

Nearly 185 000 applications received by end of second tranche of Employment Support Scheme application period

A Government spokesman said today (September 14) that at the close of applications for the second tranche of the Employment Support Scheme (ESS) last night (September 13), the Government had received a total of 184 723 applications, including 158 337 applications from employers and 26 386 applications from self-employed persons (SEPs) since the commencement of the application period on August 31.

The spokesman said, "The second tranche of the ESS has received a strong response. The number of employer applications received in the second tranche of the ESS is similar to the number of about 150 000 successful employers who applied in the first tranche of the ESS (after deducting about 18 600 unsuccessful applications in the first tranche of the ESS). Among the employers' applications for the second tranche of the ESS received, nearly 143 000 employer applicants (about 90 per cent) had successfully applied for the first tranche of the ESS.

"We are of the view that the second tranche of the ESS can continue to achieve the purpose of preserving jobs, preventing the worsening of substantial redundancies and facilitating the speedy recovery of the economy after the epidemic stabilises."

"The ESS Secretariat and the processing agent are expeditiously processing all applications received. Upon completion of the processing of applications, the ESS Secretariat will notify successful applicants via email and SMS. We expect the first batch of successful applicants to receive notification within this week."

Applicants can log in to the ESS portal (enquiry.ess.gov.hk) to check the application results including the amount of subsidy granted under the second tranche and the committed paid headcount for the months of September to November 2020.

The spokesman said, "If an applicant has no objection to the application result, we encourage the applicant to confirm the acceptance of the application result through the enquiry portal within two days of the notification such that the Secretariat may arrange for an earlier disbursement of wage subsidies."

If the employer concerned has been disbursed subsidies in both the first and second tranches, but has not used the entire subsidy amount received in the first tranche on paying the wages of employees in June or July, or the number of paid employees is less than the total number of paid and unpaid employees in March 2020, the Government will claw back the unspent amount,

and/or request the employer to pay a penalty; the relevant amount of which will be deducted from the second tranche of subsidies. If the employer concerned has failed to fully fulfil the above two undertakings in August, the Government will seek to retrieve the subsidy amount that should be returned to the Government and/or collect a penalty from the employers concerned separately after disbursing the second tranche of wage subsidies.

The spokesman reminded, "Should an applicant have any enquiries about the application result, the applicant is required to make a request for a review of the decision through the above-mentioned enquiry portal within seven days from the date of issuance of the result notification. Once the request for review is received, the subsidy payment will then be withheld until the completion of the review. If no request for review is received from the applicant before the deadline, the application result will become final. The Secretariat will not accept any late request for review of the application result."

Should there be any other enquiries, applicants should inform the ESS processing agent, through the ESS Application Service Portal (customerservice.ess.gov.hk), using the application number and password for follow-up. Applicants may send an email to enquiry@employmentsupport.hk, call the ESS hotline 1836 122 or make an appointment to visit any one of the following Help Desks during service hours for enquires:

- North Point Help Desk at Room 1701, A T Tower, 180 Electric Road, North Point;
- Kwun Tong Help Desk at Room 2507, Prosperity Center, 25 Chong Yip Street, Kwun Tong; and
- Tsuen Wan Help Desk at Room 1206, Chinachem Tsuen Wan Plaza, 455 Castle Peak Road – Tsuen Wan.