

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**CSO013**

**(Question Serial No. 1526)**

Head: (94) Legal Aid Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (4) Official Solicitor's Office

Controlling Officer: Director of Legal Aid (C. M. CHAN)

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question:

The number of active cases as at end of year handled by the Official Solicitor's Office increased from 685 in 2024 to 747 in 2025, and it is expected to increase further to 805 in 2026. This reflects a sharp rise over 2 consecutive years, amounting to a cumulative increase of 17.5%.

In this connection, would the Government inform this Committee of the following:

1. What are the reasons for the continuous increase in the number of active cases?
2. Regarding the provision for Programme (4), there is an increase of 5.6% from the revised estimate of \$19.6 million for 2025-26 to the estimate of \$20.7 million for 2026-27, while the establishment remained unchanged. With the rising number of cases, are the existing resources sufficient to fulfil the work requirements? Will increasing staff establishment be considered to manage the growing number of cases?

Asked by: Hon SO Shiu-tsung, Thomas (LegCo internal reference no.: 9)

Reply:

1. The Official Solicitor's Office (the Office) primarily handles cases referred by the court or legal practitioners. The total number of active cases includes ongoing cases carried forward from previous years and new cases received in the year concerned. Certain ongoing cases, such as those where the Official Solicitor serves as the Official Trustee, committee for mental patients or guardian ad litem/next friend of children, take longer to handle.

The increase in the number of active cases in 2025 and the estimated number of active cases in 2026 is mainly attributed to a sharp rise of 17.4% in the number of new cases received by the Office in 2024 compared to 2023, along with a considerable number of new cases referred to the Office in 2025. There was also a significant increase in the numbers of 2 types of new cases referred to the Office in 2024 and 2025. These 2 types of cases are representation of deceased persons' estates in litigation and representation of adults under disability under Rule 105 of Matrimonial Causes Rules. Cases involving representation of deceased persons' estates in litigation recorded growth of 47% in 2024 and 25% in 2025 as compared to 2023, while cases involving

representation of adults under disability recorded growth of 61% in 2024 and 36% in 2025 as compared to 2023.

2. To cope with the growing number of cases, the Office has accorded priority to urgent cases based on imminent deadlines, court directions and the vulnerability of individuals in order to maintain quality services. In the long run, the Office will assess and review its establishment to meet the operational needs.

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