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Replies to questions raised by Legislative Council Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2025-26

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Constitutional & Mainland Affairs

Session No. : 8

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**CMAB052****(Question Serial No. 2920)**Head: (163) Registration and Electoral OfficeSubhead (No. & title):Programme: Electoral ServicesControlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (Ms Natalie CHAN)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland AffairsQuestion:

The estimated expenditure on electoral services in 2025-26 is about \$1.83 billion, increasing by 174.1% over the revised estimate for 2024-25. In this connection, please inform this Committee of the following:

- 1) Set out in table form a breakdown of the specific estimated expenditure, the relevant amounts and the manpower arrangements involved (including the 2025 Election Committee Subsector By-elections and the 2025 Legislative Council General Election);
- 2) The estimated expenditure relating to the Legislative Council General Election in 2025-26, the year-on-year rate of change as compared with the last general election, as well as the reasons for the increase/decrease.

Asked by: Hon KAN Wai-mun, Carmen (LegCo internal reference no.: 4)

Reply:

The provision for 2025-26 under the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 Election Committee Subsector (ECSS) By-elections and the 2025 Legislative Council General Election (LCGE) is about \$1.513 billion (including the preparation and conduct of the 2025 voter registration cycle and relevant work), with breakdown as follows:

	Expenditure on the preparation and conduct of the ECSS By-elections and LCGE	2025-26 (Provision) \$ million
(1)	Staff cost	370
(2)	Publicity	181
(3)	Other expenses (including the costs of hiring venues, manning polling and counting stations, transportation, postage, free mailing, printing, and rental cost of temporary offices and stores, etc.)	962
	Total	1,513

2. The REO preliminarily estimates that it will need to recruit about 38 500 government employees to participate in the various electoral work for the above two elections.

3. The provision for 2025-26 for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 LCGE is about \$1.28 billion (including the provision for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 voter registration cycle and relevant work). This represents an increase of about 52% over the expenditure for the preparation and conduct of the 2021 LCGE in 2021-22 which was about \$841 million (including the provision for the preparation and conduct of the 2021 voter registration cycle and relevant work). The increase is mainly due to publicity expenses, expenditure on information technology support, rental cost of polling station venues, as well as staff remuneration, etc.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**CMAB053****(Question Serial No. 0599)**Head: (163) Registration and Electoral OfficeSubhead (No. & title):Programme: Electoral ServicesControlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (Ms Natalie CHAN)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland AffairsQuestion:

Regarding the estimated election expenses of \$1.53 billion of the Registration and Electoral Office in 2025-26, will the Government inform this Committee of the estimated expenditure and the provision earmarked for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 Legislative Council General Election, as well as the breakdown in this respect?

Asked by: Hon LAI Tung-kwok (LegCo internal reference no.: 8)Reply:

The provision for 2025-26 under the Registration and Electoral Office for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 Legislative Council General Election (LCGE) is about \$1.28 billion (including the provision for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 voter registration cycle and relevant work), with breakdown as follows:

Expenditure on the preparation and conduct of the LCGE		2025-26 (Provision) \$ million
(1)	Staff cost	289
(2)	Publicity	177
(3)	Other expenses (including the costs of hiring venues, manning polling and counting stations, transportation, postage, free mailing, printing, and rental cost of temporary offices and stores, etc.)	814
<hr/> Total		1,280

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**CMAB054****(Question Serial No. 2422)**Head: (163) Registration and Electoral OfficeSubhead (No. & title):Programme: Electoral ServicesControlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (Ms Natalie CHAN)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland AffairsQuestion:

The Registration and Electoral Office stated in the Programme that its work plan for 2025-26 includes the conduct and supervision of the 2025 Election Committee Subsector By-elections and the 2025 Legislative Council General Election. In this connection, will the Government inform this Committee of:

1. the details of the work plan and the estimated staff establishment and expenditure for the Election Committee Subsector By-elections; and
2. the details of the work plan and the estimated staff establishment and expenditure for the Legislative Council General Election?

Asked by: Hon LEE Chun-keung (LegCo internal reference no.: 10)Reply:

The provision for 2025-26 under the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 Election Committee Subsector (ECSS) By-elections is about \$233 million with breakdown as follows:

Expenditure on the preparation and conduct of the ECSS By-elections		2025-26 (Provision) \$ million
(1)	Staff cost	81
(2)	Publicity	4
(3)	Other expenses	148
	(including the costs of hiring venues, manning polling and counting stations, transportation, postage, free mailing, printing, and rental cost of temporary offices and stores, etc.)	
Total		233

2. The provision for 2025-26 under the REO for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 Legislative Council General Election (LCGE) is about \$1.28 billion (including the provision for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 voter registration cycle and relevant work), with breakdown as follows:

	Expenditure on the preparation and conduct of the LCGE	2025-26 (Provision) \$ million
(1)	Staff cost	289
(2)	Publicity	177
(3)	Other expenses (including the costs of hiring venues, manning polling and counting stations, transportation, postage, free mailing, printing, and rental cost of temporary offices and stores, etc.)	814
	<hr/> Total	<hr/> 1,280

3. The REO preliminarily estimates that it will need to recruit about 1 500 and 37 000 government employees to participate in the electoral work for the 2025 ECSS By-elections and the 2025 LCGE respectively. Currently, the Government is working actively with the Electoral Affairs Commission on the detailed electoral arrangements and will announce the specific arrangements in due course.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**CMAB055****(Question Serial No. 1946)**Head: (163) Registration and Electoral OfficeSubhead (No. & title):Programme: Electoral ServicesControlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (Ms Natalie CHAN)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland AffairsQuestion:

1. Please list out the total amount of expenditure of the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) each year from 2019 to 2024 on A. voter registration, B. verification of voter registration and C. publicity of voter registration; the manpower required by the REO to complete the relevant work; and the emoluments and benefits involved.
2. Please list out the projects undertaken by the REO in the recent 5 years for enhancing its information technology and electronic systems; and the amount spent on these projects each year. How much manpower was saved or how was work efficiency improved by these projects for the REO?

Asked by: Hon LI Sai-wing, Stanley (LegCo internal reference no.: 32)Reply:

In the past 5 years, the establishment and expenditure of the Voter Registration Division responsible for voter registration matters under the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) are tabulated below:

Financial year	Establishment	Expenditure#
2020-21	127	\$184 million
2021-22	131	\$168 million
2022-23	127	\$130 million
2023-24	124	\$165 million
2024-25 (Revised estimate)	124	\$144 million

Inclusive of staff remuneration and operating expenses

2. After improving the electoral system, the REO normally launches the Voter Registration Campaign in April every year. The deadline for submitting applications for new registration/report on change of particulars is set on 2 June every year. The publicity expenses for the Voter Registration Campaign in the past 3 years are tabulated below:

Voter Registration Campaign	Expenditure
2022	\$5.16 million
2023	\$13.60 million
2024	\$7.06 million

3. In line with the improved electoral system, the REO has been applying information technology (IT) more extensively in elections in recent years. In addition to using the Electronic Poll Register System for issuing ballot papers and the Electronic Vote Counting System to assist in vote counting, the REO has continuously applied IT in other electoral processes to enhance efficiency and introduce more user-friendly arrangements. For example: (1) enhancing the Online Voter Information Enquiry System to enable voters to log in the system through “iAM Smart”, and submit applications for new registration or report on change of registration particulars by an elector in a geographical constituency, etc. via “iAM Smart+” so as to facilitate voters; (2) utilising the Electronic Platform for Recruitment of Electoral Staff and the E-sign in/sign out System for Electoral Staff to optimise the recruitment, management and attendance record arrangements for electoral staff; (3) launching the Polling Station Management System to monitor the progress of delivering electoral materials to polling stations before the election and support the replenishment of materials on the polling day; and (4) launching the Mobile Input System for Electoral Statistics to enable polling and counting staff to input, calculate and verify various electoral data of polling and counting stations and upload such data to the Statistical Information Centre of the REO on the polling day in a more convenient and efficient manner, so as to make the data collection process more efficient and accurate. The expenditures on the administration and maintenance of the systems (including the staff costs) are part of the REO’s recurrent expenditure and thus cannot be itemised separately.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CMAB056

(Question Serial No. 0779)

Head: (163) Registration and Electoral Office

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: Electoral Services

Controlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (Ms Natalie CHAN)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Question:

Provision for 2025-26 is \$1.1593 billion (174.1%) higher than the revised estimate for 2024-25, mainly due to the conduct of the 2025 Election Committee Subsector By-elections and the 2025 Legislative Council General Election, which are included in Matters Requiring Special Attention this year. In addition, there will be a net decrease of 4 posts in 2025-26. In this connection, please inform this Committee of the following:

- (1) the estimated expenditures and manpower arrangements for the 2 elections, the reasons for proposing the earmarked provision, and whether other methods such as technology will be adopted to reduce costs and enhance efficiency;
- (2) the details regarding the net decrease of 4 posts in 2025-26;
- (3) the Administration has stated that publicity work for future public elections will be conducted through various “innovative, diversified and down-to-earth” means, so as to encourage the public to vote in the Legislative Council election. What are the innovative measures for promoting elections in the context of a fiscal deficit?

Asked by: Hon LIAO Cheung-kong, Martin (LegCo internal reference no.: 16)

Reply:

The provision for 2025-26 under the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 Election Committee Subsector (ECSS) By-elections is about \$233 million and the provision for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 Legislative Council General Election (LCGE) is about \$1.28 billion (including the provision for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 voter registration cycle and relevant work).

2. The REO preliminarily estimates that it will need to recruit about 1 500 and 37 000 government employees to participate in the electoral work for the 2025 ECSS By-elections and the 2025 LCGE respectively.

3. The above mentioned provisions are to ensure the smooth conduct of the two elections, ensuring that the elections will be fair, just and honest, as well as safe, orderly, efficient and user-friendly. In respect of election publicity, the REO is dedicated to launching diversified and extensive publicity activities to promote public understanding of and support to the elections, thereby creating a lively election atmosphere which will encourage electors to vote actively.

4. The REO has been applying information technology (IT) more extensively in the elections in recent years. In addition to using the Electronic Poll Register system for issuing ballot papers and the Electronic Vote Counting System to assist in vote counting, the REO has also applied IT in other electoral processes. Examples are launching the Polling Station Management System to monitor the progress of delivering electoral materials to polling stations before the election and support the replenishment of such materials on the polling day; and introducing the Mobile Input System for Electoral Statistics to enable polling staff to conveniently and effectively input, calculate, validate and submit various electoral data. The REO will, having regard to the actual circumstances and need, continue to promote the application of IT to enhance efficiency and make elections more user-friendly.

5. As at 31 March 2025, the REO's establishment consists of 320 posts and it is anticipated that 2 additional civil service posts (including 1 Senior Systems Manager and 1 Systems Manager posts) will be created in 2025-26. After discounting 6 posts to be deleted in 2025-26 (including 1 Executive Officer I, 3 Assistant Clerical Officers, 1 Clerical Assistant and 1 Office Assistant posts), the REO's establishment will gradually reduce to 316 posts in 2025-26, resulting in a net decrease of 4 posts.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CMAB057

(Question Serial No. 1315)

Head: (163) Registration and Electoral Office

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: Electoral Services

Controlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (Ms Natalie CHAN)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Question:

- (1) The estimated expenditure of the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) for 2025-26 is \$1.82 billion, representing an increase of 174.1% over the revised estimate for 2024-25. Such an increase is mainly due to the conduct of the 2025 Election Committee Subsector By-elections and the 2025 Legislative Council General Election. The expenses for the 2 elections have amounted to over \$1.53 billion. Please advise of the allocation of such expenses.
- (2) The revised estimate of election expenses for 2024-25 is \$400 million, yet no election has been conducted during the year. What are the purposes of the election expenses concerned?
- (3) The estimated expenditure of salaries under personal emoluments for 2025-26 exceeds \$190 million, representing an increase of more than 9% over the revised estimate for 2024-25. In light of the civil service pay freeze, what are the reasons for such an increase? According to paragraph 3 under the analysis of recurrent expenditure, the establishment of the REO as at the end of March 2025 will be 320 posts. It is expected that there will be a net decrease of 4 posts in 2025-26. In this regard, why is there an increase, rather than a decrease, in the estimated expenditure for salaries?

Asked by: Hon MA Fung-kwok (LegCo internal reference no.: 20)

Reply:

The provision for 2025-26 under the Registration and Electoral Office for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 Election Committee Subsector (ECSS) By-elections is about \$233 million and the provision for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 Legislative Council General Election (LCGE) is about \$1.28 billion (including the provision for the preparation and conduct of the 2025 voter registration cycle and relevant work).

2. Although 2024-25 is not an election year, the REO still has to carry out various election-related work, including the follow-up work of the 2023 District Council Ordinary

Election, preparation and conduct of the annual voter registration cycle and relevant work, and advanced preparation of part of the work for the two elections in 2025, etc.

3. The provision for personal emoluments of the REO for 2025-26 is higher than the revised estimate for 2024-25. This is mainly due to the filling of some vacancies not until the later part of 2024-25, and thus the revised estimate for 2024-25 cannot reflect the full-year salary expenditure for those posts, in addition to the anticipated increase in expenditure for 2025-26 arising from salary increments of civil servants.

4. As at 31 March 2025, the REO's establishment consists of 320 posts, and it is anticipated that 2 additional civil service posts (including 1 Senior Systems Manager and 1 Systems Manager posts) will be created in 2025-26. After discounting 6 posts to be deleted in 2025-26 (including 1 Executive Officer I, 3 Assistant Clerical Officer, 1 Clerical Assistant and 1 Office Assistant posts), the REO's establishment will gradually reduce to 316 posts in 2025-26, resulting in a net decrease of 4 posts. After the change in the number of posts, there will be a net increase of \$548,040 in the notional annual mid-point salary value because the mid-point salaries of the newly created posts are higher than those of the deleted posts.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CMAB058

(Question Serial No. 2651)

Head: (163) Registration and Electoral Office

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: Electoral Services

Controlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (Ms Natalie CHAN)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Question:

The number of electors recorded in the (Provisional) Register of Electors has declined continuously over the past 3 years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Committee of the following:

1. The changes in the number of electors in the recent 5 years, with a breakdown by administrative district;
2. The changes in the number of electors in the recent 5 years, with a breakdown by age group (each covering 5 years; starting from 18 years old);
3. The number of electors (a) de-registered voluntarily; (b) being de-registered; (c) removed from the Register due to death; and (d) de-registered due to other reasons, over the past 5 years, with a breakdown by administrative district; and
4. The number of electors (a) de-registered voluntarily; (b) being de-registered; (c) removed from the Register due to death; and (d) de-registered due to other reasons, with a breakdown by age group (each covering 5 years; starting from 18 years old).

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen (LegCo internal reference no.: 31)

Reply:

- 1 and 2) The statistical information about the Final Register of Electors for Geographical Constituencies in the recent 5 years (including the number of registered electors and the age profile in each district) is available on the voter registration dedicated website (vr.gov.hk) of the Registration and Electoral Office (REO).
- 3 and 4) The numbers of geographical constituency electors removed from the register for no longer meeting the eligibility for registration in the past 5 years (from 2020 to 2024) and the reasons are tabulated as follows:

Registration cycle Reason for removal and number of electors					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Through statutory inquiry process	47 084	34 165	55 510	71 354	103 914
Death	25 853	41 479	38 031	37 634	35 796
Other Reasons (Such as voluntary de-registration, loss of Hong Kong permanent resident status, objection cases allowed by the Revising Officer, etc.)	546	1 461	2 761	1 747	1 982
Total	73 483	77 105	96 302	110 735	141 692

The REO does not have the relevant statistics broken down by district or age group of electors.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CMAB072

(Question Serial No. 3976)

Head: (163) Registration and Electoral Office

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: Electoral Services

Controlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (Ms Natalie CHAN)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Question:

Regarding the continuous enhancement of electoral arrangements, are there any corresponding training programmes and technology application initiatives in place to improve the compilation and safety management of the Electronic Poll Register while enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of ballot paper issuing procedures through leveraging technology?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Yung (LegCo internal reference no.: 37)

Reply:

The Registration and Electoral Office (REO) has adopted the Electronic Poll Register (EPR) system since the 2021 Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections. After the electors have produced their identity documents, the polling staff can verify the identities of the electors, issue ballot papers and record through the EPR system. The ballot paper issuing process will no longer require polling staff to search for electors' entries in the printed-form final register manually and to cross out entries on the printed copies when issuing ballot papers. This greatly enhances the efficiency and accuracy of the ballot paper issuing process. Moreover, electors can check their personal data on the tablet screens, which enhances the transparency of the whole ballot paper issuing process. In addition, unlike the traditional arrangement of assigning electors to specific ballot paper issuing desks, electors can collect their ballot papers at any issuing desks in their respective polling stations as directed. This arrangement can fully utilise the issuing desks in polling stations and make the ballot paper issuing process smoother.

2. Regarding the application and operation of the EPR system, the REO will arrange a series of training and rehearsal sessions for electoral staff at all levels for each election. Taking the 2023 District Council Ordinary Election as an example, the REO organised training sessions on the operation of the system for over 30 000 electoral staff, enabling them to practise in groups the issuing of ballot papers with the EPR system, and organised drills and scenario simulations for staff at the supervisory level, including step-by-step demonstrations and practices on activating the contingency plans in response to unexpected situations. Through simulated training, the REO ensured that staff at the supervisory level were acquainted with the relevant procedures and operation and would be able to lead the polling staff to deal with unexpected circumstances. Meanwhile, the REO also arranged

technical training on the actual operation of the system for technical support staff to familiarise them with the procedures and skills of setting up the EPR system at the polling stations. Furthermore, the operation manual and training videos produced by the REO included dedicated chapters to explain the application and operation of the EPR system, including relevant contingency arrangements for activating the fallback mode when necessary.

- End -