

Economic restructuring to be a key topic at Budget debate

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Economic restructuring and the new Wage Credit Scheme to help raise incomes are likely to dominate the three-day Budget debate that kicks off tomorrow.

Many MPs are expected to speak in Parliament, a month after a heated debate on the population white paper. Some will call for a slower pace to restructuring and more help for small businesses, while others will warn against going too far towards welfarism as the government expands its social spending programmes.

They are also set to call for more drastic measures to address ongoing concerns over high public housing, transportation and healthcare costs. A number of MPs tell Singapolitics about what they intend to raise during the debate.

Dr Chia Shi-Lu (Tanjong Pagar GRC):

“I will comment on the Wage Credit Scheme, which seems like a positive first step in the direction I have spoken about previously. Previously, I called for government support to encourage companies to pass on productivity gains to workers, as many schemes help companies to do better, but sometimes these gains are not passed down to the workers in terms of wage increases.”

Edwin Tong (Moulmein-Kallang GRC):

“Singaporeans cannot depend on the government alone, and I am concerned that the social transfers do not make for a softer population. The Budget helps the low income level up. This is good, but there are different ways of doing this. We have to be careful not to rely too much on social transfers which are disguised handouts and not pegged to matching effort.”

Nominated MP Eugene Tan:

“I hope to pursue the policy question of whether we are likely to see more re-distributionist approaches in our tax system, or whether the approach ought to be one more focused on improving social mobility but not ignoring the limited utility of redistribution. I also plan to raise questions about the sustainability of the WCS and whether it is sufficient incentive to change behaviours of employees towards shift work and service jobs.”

Mr David Ong (Jurong GRC):

“I want to talk about our seniors workers and for them to live, play and work in dignity. Our older workers should be a critical component of our workforce given the shrinking work force and ageing population. More can be done to support our older workers. I will also be calling for a mindset change for employers to view older workers as a valuable resource and pay them fair wages.”