of grant payable will be adjusted accordingly.
 - (3) Additional payment can be considered if the actual expenses exceed the amount of the grant paid. Recipients should keep all relevant receipts to prove that the amount of grant paid is insufficient to cover the actual expenses.

(b) Special grants payable to able-bodied adults/children

Types of grant

Payment rate

(i) Rent allowance

Up to a maximum of :

<u>No. of eligible members in the household</u>	<u>Maximum level per month (\$)</u>
1	1,265
2	2,550
3	3,330
4	3,545
5	3,550
6 or above	4,435

(Rent allowance above the maximum level can be considered to cover the actual rent if the applicant has been waitlisted for compassionate re-housing.)

- (ii) Water/sewage charge allowance Amount of allowance depends on the number of persons sharing the water meter

<u>Number of persons sharing the water meter</u>	<u>Amount of allowance per person per month</u>
	(\$)
1	Nil
2	6.80
3	9.40
4	11.00
5	13.00
6	14.80
7	16.80
8	18.30
9	19.30
10 or above	20.30

[For example, if a family of four is sharing a water meter with six other tenants, the family will be entitled to a water/sewage charge allowance of \$81.2 (\$20.3 x 4) a month.]

(iii) Child-care grants

- a) Grant to cover fees for attending a child care centre
- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Group aged 0-2: | up to a maximum of \$4,680 per month |
| Group aged 2-3: | up to a general maximum of \$2,779 per month |
- b) Grant to cover charges for occasional child care services
- Actual expenses (cost of meals excluded) of occasional child care services provided by the designated pre-primary institutions

(iv) School grants

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| a) | Grant to cover school fees | Actual fees except for kindergarten fees of which the maximum levels are :
full-day kindergarten : \$2,301 per month
half-day kindergarten : \$1,379 per month |
| b) | Meal allowance for students | \$195 per month for full-time students who have to take lunch away from home |
| c) | Grant to cover fares to and from school | Actual expenses (normally by the cheapest means of available transport) |
| d) | Grant to cover Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination fees | Actual fees |
| e) | Grant for selected items of school related expenses (i.e. books, stationery, school uniforms, miscellaneous and minor one-off expenses) | A flat-rate grant is payable to full-time students up to the upper secondary level for selected items of school related expenses. The rates are as follows : |

<u>Education level</u>	<u>Full grant per student per school year (\$)</u>
Child Care Centre (Group aged 0-2/ Group aged 2-3)	1,245
Kindergarten (Nursery/Upper/Lower)	2,845
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- Note:
- (1) The grant is normally paid before the commencement of the school year.
 - (2) If the family is eligible for CSSA after the commencement of the school year, the amount of grant payable will be adjusted accordingly.
 - (3) Additional payment can be considered if the actual expenses exceed the amount of the grant paid. Recipients should keep all relevant receipts to prove that the amount of grant paid is insufficient to cover the actual expenses.

(v) Burial grant

Up to a maximum of \$10,610