

LCQ20: Measures to supplement local workforce

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Tan Yueheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (November 15):

Question:

Regarding measures to supplement the local workforce, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of Category A applicants (i.e. persons with an annual income reaching HK\$2.5 million or above (or its equivalent in foreign currency) in the year immediately preceding the date of application) whose applications have been approved since the launch of the Top Talent Pass Scheme, and the occupations and trades in which they are engaged; whether it has assessed if those talents can, to a certain extent, meet the talent demands of the professions covered by the Talent List; whether it will proactively reach out to those talents to follow up their living and employment situation in Hong Kong;

(2) whether it has assessed if the local workforce can now meet the manpower demand following the implementation of a series of measures to bring in talents and labour; and

(3) of the further plans to retain talents and unleash the local workforce, and whether it has made specific planning for the supply of workforce in the coming three, five and 10 years?

Reply:

President,

Our workforce builds the foundation of Hong Kong's economic development being its precious resources. The main thrust of the Government's manpower policy is to nurture local talent, complemented by attraction of outside talent, to enrich the local talent pool for meeting the needs in social and economic developments. As the global competition for talent remains fierce, and in order to address the challenges of labour shortage, the Government adopts a multi-pronged strategy, including promoting training and retraining, attracting talent proactively and aggressively, and providing appropriate employment and other support services, to relieve the tight local labour market situation.

Our reply, in consultation with the Immigration Department and the Labour Department, to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Government implemented various talent attraction measures

targeting global talent which have received positive responses since their implementation at the end of last year. As at the end of October this year, we received over 180 000 applications under various talent admission schemes and approved over 110 000. In addition, around 70 000 talents with visas approved have arrived in Hong Kong this year, which has far exceeded our annual target of admitting at least 35 000 talents with an intended duration of stay of at least 12 months.

The Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) launched at the end of last year targets to attract high-income talent and graduates from the world's top 100 universities to come to Hong Kong for development, in which Category A is applicable to persons with annual income reaching HK\$2.5 million or above in the year preceding the date of application. As at late October this year, we received around 55 000 applications under the TTPS and approved over 43 000. Of these, there were 15 149 applications under Category A with 9 782 approved.

Apart from the launch of the TTPS and enhancement of the various existing talent admission schemes, last year's Policy Address announced that the Government would update the Talent List to reflect the latest shortage of professional and high skilled talent spanning different fields. After a review, the Government announced in May this year the expanded Talent List that increases the coverage from 13 to 51 professions under nine industry segments, namely business support; creative industries, arts and culture, performing arts; development and construction; environmental technology services; financial services; healthcare services; innovation and technology; legal and dispute resolution services; and maritime services. The expanded Talent List has immediately been applied to the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, the General Employment Policy and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals, with a view to providing immigration facilitation for attracting more high-quality talent to come to Hong Kong.

Since March this year, TTPS applicants with work experience are required to declare in their applications the sectors of their occupations. As at late October this year, around half of the approved applicants under Category A come from the nine industry segments covered by the Talent List. They, if after arrival in Hong Kong engaging in relevant industries for development, will help supplement the manpower to meet the requirements of these industries. In fact, among all the approved TTPS applicants, more than 70 per cent of them are aged 40 or below, and high-income persons and graduates from the world's top 100 universities with at least three years of work experience (i.e. applications under Categories A and B of the scheme) also account for more than 70 per cent. These quality talent who are young, with high-income or good academic qualifications, extensive work experience and global vision could help fill the manpower gap in the local market and promote the development of major sectors.

The physical office of Hong Kong Talent Engage (HKTE), which was formally established in end-October this year, will maintain contact with the incoming talent to keep track of their development and needs in Hong Kong. HKTE will actively expand its network of working partners, and organise a

variety of online and offline activities as well as services to assist talent who are interested in coming to Hong Kong or have newly arrived to obtain necessary information on living and jobs or skills, and provide them with pertinent support on accommodation, employment, children's education, etc, in order to make it easier for them to adapt to and integrate into the new life as early as possible, hence, settle in Hong Kong for development in the long term.

(3) To tackle manpower shortage, the Government has, on a time-limited and non-permanent basis, enhanced the mechanism for admission of talent and importation of labour to satisfy imminent needs. The Government attaches great importance to giving priority to local workers on employment. We will strengthen the training, support and protection for local workers, unleash the potential labour force, enhance the productivity of our workers and create quality employment opportunities. The Labour Department provides free and diversified employment services for assisting people, including young people, the elderly and middle-aged, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, etc, to enter the employment market.

In the Policy Address this year, the Chief Executive announced various measures to retain talent, strengthen retraining and promote re-employment. In addition to increasing the maximum monthly retraining allowance by nearly 40 per cent from \$5,800 to \$8,000, the Employees Retraining Board will roll out a new training and employment scheme. Besides, the Labour Department will launch a three-year Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme, targeting persons aged 40 or above who have not been in paid employment for three consecutive months or more. To encourage these persons to rejoin the workforce, those who have worked for six consecutive months will be provided with a maximum allowance of \$10,000, while those who have worked for 12 consecutive months will be given an additional maximum allowance of \$10,000.

The Government has been conducting periodic manpower projection exercises at the macro level to assess the broad trends of Hong Kong's future manpower supply and requirements for the medium term. The Government commenced in July this year a new round of manpower projection with an enhanced methodology, with a view to gauging the manpower demands and shortage in the coming five years in respect of key industries driving economic growth in Hong Kong and sectors supporting city operation. Key findings of the manpower projection are expected to be available in the third quarter next year, and the detailed report will be promulgated in early 2025. Projection findings will provide an empirical basis for the Government and various stakeholders, including businesses and training institutions, to grasp the situation of manpower and skills shortages in key industries and trades in Hong Kong, so as to formulate more precise strategies on the short-term and medium-to-long-term manpower development training and employment for the relevant industries.