

First batch of successful employer applicants for the second tranche of Employment Support Scheme received notification

A Government spokesman today (September 17) said, the Employment Support Scheme (ESS) Secretariat yesterday (September 16) notified the first batch of 20 000 successful employer applicants of the application result for the second tranche of the ESS with subsidies totalling \$7.2 billion and a total committed headcount of paid employees of nearly 290 000.

The ESS Secretariat has notified successful applicants via email and SMS. Applicants can log in to the ESS portal (enquiry.ess.gov.hk) to check the application results.

The spokesman said, "If an applicant has no objection to the application result, the applicant should 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."

Among the first batch of employers who will receive wage subsidies for the second tranche, almost all of them have been granted subsidies in the first tranche. Among them, about 77 per cent have not breached the two undertakings of first tranche of the ESS. Therefore, they are not required to pay penalty or return subsidies to the Government. For those 23 per cent in total who have not fully used the subsidy amount received on paying wages to employees in June or July, or the number of paid employees was 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 subsidies of the second tranche. Among the first batch of employers who will have their wage subsidies deducted, 97 per cent of those employers' deducted amount accounted for less than 5 per cent of the respective subsidy they received for June or July.

The spokesman reminded, "Should employers have any enquiries about the application result, they are required to make a request for a review of the result through the above-mentioned enquiry portal within seven days from the date of 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 before the deadline, the application result will become final. The Secretariat will not accept any late request for review of the application result."

In addition, regarding the mandatory contribution for the last month (August 2020) of the subsidy period of the first tranche, in accordance with

the requirements of the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority, employers are required to remit mandatory contributions for employees on or before September 10, 2020. However, having considered the impact of the Covid-19, the Government will accept MPF record certificates (certificates) to be provided by MPF trustees if employers' MPF contributions for August 2020 have been settled on or before September 30, 2020 so as to examine whether any redundancies have been made.

Since MPF trustees will need time to process the relevant information, employers should contact their MPF trustees to ensure that the trustees will be able to complete the processing of their MPF contribution payments and other relevant information on or before September 30, 2020, so that such information can be reflected in their certificates for August 2020. If an employer fails to remit mandatory contributions or provide relevant information to MPF trustees in time, the relevant employees will not be counted towards the total number of paid employees and their wages will not be counted towards the total "relevant income"/ basic salaries in the certificates for August 2020. If the certificate shows an employer's "relevant income"/ basic salaries is less than the wage subsidies of a particular month, or the total number of paid employees in any one month of the subsidy period is less than the "committed headcount of paid employees", the employer concerned has to return the unspent amount of the wage subsidy or to pay a penalty.

Regarding the mandatory contribution within the subsidy period of the second tranche (September, October and November 2020), in accordance with the requirements of the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority, employers are required to remit mandatory contributions for employees on or before October 12, 2020, November 10 and December 10, 2020 respectively.

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 also 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.