

LCQ6: Attracting non-locally trained doctors to practise in Hong Kong

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Chiang Lai-wan and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 17):

Question:

To attract non-locally trained doctors to practise in Hong Kong so as to alleviate the manpower shortage of doctors in public hospitals, I and fellow members of the party to which I belong proposed in the middle of last year to amend the Medical Registration Ordinance to the effect that non-locally trained doctors who had been in employment with the Hospital Authority (HA) under limited registration for not less than five years and with satisfactory work performance would be qualified to apply for full registration as a registered doctor, without having to go through the required examination. The Government responded that as the proposal was controversial, it was not an "opportune time" to amend the Ordinance without full consultation of the stakeholders. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has assessed at what time, and upon what conditions having been met, it will be an opportune time to implement the aforesaid proposal; whether it has consulted HA and other stakeholders on the proposal; if it has consulted, of the details of the views collected, including the ratio between those views for the proposal and those against and the justifications therefor; whether and when it will consult members of the public on the proposal;

(2) whether it knows the current situation of the manpower shortage of doctors in public hospitals, and the impacts of such situation on the quality of public healthcare services; and

(3) given that as at the end of March this year, there were only 24 non-locally trained doctors employed by HA under limited registration, whether it has reviewed the effectiveness of the efforts in attracting such doctors to practise in Hong Kong; if it has reviewed and the outcome is that the efforts are unsatisfactory, whether the Government will consider providing more incentives for such doctors to practise in Hong Kong, e.g. by implementing the aforesaid proposal; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has taken a multi-pronged approach to tackle the severe shortage of doctors in the public healthcare system by, inter alia,

increasing the number of healthcare training places, providing funding for universities to upgrade and increase their healthcare training capacities, as well as supporting the manpower initiatives of the Hospital Authority (HA). The Government will also continue to actively promote and publicise for the limited registration arrangement overseas, and conduct recruitment exercises to attract qualified non-locally trained healthcare professionals to practise in Hong Kong.

My reply to the question raised by Dr the Hon Chiang Lai-wan is as follows:

(1) The Food and Health Bureau set up a multi-party platform in March last year, engaging representatives from the Medical Council of Hong Kong (MCHK), the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (HKAM), the Hong Kong Medical Association, the HA, the two medical schools in Hong Kong and the Department of Health to discuss feasible options for increasing the supply of doctors.

In the past year or so, a number of measures to increase the supply of doctors have been implemented. For instance, for non-locally trained specialist doctors who have passed the Licensing Examination and have worked full-time in the public healthcare sector for three years, the MCHK has, since last August, shortened their period of assessment from six months to two days. Besides, four colleges of the HKAM (namely Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine and Paediatrics) have agreed to admit non-locally trained doctors with qualifications at the pre-intermediate level for continuation of their specialist training in Hong Kong on the premise that the specialist training opportunities for locally trained doctors will not be compromised. The HA has updated the recruitment requirements for non-locally trained doctors with limited registration in these specialties since April this year. We expect that these measures will attract more eligible non-locally trained doctors, particularly those who are the children of Hong Kong people, to serve in our public healthcare sector through limited registration, thus alleviating the manpower shortage problem.

The Government will consider the effectiveness of the above measures as well as the views of relevant institutions and stakeholders in the healthcare sector before deciding on the way forward.

(2) In 2019-20, there was a cumulative shortfall of around 260 doctors, and an attrition rate of 5.4%, or 322 full-time doctors in equivalent, in the HA.

The HA is very concerned about the manpower of doctors in public hospitals, and will continue to undertake measures to increase and retain manpower. In addition to increasing the number of Resident Trainee posts, the HA will strive to recruit more full-time and part-time doctors, increase promotion opportunities and enhance training, and continue to recruit non-locally trained doctors to serve in public hospitals under limited registration, so as to relieve the work pressure on frontline doctors and improve the working environment. Besides, the HA will continue with the Special Retired and Rehire Scheme to rehire suitable serving doctors upon

their retirement at normal retirement age or leaving the service upon completion of contract.

(3) With the commencement of the Medical Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 2018, the validity period and the renewal period of limited registration have been extended from not exceeding one year to not exceeding three years. The HA has taken this opportunity to review and enhance the Limited Registration Scheme (the Scheme) in different aspects with the aim to attracting more non-locally trained doctors to practise in Hong Kong. Relevant measures include extending the Scheme from April 2019 to cover all specialties at the rank of Resident and recruiting non-locally trained specialists at the rank of Associate Consultant in specialties where shortage of specialists is more serious. Moreover, in order to increase the promotion opportunities for non-locally trained doctors, those at the rank of Resident with five or more years of post-specialist qualification clinical experience in public hospitals will have the chance to be promoted to the rank of Associate Consultant.

With the implementation of the enhancement measures, the number of non-locally trained doctors recruited by the HA has increased. As at May this year, there are 25 non-locally trained doctors working in HA public hospitals under limited registration.

Job applications from non-locally trained doctors are still received under the Scheme. As usual, the HA will assess the qualification and experience of the applicants in accordance with the mechanism and arrange interviews for suitable candidates. For those who are eligible and considered suitable for appointment, the HA will submit their limited registration applications to the MCHK in batches according to their intended dates of reporting for duty in Hong Kong. Four non-locally trained doctors whose applications for limited registration were earlier approved by the MCHK will report for duty within this year. The HA has submitted another three applications from non-locally trained doctors to the MCHK in May this year.

The HA will continue to recruit non-locally trained doctors by way of limited registration and keep reviewing and monitoring its overall manpower situation.

LCQ 5: Management fees of housing courts under the Starter Homes pilot projects for Hong Kong Residents

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative

Council today (June 17):

Question:

Intake of residents for the eResidence, the first Starter Homes (SH) for Hong Kong Residents pilot project developed by the Urban Renewal Authority, commenced last month. Some flat owners of that housing court have complained that they have to pay exorbitant management fees, which amount to \$4.3 per square foot and are even higher than those of certain private housing courts. The exorbitant management fees, coupled with property mortgage repayments, have aggravated their financial burden. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the prices of SH flats are positioned at a level between those of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) courts and private housing courts, whether it has assessed if the management fees of SH housing courts should be pitched at a level between those of HOS courts and private housing courts; if it has conducted such an assessment, of the outcome;

(2) whether the Government participated in determining the management fee level of the eResidence; and

(3) whether it will set up a mechanism to monitor the management fee levels of SH housing courts?

Reply:

President,

The objective of Starter Homes (SH) pilot projects for Hong Kong Residents is to enrich the housing ladder by adding a rung below private housing and above the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS). As a type of subsidised sale flats (SSFs), SH aims to help the higher-income families who are not eligible for HOS and yet cannot afford private housing to meet their home ownership aspirations in the face of high property prices.

In June 2018, the Government invited the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) to assign its redevelopment project at Ma Tau Wai Road as an SH pilot project (eResidence). Subsequently, URA announced the pre-sale of 450 SH units at eResidence in December 2018. All SH units were sold in June 2019. Following the completion of the project, URA commenced execution of assignment and handover procedures in early May this year.

My reply to various parts of the question raised by Hon Wilson Or is as follows:

(1) Currently, there are three major types of SSFs under different rungs along the housing ladder, namely, Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH), HOS and SH. The positioning and relativity of these three types of SSFs along the housing ladder are reflected in the discount of the selling

prices of the units. Therefore, the discount rate of GSH units would be higher than that for HOS sale exercise, while the discount rate of SH units would be lower than that for HOS sale exercise. As for the eResidence project, SH units were sold at 62 per cent of the assessed market values, i.e. a discount rate of 38 per cent, which was 10 per cent less than the 48 per cent discount for the previous HOS sale exercise (i.e. in 2018).

From the perspective of property management, there is no difference between SSF projects and private residential projects in general. The management fee level of housing projects (no matter for SSF or private residential projects) is affected by a number of factors, including development scale of the housing estate, number of units, community facilities and ancillary infrastructures provided by the housing estate, expenditure on daily maintenance and repair works, number of security guards and cleaning workers, as well as fees for hiring property management company, etc. In general, if there are fewer building blocks and units in the housing estate, or more community facilities (e.g. clubhouse and gym) provided by the housing estate, the management fees to be shared by each unit would be higher. Considering that the specific circumstances of different housing projects may be widely different, the Government does not consider it appropriate to lay down a set of rigid indicators with regard to the management fee level.

(2) In inviting URA to assign its redevelopment project at Ma Tau Wai Road as SH pilot project, the Government has specified certain requirements concerning SH units under the relevant lease modification document, including that the units can only be sold to persons meeting the eligibility criteria specified by the Government, the pricing should be subject to the approval by the Government, and there should be alienation restrictions for the units, etc., while matters concerning the determination of management fee level are not included. The Government was also not involved in the determination of the management fee level of eResidence.

According to information provided by URA, in determining the management fee level of eResidence, URA has made reference to the management fees of residential projects in the market with comparable development scale and facilities, and the management fee level of eResidence is compatible with the current market level. According to the understanding of the Government, depending on the scale and relevant facilities of individual housing estates, the management fee level of private residential projects completed in recent years is around \$4 to \$5 per square foot in general.

(3) As mentioned above, the management fee level is affected by a number of factors. It would be difficult for the Government to specify the management fee level and relevant indicators for SH projects which are of reference value. Moreover, if the Government sets restrictions on the management fee level for SH projects, in order to comply with relevant requirements, developers may unavoidably need to make trade-offs on areas such as facilities and ancillary infrastructures of the housing estates. This may reduce the flexibility of developers in the design of SH projects, and is not in line with the original intent of the Government to fully utilise the

experience and expertise of developers in designing and constructing buildings to provide SH units.

Tender results of re-opening of 15-year Government Bonds under Institutional Bond Issuance Programme

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority, as representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR Government), announces that a tender of 10-year Government Bonds through the re-opening of existing 15-year Government Bond issue 15GB3007 under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme was held today (June 17).

A total of HK\$1.7 billion 15-year Government Bonds were offered today. A total of HK\$4.508 billion tender applications were received. The bid-to-cover ratio, i.e. the ratio of bonds applied for to bonds issued, is 2.65. The average price accepted is 112.97, implying an annualised yield of 0.790%.

HKSAR Government Institutional Bond Issuance Programme Government Bond tender results

Tender results of re-opening of 15-year Government Bonds under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme:

Tender Date	: June 17, 2020
Issue Number	: 15GB3007 (Re-open)
Stock Code	: 4227 (HKGB 2.13 3007)
Issue and Settlement Date	: June 18, 2020
Tenor	: 10-year
Maturity Date	: July 16, 2030
Coupon Rate	: 2.13%
Amount Applied	: HK\$4.508 billion

Amount Allotted	: HK\$1.7 billion
Bid-to-Cover Ratio*	: 2.65
Average Price Accepted (Yield)	: 112.97 (0.790%)
Lowest Price Accepted (Yield)	: 112.15 (0.870%)
Pro-rata Ratio	: About 67%
Average Tender Price (Yield)	: 111.37 (0.947%)

* Calculated as the amount of bonds applied for over the amount of bonds issued.

LCQ3: Polling arrangements for the Legislative Council General Election

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Helena Wong and a reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (June 17):

Question:

Regarding the Regulation under which persons arriving at Hong Kong from overseas shall be subject to 14-day compulsory quarantine, the Government has extended its expiry date to September 18 this year, straddling the polling date set for the 2020 Legislative Council General Election (i.e. September 6). The Government has indicated that it will consider allowing electors under compulsory quarantine to go out temporarily to cast their votes. However, some Hong Kong people who are currently outside Hong Kong and intend to make a special trip to return to Hong Kong to cast their votes have indicated that the said arrangement is still unsound as they have to, owing to personal circumstances, leave Hong Kong shortly after casting their votes, and will be unable to stay in Hong Kong to complete the quarantine procedure. Regarding the polling arrangements for the Election, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has finalised the arrangements for those persons who are under

compulsory quarantine and for those coronavirus disease 2019 patients who are receiving medical treatments to cast their votes on the polling day; if so, of the details;

(2) whether it will exempt those electors who have made a special trip to return to Hong Kong to cast their votes from the 14-day compulsory quarantine requirement; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will set up a polling station inside the Restricted Area of the Hong Kong International Airport to facilitate those electors outside Hong Kong who make a special trip to return to Hong Kong or transit via Hong Kong to cast their votes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Food and Health Bureau, our consolidated reply to Dr the Hon Helena Wong's question is as follows:

The Chief Executive has published in the gazette on June 12 that the 2020 Legislative Council (LegCo) General Election will be held on September 6, 2020. The nomination period of the LegCo General Election is set from July 18 to July 31 this year.

We note that although the situation of COVID-19 outbreak in Hong Kong and the number of confirmed cases have slightly stabilised in the past month or so, the situation still remains volatile, with local cluster cases reported again recently. At the same time, the global situation remains severe. As at June 16, 218 countries/territories/areas reported a total of around 7.86 million COVID-19 cases. Since late March, about 70 000 to 130 000 new cases have been reported daily around the world. As regards the Mainland, despite significant improvements in the situation, individual provinces/cities still reported certain number of imported and local cases in the past few weeks.

The above situation reflects that the epidemic is yet to be over whether in Hong Kong or places outside Hong Kong. Considering that COVID-19 epidemic is not expected to fade away in the near future, we will closely keep in touch with the Food and Health Bureau and the Centre for Health Protection to carefully monitor the development of the outbreak in assessing the impact of the epidemic on the LegCo General Election from now until the polling date, and formulate various plans in view of the different possibilities concerning the development of the epidemic in a timely manner. The Registration and Electoral Office all along does not set up polling stations in hospitals, but will explore whether special arrangements could be made for electors under compulsory quarantine to go out temporarily to cast their votes in a safely manner.

The voting rights of citizens are protected by the Basic Law. When formulating measures that are related to the prevention of COVID-19 in the

election, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government will endeavour to strike a balance among factors like public health protection, social acceptance, electors facilitation, etc. The HKSAR Government has earlier published in the gazette to amend the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) and the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) by extending their validity. We shall closely monitor movement of people between Hong Kong and other places and implement compulsory quarantine measures, as well as development of the epidemic situation in the Mainland and overseas, in order to decide the plan to be adopted to facilitate electors to vote. We will finalise the details and announce them to the public in due course.

Regarding the setting up of a polling station inside the Hong Kong International Airport, in accordance with Section 30 of the Electoral Affairs Commission (Electoral Procedure) (Legislative Council) Regulation (Cap. 541D), the Chief Electoral Officer must allocate to each elector and authorised representative a polling station or polling stations to cast the vote or votes he or she is entitled to cast at an election. The Chief Electoral Officer must also allocate to a geographical constituency (GC) elector a GC polling station that is, as far as practicable, close to his or her registered residential address to cast the vote for the GC. To this end, the Registration and Electoral Office must prepare an extract of the Register of Electors for each polling station for staff at the polling station to verify the electors' eligibility to vote before issuance of ballot papers. Taking into account that there are difficulties in ascertaining the information and number of electors who will return to Hong Kong or transit via Hong Kong on the polling day, the Registration and Electoral Office considers that it will be difficult to prepare the said extract of Register of Electors prior to the polling day. At this stage, the Registration and Electoral Office considers that the proposal to establish a polling station in the Restricted Area of Hong Kong International Airport may not be feasible, but it will continue to explore if the relevant technical difficulties can be overcome, or adopt other practicable ways to enable voters returning from abroad to vote.

Besides, in order to ensure electors' safety and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the polling stations and counting stations, we plan to implement the following proposed safety measures:

- (1) All polling staff are required to wear a mask and those showing signs of fever will not be allowed to discharge electoral duties;
- (2) Before entering the polling stations, electors, candidates and agents are required to put on their own masks properly and rub their hands by using alcohol based handrub placed at the entrance of the polling stations;
- (3) Installation of infrared thermographic camera at polling stations as far as possible to screen out electors showing signs of fever and provision of handheld electronic thermometers to polling stations where it is not feasible to install such camera;

(4) Upon arrival at the polling station, temperatures of electors, candidates and agents will be taken. Candidates and agents showing signs of fever are advised not to enter the polling station; and

(5) Providing disinfecting sprays or wipes for polling staff to disinfect polling tables, tick chops, paperboards, etc. regularly.

The Government will continue to make proactive preparations and arrangements to ensure that the LegCo General Election in September will be conducted in a fair, open and honest manner whilst meeting the public health and safety requirements.

Thank you President.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, June 17, 2020 is 107.9 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).