

LCQ11: Reimbursement of Maternity Leave Pay Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Chau Siu-chung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (July 17):

Question:

The Government launched the Reimbursement of Maternity Leave Pay Scheme (the Scheme) on April 1, 2021, through which employers can apply for reimbursement of the statutory maternity leave pay paid to employees in respect of the 11th to 14th weeks. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the numbers of applications under the Scheme in each of the past three years and this year to date, and set out in Table 1 a breakdown by the monthly salaries of the employees involved and the respective percentages of the applications concerned;

Table 1

Monthly salary of employees involved	Number of applications (percentage)		
	2021	This year to date
Below \$10,000			
\$10,000 to below \$20,000			
.....			
Above \$150,000			
Total			

(2) of the average processing time for the applications mentioned in (1) in each of the past three years and this year to date; among such cases, of the respective numbers (and percentages) of applications approved, rejected and withdrawn (set out in Table 2); the main reasons for rejection and withdrawal of the applications;

Table 2

Result of application	Number of applications (percentage)		
	2021	This year to date
Approved			

Rejected			
Withdrawn			
Total			

(3) of the amounts reimbursed for the approved applications mentioned in (2) and distribution of the types of industries of the employers involved in each of the past three years and this year to date, as well as the respective percentages of the applications concerned (set out in Tables 3 and 4 respectively);

Table 3

Reimbursement amount	Number of applications approved (percentage)		
	2021	This year to date
Below \$10,000			
\$10,000 to below \$20,000			
.....			
\$80,000			
Total			

Table 4

Type of industry of employers involved	Number of applications approved (percentage)		
	2021	This year to date
Catering			
Construction			
Education services			
Finance			
Health services			
Hotel and accommodation			
Import/export			
Information and communications			
Insurance			
Manufacturing			
Professional service, administrative and other business support service activities			

Real estate			
Retail			
Social work activities			
Storage			
Transport, postal and courier services			
Wholesale			
Work within domestic households			
Other personal services			
Others			
Total			

(4) of the respective total reimbursement amounts involved in the approved applications mentioned in (2) in each of the past three years and this year to date;

(5) as it is learnt that the authorities have appointed a private processing agent to assist in the implementation of the Scheme, of the respective expenditure on appointing the processing agent in the past three years and this year to date, as well as the manpower arranged by the processing agent for the Scheme; whether it has reviewed the effectiveness of the processing agent's assistance in the implementation of the Scheme; and

(6) whether it will consider stepping up publicity and promotion to enhance employers' or human resource practitioners' knowledge of the Scheme, so that more people can benefit from the Scheme?

Reply:

President,

The Labour Department (LD) has implemented the Reimbursement of Maternity Leave Pay Scheme since April 1, 2021. For the maternity leave pay (MLP) of the 11th to 14th weeks' maternity leave that is required to be paid to the employee under the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57), employers may apply to the Scheme for reimbursement of MLP paid, subject to a cap of \$80,000 per employee.

The reply to the Member's question is set out below:

(1) Up to June 2024, a total of 25 105 applications have been received under the Scheme, with 6 127, 7 963, 7 367 and 3 648 applications received in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 (up to June) respectively. As employers are not required to provide the amount of monthly wages of employees on relevant application forms, the LD does not have breakdowns by monthly wage of employees involved.

(2) In general, employers receive the reimbursement within 15 working days upon submission of an application furnished with all the required information and documents. Breakdown by result of application is tabulated below:

Result of application	Number of applications (%)			
	2021	2022	2023	2024 (Up to June)
Approved	5 405 (98.2%)	7 480 (96.9%)	6 820 (94.7%)	3 507 (94.4%)
Rejected	6 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.1%)	2 (0.1%)
Application withdrawn	91 (1.7%)	243 (3.1%)	375 (5.2%)	208 (5.6%)
Total	5 502 (100%)	7 723 (100%)	7 198 (100%)	3 717 (100%)

Note: Individual percentages may not add up to the total owing to rounding.

Applications were rejected mainly because the employee concerned had not been employed under a continuous contract for at least 40 weeks immediately before the commencement of maternity leave, i.e. the employee did not meet the eligibility criteria for MLP under the Employment Ordinance. The Scheme does not inquire employers about their reasons for withdrawing applications.

(3) Breakdown of approved applications by reimbursement amount is tabulated below:

Reimbursement amount	Number of applications approved (%)			
	2021	2022	2023	2024 (Up to June)
Below \$10,000	475 (8.8%)	580 (7.8%)	393 (5.8%)	165 (4.7%)
\$10,000 to below \$20,000	2 809 (52.0%)	3 670 (49.1%)	3 134 (46.0%)	1 586 (45.2%)
\$20,000 to below \$30,000	1 084 (20.1%)	1 566 (20.9%)	1 618 (23.7%)	821 (23.4%)
\$30,000 to below \$40,000	482 (8.9%)	742 (9.9%)	746 (10.9%)	418 (11.9%)
\$40,000 to below \$50,000	267 (4.9%)	447 (6.0%)	421 (6.2%)	218 (6.2%)
\$50,000 to below \$60,000	106 (2.0%)	194 (2.6%)	201 (2.9%)	128 (3.6%)

\$60,000 to below \$70,000	60 (1.1%)	100 (1.3%)	121 (1.8%)	56 (1.6%)
\$70,000 to below \$80,000	39 (0.7%)	55 (0.7%)	57 (0.8%)	21 (0.6%)
\$80,000	83 (1.5%)	126 (1.7%)	129 (1.9%)	94 (2.7%)
Total	5 405 (100%)	7 480 (100%)	6 820 (100%)	3 507 (100%)

Note: Individual percentages may not add up to the total owing to rounding.

The LD does not have breakdowns of approved applications by trade. Yet, according to our records, applications were mainly from employers of the financing, insurance, real estate and business services (21.6 per cent), import/export, wholesale and retail (21.1 per cent) and community, social and personal services (20.0 per cent) sectors.

(4) For the approved applications mentioned under (2), the Scheme has reimbursed \$545 million up to June 2024. The reimbursement amounts in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 (up to June) were \$118 million, \$173 million, \$166 million and \$88 million respectively.

(5) In the past three years, the total service contract value for engaging a processing agent (PA) by the LD to implement the Scheme was \$90 million. During the contract period, PA is responsible for the operation of the Scheme, which included setting up a service centre for the Scheme; developing, operating and maintaining the Disbursement Information System; processing and approving applications in accordance with the operation guidelines and requirements as prescribed by the LD; conducting quality assurance checks and internal audit checks; handling enquiries and complaints from the applicants; assisting in conducting publicity activities; and organising public engagement activities.

According to the service contract, PA is required to appoint at least three managerial personnel to assist in implementing the Scheme and to employ at least 39 staff members for handling various specified tasks under the Scheme.

The LD regularly conducts quality assurance checks, including performing random checks on PA's vetting records and related information, conducting on-site inspections and convening management meetings, for monitoring the performance and service effectiveness of PA.

(6) The LD has been promoting the Scheme through different channels such as broadcasting radio announcements in the public interest; placing advertisement; disseminating promotional messages through mobile applications, Internet platforms, the Reimbursement Easy Portal and the LD's homepage; as well as displaying posters and distributing leaflets.

Particularly for employers and human resources practitioners, in

addition to organising briefings and workshops on details of the Scheme, the LD also places advertisements in publications of different chambers of commerce, employers' associations and organisations of human resources management to publicise the Scheme. The LD will continue to explore suitable promotional channels to further enhance the publicity efforts.