

LCQ15: Love Upgrading Special Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (December 2):

Question:

The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) has been entrusted by the Government to implement the Love Upgrading Special Scheme (the Scheme) to assist, through the provision of two to three months' integrated training courses, in upgrading the skills and self-enhancement of the unemployed and underemployed, with a view to their re-entering the employment market as early as possible. A special allowance will be disbursed to trainees who have attained an attendance rate of 80 per cent. Two phases of the Scheme have been launched so far, with the relevant periods of enrolment being from October 3, 2019 to June 30, 2020 and from July 1 to December 31, 2020 respectively. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number of persons enrolling in each of the training courses under Phase 1 of the Scheme; regarding those courses that have been completed, the respective numbers and percentages of trainees who attained the required attendance rates; the amount of monthly special allowance disbursed to each eligible trainee on average;

(2) whether it knows the number of persons enrolling in each of the training courses under Phase 2 of the Scheme in each month since July this year; regarding those courses that have been completed, the respective numbers and percentages of trainees who attained the required attendance rates; the amount of monthly special allowance disbursed to each eligible trainee on average;

(3) whether it knows the employment situation of the graduates of the Scheme; and

(4) whether it will, when entrusting ERB to roll out a new phase of the Scheme, make the following improvements: raising the rate of the monthly special allowance for eligible trainees, and expediting the disbursement of the allowance to the trainees; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) launched the first tranche of the "Love Upgrading Special Scheme" (the Scheme) in October 2019 to provide employees affected by economic downturn with integrated training for two to three months. After the closing of application for the first tranche in June 2020, ERB launched the enhanced second tranche in July 2020, providing about

300 training courses covering 28 trades' "Vocational Skills", "Generic Skills" (including English, Putonghua, information technology applications and personal attributes) and "Innovation and Technology" (including artificial intelligence, blockchain, Internet business start-up, etc.). Special allowance is provided to trainees during the training period. The Scheme imposes no restriction on the trade or education attainment of trainees, and provides both full-time and part-time (half day/evening) training modes. Trainees who have completed full-time "Vocational Skills" courses would receive follow-up placement services. My reply to various parts of the Member's question is as follows:

(1) Application for the first tranche of the Scheme was closed on June 30, 2020. About 14 000 trainees enrolled in training, and about 13 000 trainees completed 15 844 training courses (note: a trainee may enrol in more than one course), representing about 91 per cent of total trainee enrolment. The number of enrolments in various training courses under the first tranche of the Scheme is at Annex 1. The allowance is calculated based on the actual number of class sessions attended and disbursed upon completion of each course. As at October 31, 2020, trainees who had completed their courses and obtained approval for special allowance received about \$3,100 on average.

(2) ERB launched the enhanced second tranche of the Scheme on July 1, 2020, and will close the application on December 31, 2020. As at October 31, 2020, about 6 500 trainees enrolled, and about 6 200 trainees completed 7 269 training courses, representing about 96 per cent of total trainee enrolment. The number of enrolments in various training courses under the second tranche of the Scheme is at Annex 2. As a higher proportion of trainees enrolled in part-time courses as compared with full-time courses, trainees who had completed their courses and obtained approval for special allowance received about \$2,000 on average as at October 31, 2020.

(3) The training bodies of ERB will start the follow-up placement period of three to six months after completion of classes of the full-time "Vocational Skills" courses under the Scheme. The follow-up placement period of respective classes under the first tranche of the Scheme was extended to end 2020 to early 2021 due to the COVID-19 situation. Hence, no relevant information is available at this stage.

(4) In the 2020 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that, to further enhance the support to employees affected by the economic downturn, ERB will launch the third tranche of the Scheme in January 2021, enabling 20 000 trainees to receive retraining. In addition, ERB has increased the maximum amount of monthly allowance per trainee from \$4,000 to \$5,800 in May 2020, and has expedited the disbursement of allowance so that most eligible trainees may receive the allowance within 20 working days of the completion of the training course.