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\$300,000 limit in Legco polls

CANDIDATES standing for election to the Legislative Council in the coming direct polls will be allowed to spend up to \$300,000 on campaign expenses.

At a briefing yesterday the Chief Secretary, Sir David Ford, told Executive and Legislative Councillors that campaign expenses would be in the range of \$150,000 to \$300,000.

The amount is in line with that suggested by the liberals.

However, the Government will not decide on the matter until the revised electoral laws are submitted to the Executive Council for consideration towards the end of next month.

The Government estimates the size of a Legco constituency to be about double that of the Regional Council or the Urban Council.

Therefore, it believes printing costs will also be double.

At present, the spending limit for Urban Council and Regional Council elections is \$43,000.

"But the Government has to set a higher limit to allow for more personal publicity," a source said.

"The Legco constitu-

encies are so large that candidates have to spend more to make themselves known to voters," the source said.

However, the Government has decided not to allow candidates to spend more than \$300,000.

"If the ceiling is too high it would be saying to the public that only the rich should stand for election," the source said.

The Government is presently considering whether publicity activities organised by a candidate's party should be considered as individual expenses.

If these activities are to be counted they would have to be deducted from the campaign funds.

In the same exercise, the Government is also reviewing the campaign expenses of candidates standing in the direct elections to district boards, the Urban Council and the Regional Council.

"There will not be any drastic increase in these campaign expenses," the source said.

"They will be adjusted only slightly according to the rate of inflation."

The spending limit for district board elections is \$12,000.