

# Anger at class sizes

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By CAROL SCOTT

TEACHERS are disappointed with the Board of Education's decision to endorse the move to bigger classes proposed by the Government.

And a spokesman said the profession intended to keep fighting the scheme.

The Government plans to save \$406 million over three years by expanding classes in Primary One, Form One and Form Four from 38 to 40 students each.

The scheme would effectively increase the size of many classes to 42, as the size of Form Four classes is often boosted by repeat students.

Teachers have already threatened to strike over the scheme, but the board is the

top advisory body to the Education Department for schools and its endorsement must make the proposal's implementation more likely.

The statutory body is composed of about 15 high-profile members including the Director of Education, the senior secretary of the Education and Manpower Branch, a representative from the Vocational Training Council, chairman of a number of advisory committees within the Education Department and representatives of the different school sectors.

The scheme will be discussed by the Omelco Education Panel tomorrow.

## Teachers to fight proposal

Speaking after yesterday's announcement, the chairman of the Education Action Group, Mr Anthony Ha Man-ho, said: "This is very disappointing news. It will have a bad effect on the morale of the teachers and the quality of education in secondary and primary schools."

Mr Ha said teachers' groups, including the Professional Teachers' Union (PTU) and the Government Non-Graduate Teachers' Union have got together to fight the proposal.

He said that industrial action was a possibility and that teachers plan a protest march to Government House.

Board of Education chairman Mr Timothy Ha Wing-ho, stressed that the board had endorsed the plan "with reluctance".

Mr Ha said the Education Department had been told it must save \$406 million over three years and had decided that the simplest and least disruptive way to do it would be by increasing class size. The Government would save about 800 classes across the three age groups.

Mr Ha said that before endorsing the proposal, the board had looked at ten alternative cost-cutting proposals put forward by school councils and teachers' unions but none of them

would save the required amount.

"The other proposals were either not workable or the savings proposed were too insignificant to be considered, so we reluctantly agreed to endorse the proposal," Mr Ha said.

Proposals which were rejected included abolishing the scheme which brings expatriate English teachers to Hongkong - it would have saved only \$4.5 million over three years.

Another proposal to phase out a government-funded scheme which sends tertiary level students to Britain was also rejected.

The teachers' groups will hold a press conference this afternoon at which they will outline their proposals for fighting the scheme.