
立法會秘書處

Legislative Council Secretariat

新聞稿 Press Release

LegCo Finance Committee to scrutinize the 2011-12 Budget next week

Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) are vigilant to perform their constitutional duty as gatekeeper of the public coffer despite the fact that there are hundreds of billions of dollars in the fiscal reserve, said Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, Chairman of the LegCo Finance Committee.

The Finance Committee is going to hold a series of special meetings from 21 to 25 March 2011 to examine the 2011-12 Budget and the Government's Estimates of Expenditure for the coming financial year.

"The record number of more than 3,900 questions that Members have so far put forward to the Government on the Estimates is evidence of their hard work to ensure every dollar is spent in the best interests of the community," said Ms Lau.

These questions are raised by 56 Members, covering 83 Heads of expenditure and major funds. "Social welfare, education and health-related issues again top the league of mostly asked areas," she added.

This year's Budget has attracted particular interest from the community as the Government made unprecedented adjustments to the Budget one week after its introduction to the Council. The adjustment proposals include the removal of the original plan to inject HK\$6,000 into Mandatory Provident Fund accounts, and, in its stead, handout of HK\$6,000 for every permanent identity card

holder aged 18 or more.

"We have made special arrangements with the Administration for Members to scrutinize the adjustment proposals on 25 March 2011 together with other public expenditure items in the Estimates," said Ms Lau.

She has also invited the Financial Secretary, Mr John Tsang Chun-wah, to attend the meeting on 25 March personally to explain the adjustment proposals and negotiated for more time for Members to look at the latest adjustment proposals and to raise questions for the Administration.

The Finance Committee is tasked to examine the Estimates in details before the Appropriation Bill 2011 is further proceeded with in the Council. The Committee will hold 20 sessions of special meetings, representing more than 27 hours of discussion in total. All directors of bureaux and controlling officers, notably department heads and permanent secretaries responsible for the accounts of the respective departments and policy bureaux, will attend these meetings.

"The meetings will enable Members to go over with the Administration how it proposes to implement major policies and services with the resources proposed. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that the Administration is seeking a provision no more than is necessary for the execution of the policy concerned," Ms LAU said.

The Financial Secretary delivered his Budget Speech at the Council meeting on 23 February 2011, introducing the Appropriation Bill 2011 and the 2011-12 Estimates. Members may raise questions on the Budget before the special meetings for written replies by the Administration.

"The LegCo Secretariat is making every effort to cope with the Budget exercise. Some thirty staff have been mobilized to undertake extra duties in scrutinizing the 3,900 odd questions

within a few days," the Finance Committee Chairman said.

On 2 March 2011, the Financial Secretary made public his intention to introduce certain adjustments to the Budget. The Finance Committee was notified of the outline of the adjustment proposals on 9 March 2011. The Finance Committee Chairman considered that more time should be allowed for Members to scrutinize the adjustment proposals and to raise questions to the Administration in order to facilitate discussion at the special meetings. Following the Finance Committee Chairman's request, the Administration has agreed that Members could forward written questions on the adjustment proposals by noon on 11 March 2011. Members have submitted additional 53 questions on the adjustment proposals.

A two-day debate on the Appropriation Bill 2011 is scheduled for 6 and 7 April 2011, and the Bill will be put for vote on 13 April 2011.

Special meetings of the Finance Committee are open to the public. Interested parties are welcome to observe the meetings at the public galleries of the LegCo Chamber. Reservation for seats can be made with the LegCo Secretariat at 2869 9399 on a first-come-first-served basis.

Ends/Tuesday, March 15, 2011

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