

## Index Page

### Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2020-21

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Session No. : 20

Consolidated e-file name : LWB(WW)-2S-e2.docx

Reply Serial No.	Question Serial No.	Name of Member	Head	Programme
<a href="#">S-LWB(WW)01</a>	S099	KWOK Ka-ki	141	(2) Social Welfare
<a href="#">S-LWB(WW)02</a>	S121	SHIU Ka-chun	170	(1) Family and Child Welfare

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**S-LWB(WW)01**

**(Question Serial No. S099 )**

Head: (141) Government Secretariat: Labour and Welfare Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Social Welfare

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
(Ms CHANG King-yiu)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

The Government announced details of the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund on 8 April. The Government will only temporarily relax the asset limits for applicants under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme through increasing the asset limits for an able-bodied applicant by 100%. Regarding family applications involving any able-bodied adult, the asset limit for a family with 4 or more members is \$88,000 and will be raised to \$176,000 when it is increased by 100%. The asset limit for a 1-member family is \$22,000 and will be raised to \$44,000 when it is increased by 100%.

1. How will the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) assist those people who become unemployed under the impact of the epidemic but with assets exceeding the limit of \$176,000 for a 4-member family? Please set out the rent subsidy, transport subsidy as well as the support for living expenses and educational expenses that are available to them.
2. According to government statistics, what is the median income of 4-member families living in private housing, flats under the Home Ownership Scheme and public rental housing units respectively? What is the median consumption expenditure?
3. According to government statistics, what is the median income of 4-member families living in each of the 18 districts in Hong Kong? What is the median consumption expenditure?
4. According to LWB's estimation, what is the number of people who become unemployed under the impact of the epidemic? Which industry will have the largest number of people affected? Please set out the estimated numbers of people affected with a breakdown by industry.

Asked by: Hon KWOK Ka-ki

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows:

1. & 4. Having considered the unprecedented challenges posed by the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19), the Chief Executive announced on 8 April 2020 a comprehensive package of relief measures, including the provision of a time-limited unemployment support scheme through the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) system. The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council has given its funding approval on 18 April 2020. Specifically, the Social Welfare Department will temporarily relax the CSSA asset limits for able-bodied applicants by 100% for 6 months (from 1 June to 30 November 2020). Meanwhile, under the existing CSSA arrangements, the value of an owner-occupied residential property of able-bodied households will be disregarded for a grace period of the first 12 months. This arrangement will also apply to applicants under the 6-month unemployment support scheme. It is roughly estimated that the above-mentioned support scheme will benefit 40 000 households and the total expenditure involved will be about \$3,520 million.

Separately, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) launched the “Love Upgrading Special Scheme” (the Scheme) in October 2019 to provide employees affected by economic downturn with comprehensive training for 2 to 3 months and allowance. ERB has already announced the enhancement and extension of the Scheme, providing a total of 20 000 places until the end of 2020.

The Labour and Welfare Bureau does not maintain other information sought.

2. & 3. The information provided by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) is set out at **Annex**.

**Table 1: Median monthly domestic household income of 4-member families by type of housing in 2019 according to the General Household Survey conducted by C&SD**

<b>Type of housing</b>	<b>Median monthly domestic household income</b>
Public housing	\$31,000
Subsidised home ownership housing <sup>(Note)</sup>	\$43,500
Private permanent housing	\$54,400
Overall (including temporary housing)	\$42,500

Note: Including the Home Ownership Scheme of the Hong Kong Housing Authority

**Table 2: Median monthly household expenditure of 4-member families by type of housing according to the 2014/15 Household Expenditure Survey conducted by C&SD**

<b>Type of housing</b>	<b>Median monthly household expenditure<sup>(Note 1)</sup></b>
Public housing	\$15,800
Subsidised housing <sup>(Note 2)</sup>	\$28,300
Private housing	\$35,800
Overall	\$28,000

Note 1: During the survey period of the 2014/15 Household Expenditure Survey, the Government implemented a number of one-off relief measures. The household expenditure figures set out in this table refer to the actual expenditure incurred by households after taking into account the waivers/concessions.

Note 2: Including the Home Ownership Scheme of the Hong Kong Housing Authority

- End -

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**(Question Serial No. S121)**

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (1) Family and Child Welfare

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Mr Gordon LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

At present, the Integrated Services Teams for Street Sleepers (ISTs) have an emergency fund (EF) (the Social Welfare Department (SWD) allocates about \$90,000 per annum to each IST) for application by the homeless to meet their rental payments and living needs. It is learnt that among the 3 ISTs, the Salvation Army IST serving the Yau Tsim Mong district faces a relatively tight reserve in their EF. With the McDonalds suspending their dine-in service from 25 March to 7 April and the impact of the epidemic, more homeless people, unemployed grassroot citizens and affected McRefugees in the district have sought assistance from the Salvation Army IST. Their places of accommodation for the homeless are almost fully utilised, and there is a number of people on the waiting list. The IST is making use of its EF to help those in need on guesthouse or house rentals, and has used part of its EF reserve, nearly \$30,000 for instance, on the rental payments of 4 people (covering 2 months deposits, 1 month rental plus the purchase of home furniture and equipment). The situation calls for assistance from SWD.

- (1) Given that the EF now has a net balance of around \$25,000, the IST can apply for assistance from SWD, which could then consider a further injection into the organisation's EF reserve. Would SWD inform this Committee whether the threshold of \$25,000 can be flexibly adjusted so that the IST can apply for assistance from SWD in the form of further injections into the organisation's EF reserve even when the net balance is \$50,000 or \$70,000 in case of need?
- (2) Would SWD inform this Committee whether additional annual provisions can be made for the EF so that organisations can flexibly deploy their resources to help the needy who are affected by the epidemic?
- (3) Would SWD inform this Committee whether guesthouses or hotels would be rented as temporary accommodation for the homeless to reduce their risks of contracting the virus on-street?

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-chun

Reply:

SWD provides subventions for non-governmental organisations to operate 3 ISTs and the related EF. Through the EF, SWD provides short-term financial assistance to street sleepers (to cover short-term rents, living and moving expenses, etc.) aiming to help them to be self-reliant in the long run. In general, ISTs will base on the individual needs and willingness of street sleepers and agree with them on the use of the EF with deliberations on their long-term welfare plan. According to the existing practice, SWD will make an advance allocation of \$22,500 to each IST every quarter (a total allocation of \$90,000 for the whole year), while ISTs will make use of the allocations on an accountable basis. In response to the recent development of the epidemic, SWD has reached a consensus with ISTs and will keep in view of the service needs and utilisation of the EF, and will make flexible arrangements on funding allocations to meet the urgent needs of street sleepers.

- End -