



財政司司長 曾俊華
John C Tsang, GBM, JP
Financial Secretary

18 April 2013

The Hon Jasper Tsang Yok-sing, GBS, JP
President
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear President,

Appropriation Bill 2013

I write to express my concerns about the likely delay of the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2013.

Members have proposed over 700 Committee Stage Amendments (CSAs) to the Appropriation Bill. While I fully respect the right of Legislative Council (LegCo) Members to examine the Bill, full deliberation of these CSAs in LegCo will require a substantial amount of time. It will likely delay the passage of the Appropriation Bill beyond the point where public services can be covered by the Vote on Account Resolution. This would have adverse impact on the operation of the Government, LegCo as well as the Judiciary.

If the Appropriation Bill were not passed in time, Government would not be able to fund the following public services:

- (a) welfare payments, including Comprehensive Social Security Allowance (CSSA), Old Age Living Allowance (OALA), Old Age Allowance (OAA), Disability Allowance (DA), etc.;

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- (b) all public services requiring funding through the Appropriation Bill under various Heads of Expenditure, including education, health, law and order, environmental hygiene, food safety, employment services, legal aid, etc.;
- (c) contractual obligations, including payment for refuse collection, street cleansing, road maintenance, etc.; and
- (d) commitments towards subvented organizations, including Hospital Authority, welfare non-governmental organisations, aided schools, etc.

The timely passage of the Appropriation Bill is of vital importance to Hong Kong. The economic and social consequences for the Hong Kong community of undue delay in passing the Bill cannot be overstated.

Undue delay in the passage of the Appropriation Bill would also cause direct consequential delay in the implementation of the various initiatives announced in the 2013-14 Budget, including one-off relief measures, non-recurrent funding commitments and injections into designated funds. I am referring to the series of Budget measures requiring specific approval from the Finance Committee (FC), including two months' public housing rental relief, one extra month standard rate/allowance under CSSA/OALA/OAA/DA, \$15 billion injection into the Community Care Fund, \$5 billion for the Environment and Conservation Fund, \$5 billion for the Language Fund, \$15 billion for the Employees Retraining Board, etc. Without the passage of the Appropriation Bill, the Administration cannot seek funding approval from FC for any of these funding proposals.

In the interest of our community, I would be most grateful if you would take into account the serious consequences, and I know that you fully appreciate the gravity of the situation, when deciding on the way to process Members' CSAs at the third budget meeting on 24 April.

Best wishes,

Yours,
James