

\$25m boost for new welfare package

THE Finance Committee will be asked today to accept the financial implications arising from a proposal to improve the public assistance scheme beginning January 1.

A package of proposed improvements was approved by the Governor-in-Council, subject to the provision of the necessary funds, following a recent review of the scheme.

The costs are estimated at \$25.7 million for a full year in annual recurrent expenditure.

The Finance Committee will also consider two items relating to recent events on

the Hongkong stock and futures markets.

The first is a commitment of \$3.5 million for a consultancy on the financial futures market in Hongkong. The expenditure was incurred as a result of engaging Hambros Bank Ltd on October 22 to act as adviser to the Government.

This led to the orderly re-opening of the stock and futures markets on October 26.

The second item is to approve the financial implications of establishing the Securities Review Committee, estimated at \$5.1 million, and a new non-

recurrent commitment of \$3.9 million to engage experts and for duty visits.

Other items on today's agenda are:

□ an increase of \$6.19 million in the block capital grant to the Housing Department for inclusion of 11 additional welfare projects in the rolling programme;

□ to pump in \$19 million more towards the cost of asbestos abatement work to be carried out in 28 aided schools;

□ a commitment of \$5.9 million to help the Po Leung Kuk provide a special school with boarding places for severely mentally hand-

icapped children at the Lei Muk Shue Estate;

□ the financial implications of setting up a pilot computerised hospital information system for the Medical and Health Department, estimated at \$33 million in non-recurrent costs and \$5.9 million in annual recurrent expenditure on full implementation and;

□ a commitment of \$12.8 million for repairs and maintenance to the Caritas Medical Centre and a commitment of \$3.68 million for repairs to the external walls of buildings at the Kwong Wah Hospital.