

Press Release

Government urges Finance Committee to expedite deliberations on outstanding funding proposals

Friday, October 10, 2014

Upon the commencement of the 2014-15 term of the Finance Committee (FC) today (October 10), the Government appeals to the FC to expedite deliberations on all 18 funding proposals deferred from the previous term.

The impact of filibustering during the previous term of the FC has caused a heavy toll on the efficiency of FC deliberations. There is an unprecedented backlog of 18 funding proposals which have been delayed and stalled for many months.

The backlog includes six major capital works projects, five of which are designed to tackle the most urgent environmental issues relating to organic waste treatment, landfill extension and integrated waste management. Funding is also sought for the study relating to the topside development at the Hong Kong boundary crossing facilities island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. Delays in the passage of these funding items have added to project costs. The latest total estimate for these six projects now reads \$30.5 billion, up by as much as \$1.3 billion from \$29.2 billion, as set out in the papers submitted to the FC in the last term. The price for delaying deliberations in the FC hits hard on taxpayers.

The backlog also includes important funding items to give effect to the Low-Income Working Family Allowance scheme, as well as systems and facilities for supporting the elderly and needy. Also deferred is a funding proposal to give effect to the 2014-15 pay adjustment for the civil service (with consequential impact on some subvented bodies). The efficiency in the delivery of welfare and other much-needed public services has been adversely affected by the longer-than-usual time taken to deliberate on these FC items. The livelihood of many sectors of the community has also been compromised.

"At the start of the new term of the FC, the Government sincerely appeals to all to seek an early resolution to all outstanding funding proposals. Otherwise, we foresee great difficulty for the Government to put up new and additional proposals to the FC for timely consideration in the new term," a

Government spokesman said.

The backlog awaiting consideration by the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) is also worrying. Over 20 items have been held up. The time delays and extra costs would be a drag on the infrastructure and economic development for Hong Kong.

"We would likewise appeal to the PWSC to expedite the processing of all PWSC items.

"The Government looks forward to working closely with the FC and its subcommittees in the new term.

"As has been repeatedly reminded by the Public Accounts Committee, the established regard to the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services should continue to be observed not only by the Government but also by FC and its subcommittees," the Government spokesman added.

The lists of outstanding FC and PWSC items are at Annex.

Ends