

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (November 26):

Reporter: Chief Executive, some pro-government parties have blamed you and the extradition saga for their defeat. Do you agree with their interpretation of the election results and do you feel apologetic about the loss? And some analysts also said the election is a de-facto referendum and it shows a majority of the citizens support the current social movement and the demands of the protesters despite the violence. What do you think about that and will you reconsider some of the demands of the protesters in view of the election results?

Chief Executive: First of all, the nature of these elections is simply to elect District Council members to serve on the 18 District Councils. It is not for the Government and for myself to give it another interpretation because by law we are electing members to serve on the District Councils. But I do confess that this particular District Council election, unlike previous District Council elections, has a more political dimension to it. I said in my statement yesterday that we were aware of the large number of voters coming out to cast their vote, perhaps not only to select a preferred candidate to sit on the District Council, but also to express a view on many issues in society, including, I would readily accept that, including deficiencies in governance, and including unhappiness with the time taken to deal with the current unstable environment and to end violence. I said that we will seriously reflect on these views expressed to us and improve governance in the future of our work.

As far as the pro-establishment members are concerned – of course fundamentally, we do not take sides in the sense that we will side with particular political affiliation in elections because elections have to be conducted in a fair, honest manner – when the general mood in society is they have a lot of unhappiness about the way we govern, about the ways we roll out policies, then perhaps they will be affected by that sort of mood. I am pleased to say that from what our pro-establishment political parties said yesterday, they will continue to serve the people and we will continue to work with them.

Reporter: Chief Executive, clearly the public support the protesters. Should you not have some concessions, perhaps an enquiry into what's happened here? Because they are saying to all of us who are on the streets that they will go back and it will be even more violent if you don't engage. Is it not time now, six months in, to properly engage rather than just saying there is a silent majority which clearly doesn't exist?

Chief Executive: No, I did not refer to a silent majority. I did confess that this particular election has clearly reflected that many voters wanted to express their opinions and views to the Government, to myself. And the views and opinions expressed, I hope you agree, are quite diverse. There are people who want to express the view that they could no longer tolerate the violence on the streets, there are people who felt that the Government has not handled competently the legislative exercise and its aftermath. As I have said very clearly on September 4, we have officially and formally withdrawn the Bill, which was the cause of all these social unrest. The next step to go forward is really, as you have put it, to engage the people, and we have started public dialogue with the community. Unfortunately, with the unstable and violent environment and chaotic situation, I could not do more of that sort of engagement. I hope that the environment will allow me to do it now. And, like in the other places' experience, particularly in the United Kingdom after the 2011 Tottenham riots, we are now modeling on that arrangement to set up an independent review committee to look at the causes of the social unrest which has lasted for so long in Hong Kong, to identify the underlying problems, social, economic, or even political, and to recommend measures that the Government should take. I sincerely hope that these will provide us with the way forward.

Let me just stress that after these five or six months, Hong Kong people have realised very clearly that Hong Kong could no longer tolerate this chaotic situation. Everybody wants to go back to their normal life and this requires the concerted efforts of every one of us. As I have said repeatedly, resorting to violence will not give us that way forward. Please help us to maintain the relative calm and peace that we have seen in the last week or so and provide a good basis for Hong Kong to move forward.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)