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~~\$2.5b request~~ for welfare centres passed

A \$2.5 BILLION grant to pay for social welfare and rehabilitation centres was approved by the Legislative Council Finance Committee yesterday, despite the Liberal Party asking that the budget request be withdrawn.

Legislators queried whether the purchases were worthwhile. Some claimed the government was being asked to pay too much since private developments were demanding an average price of \$10,000 per square foot.

They also questioned whether the government might be going too up-market for one of the proposed premises in Wan Chai, which costs \$20,000 psf.

Deputy Director of Social Welfare Department Louise Wong said the premises were expensive because they had to be strategically located.

Liberal legislator Steven Poon said since many of his members still had doubts about the spending request, he would ask the grant proposal to be withdrawn.

Despite Mr Poon's reservations, the proposal was approved by 24 votes to nine.