

Speech

LC: SFST's speech in moving the Rule 18(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the Legislative Council on Order of Business at a Meeting be suspended

Wednesday, March 16, 2016

Following is the English translation of a speech by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, in moving the Rule 18(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the Legislative Council on Order of Business at a Meeting be suspended in the Legislative Council today (March 16):

President,

Pursuant to Rule 91 of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Legislative Council (LegCo), I move the motion, as printed on the Agenda, be passed such that Rule 18(1) on Order of Business at a Meeting be suspended at the LegCo meeting of March 16, 2016. The purpose of the proposed suspension is to allow LegCo to consider Government's motion on the Vote on Account (VoA) Resolution for 2016-17 before Government bills. To prepare for different scenarios, the motion to suspend the operation of Rule 18(1) of the RoP is designed to apply to the Council meeting of March 16, 2016 as well as any subsequent meeting or meetings in which this VoA motion is put on the Agenda of LegCo meeting.

I have earlier given notice of the intention to move a motion on the VoA Resolution at the Council meeting of March 16, 2016, which is the last scheduled meeting in the month of March 2016. Taking into account the requirement for Government to complete a series of statutory and accounting procedures to ensure all necessary payments (including those for social security allowances) due on April 1, 2016 can be made without delay, there is an imminent and practical need for the VoA Resolution to be voted on at the Council meeting of March 16, 2016.

According to the order of Council business as prescribed in Rule 18(1), a total of seven Government bills ready for resumption of second reading debate would have to be considered before the VoA resolution at the Council meeting of March 16, 2016. Given the urgency and overriding importance of the VoA Resolution, it would be necessary for the order of Council business as

prescribed in Rule 18(1) to be changed for the Council meeting of March 16, 2016 so that the Council can consider the proposed VoA Resolution, as a matter of priority over Government bills.

The VoA Resolution seeks LegCo's authorisation of funds on account to enable Government to fund and/or subvent a full range of public services between the start of the coming financial year on April 1, 2016 and the time when the Appropriation Ordinance 2016 comes into operation. The VoA Resolution provides interim funding for education, social welfare, healthcare, security, economic development, environmental protection, financial services, innovation and technology, etc., whether the services are delivered by Government, the Judiciary or subvented bodies. According to the Budget timetable this year, resumption on the second reading of the Appropriation Bill 2016 would only start in late April. The interim funding to be made available through the VoA Resolution is thus an all-embracing time-critical bridging device.

Specifically, we propose that Government business at the relevant Council meetings be transacted in the following order:

- (a) Motion on VoA Resolution,
- (b) Government bills,
- (c) Government motions referred to in Rule 18(1)(j) of the RoP,
- (d) Other Government motions referred to in Rule 18(1)(ja) of the RoP.

I hope Members can lend their support to the order of business in LegCo meeting proposed by the Government to enable the LegCo to deliberate first on the VoA Resolution.

President, I beg to move.

Ends