

PRESS RELEASE
FOURTH REPORT OF THE ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

1 The Estimates Committee presented its fourth report to Parliament on 13 November 2019. The Estimates Committee had considered the Budget for the Financial Year (FY) 2019/2020 (Paper Cmd. 19 of 2019) and enquired into certain matters, including special transfers, supplementary estimates for FY2018 and cybersecurity in Government and resources allocated. The Committee also made inquiries on the measures to build Singapore as a Global-Asia node of technology and development, and monitored the implementation of the national SkillsFuture movement.

2 In the course of its enquiry, the Committee held four meetings and considered memoranda from the Ministry of Finance and a written representation from the Singapore Business Federation (SBF).

3 The Fourth Report of the Estimates Committee [Parl 18 of 2019] is attached.

4 Ms Foo Mee Har, the Chairman of the Committee said, “Noting that a significant amount of \$15.3 billion in Budget 2019 was set aside under Special Transfers which included top-ups to endowment and trust funds, the Committee acknowledged the Government’s sustained efforts to leverage on such mechanisms and funds to meet specific current and future needs of Singaporeans. The Committee urged the Government to continue exploring ways to find the ‘right’ financing solution to fund programmes, balancing competing needs of Singaporeans across generations as well as ensuring that the healthcare needs of new cohorts beyond Pioneer and Merdeka Generations would receive similar support, in the light of greying population and increasing life expectancy.

With \$19 billion set aside under Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2020 (RIE2020), the Committee urged the Government to inculcate strong discipline in extracting value from R&D and RIE investments, including the development of a comprehensive set of analytics, to set KPIs and inform value and outcomes. Unlike other small advanced economies, where a significant proportion of Business Expenditure in R&D (BERD) may be contributed by a few large locally-headquartered MNCs, around 50 of Singapore’s top large local enterprises contributed only 15% of BERD. The Committee urged the Government to comprehend the underlying factors for Singapore’s diffused BERD contributions, and the pre-conditions for nurturing the emergence of national unicorns that are globally competitive.

The Committee recommended that the Government considers Singapore Business Federation’s feedback on the Centres of Innovation (COIs) programme, especially regarding efforts to reduce bureaucracy, and help local SMEs shorten their learning curve in embracing technology language, licensing frameworks and translation prototypes, so that they may be equipped to fully participate in R&D.”

Office of the Clerk of Parliament
14 November 2019