

For discussion on
14 May 2010

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

Proposed Injection of Funds into the Cantonese Opera Development Fund

PURPOSE

This paper invites Members' views on the proposed injection of \$69 million into the Cantonese Opera Development Fund (CODF).

POLICY DIRECTION ON SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CANTONESE OPERA

2. Cantonese opera is an important form of Hong Kong's traditional art and culture. 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 continuing development of Cantonese opera in the following ways:

- i) Developing performance venues for Cantonese opera;
- ii) Nurturing Cantonese opera professionals, preserving the traditions and promoting creative works;
- iii) Promoting Cantonese opera education, audience building and community participation;
- iv) Fostering cultural exchange and cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao; and
- v) Preserving the essence of Cantonese opera and showcasing treasures of our cultural heritage.

3. In May 2004, the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) set up the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee (COAC) to consult the sector and others on policies and issues relating to the promotion, preservation, study and development of Cantonese opera.

4. There are three main sources of funding for developing Cantonese opera: direct or indirect recurrent support from the Government, CODF and the funding of capital works projects as detailed below:

- i) In the 2010-11 financial year, we estimate that about \$31 million¹ 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 and audience building; Cantonese opera courses run by the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA);
- ii) The CODF has so far raised over \$47 million of funding. Relevant information about the CODF and details of the proposed injection of \$69 million are set out in paragraphs 5 to 15 below; and
- iii) As regards the funding of capital works projects, we have submitted a separate paper to the Panel on the proposed construction of an annex building at Ko Shan Theatre in addition to the Yau Ma Tei Xiqu Activity Centre. The total estimated capital cost of these two projects is about \$870 million.

CANTONESE OPERA DEVELOPMENT FUND

5. The CODF was set up by the Home Affairs Bureau in November 2005 pursuant to the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporation Ordinance. It aims to provide funding support to projects and activities relating to the study, promotion and sustainable development of Cantonese opera.

¹ The above amount does not include funding granted by the CODF.

6. The CODF is mainly used for supporting the following projects or activities:

- i) Nurturing budding artists and supporting those Cantonese opera performances which are experimental/creative or highly worthy of preservation;
- ii) Academic researches and studies, seminars, talks or workshops in relation to the continuing development of Cantonese opera;
- iii) 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 of Cantonese opera and audio-visual materials, etc.;
- iv) Promoting and sustaining the development of Cantonese opera in the community or among the disadvantaged;
- v) Developing educational resources on Cantonese opera and Cantonese opera education programmes for schools;
- vi) Building young audience and participants for Cantonese opera;
- vii) Professional training programmes for Cantonese opera practitioners;
- viii) Promoting Cantonese opera cultural exchange, including exchange visits or outbound exchange programmes (especially cultural exchanges with the Mainland) on the development of Cantonese opera;
- ix) Pilot schemes in developing Cantonese opera venues; and
- x) Other new projects in sustaining the development of Cantonese opera.

Terms of reference of related committees

7. The CODF is administered by the CODF Advisory Committee and its Executive Committee. The Advisory Committee advises generally on matters relating to the administration and management of the CODF including:

- Encouraging community support for the Fund;
- Formulating policies on the use, custody and investment of the Fund;
- Monitoring the operation of the Fund; and
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the researches, projects, services and other activities funded by the Fund.

8. The CODF Executive Committee advises on specific matters including:

- Drawing up application procedures and the direction of funding;
- Drawing up guidelines for assessing applications and criteria for making allocations from the Fund;
- Assessing applications as well as monitoring and evaluating the progress and effectiveness of projects funded by CODF; and
- Assisting the Advisory Committee in encouraging the public to support the CODF.

Financial position of the CODF

9. The CODF has so far received a total of over \$47 million of funding, including private donations of over \$10 million, contribution of \$9 million from the Board of Management of the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries, contribution of \$7 million from the Chinese Temples Committee, contribution of \$15 million from the Sir Murray MacLehose Trust Fund and an injection of \$5 million from the HAB. As at 31 March 2010, the balance of the CODF is about \$17 million.

Projects Funded by the CODF

10. Since its establishment, 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, venue support/development projects as well as research and archival projects, including:

- i) Supporting The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The 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 synopsis of plays, so as to promote Cantonese opera to tourists by providing English

synopsis of plays or subtitles to English-speaking audience;

- ii) Funding the “18-District Cantonese Operatic Singing Contest” and the “Cantonese Operatic Singing Contest”;
- iii) Organising the “Cantonese Opera Advancement Course for Performers” by the Society of Continuing Education for Cantonese Opera Professionals to enhance the professional level of performers in the profession;
- iv) Supporting the Centre for Advancement of Chinese Language Education and Research, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong to implement the “Integrating Cantonese Opera into New Senior Secondary Chinese Language Curriculum and Assessment: A Seed Project”;
- v) Supporting a project of promoting Cantonese opera in tertiary institutions carried out by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology;
- vi) Supporting an education pilot project on Cantonese Opera carried out by the Music Section of the Department of Creative Arts and Physical Education in the Hong Kong Institute of Education;
- vii) Supporting performances by Cantonese opera troupes at the Sunbeam Theatre;
- viii) Supporting different groups to promote Cantonese opera in schools by conducting 80 primary and secondary school touring performances;
- ix) 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 in a systematic manner through providing training and performance opportunities to raise the professional standards of new talents, thereby sustaining the development of Cantonese opera.

Monitoring mechanism

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

- i) Undertakings and submission of programme reports by grantees
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.);
- ii) CODF's assessment
Members of the CODF Executive Committee or 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 programmes, such as research programmes or academic publications; and
- iii) Financial monitoring:
The CODF has laid down guidelines for the use of the funds granted. Grantees are further required to submit audit reports². 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 along with the audited financial reports of other funds set up under the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporation Ordinance.

PROPOSED INJECTION

12. 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, making it the first item of world intangible cultural heritage in Hong Kong. The Government proposes to inject \$69 million into the CODF to further support more Cantonese opera preservation, promotion and development projects, including the provision of \$9 million for the "Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Troupe for New Talent" three-year grant scheme to nurture new Cantonese Opera talents.

13. The Advisory Committee on the CODF, the Executive Committee on the CODF and the COAC support the proposed injection into the CODF to provide further support for Cantonese opera preservation, promotion and

² For projects which have been granted funds of over \$100,000.

development projects. The Executive Committee on CODF and the COAC also support the continued implementation of a grant scheme similar to the “Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Troupe for New Talent Scheme” in order to nurture more budding artists with good potential.

14. The HAB held a round-table talk on the development of Cantonese opera on 29 April 2010 to discuss with parties concerned the further development of Cantonese opera. 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 in the promotion of the development of Cantonese opera (such as academics and representatives of the HKADC, the HKAPA and the Hong Kong Tourism Board). They generally supported the Government’s proposed injection into the CODF and reckoned that further support for the development of Cantonese opera should be focused on such areas as enhancing professional training (including play writing), nurturing budding artists, building audience base, preservation and research. Constructive recommendations were put forward by the participants, which will be considered by the Government and the Advisory Committee on the CODF and its Executive Committee in formulating the details on the future use of the CODF.

15. We will make reference to the arrangements of other similar funds in considering how to enhance the sustainable development of the CODF through the generation of revenues from prudent investments. As regards the detailed arrangements, we will consult the Advisory Committee of CODF and its Executive Committee.

ADVICE SOUGHT

16. Members are invited to comment on the above proposed injection of funds into the CODF.

Home Affairs Bureau
May 2010