

LCQ16: Measures to assist persons with disabilities in securing employment

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-chun and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (January 9):

Question:

The results of a number of studies conducted in recent years have shown that the underemployment situation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) has not improved over the years, and that PWDs often can only secure low-skilled jobs even if they are university degree holders. Regarding the various measures implemented by the Government to assist PWDs in securing employment, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of participants of the On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities in each of the past five years (with a breakdown by the age group to which the participants belonged, their type of disability, as well as the service operator providing training and counselling services), and among such participants, the respective numbers of those who participated in the Programme through referral and who successfully secured employment; the average number of months of post-placement service received by the participants who successfully secured employment;

(2) of the number of participants of the Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities in each of the past five years (with a breakdown by the age group to which the participants belonged, type of mental illness they suffered, as well as the service operator providing employment training services), and among such participants, the respective numbers of those who participated in the Programme through referral and who successfully secured employment; the average number of months of post-placement service received by the participants who successfully secured employment;

(3) of the number of organisations participating in the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme and the number of PWDs who secured employment under the Scheme in the past five years (with a breakdown by type of disability of the employees), and their average employment period;

(4) of the number of applications received under the Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities, and a breakdown by uses of the amount of subsidy granted, as well as (i) the average subsidy amount of and (ii) the average processing time taken for each approved application, in the past five years;

(5) of the respective numbers of (i) existing and (ii) newly recruited government employees with disabilities, as well as their percentages in the total number of government employees, in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by recruiting government department, type of disability of the

employees and whether their disabilities were caused by work injuries;

(6) whether it knows the number of PWDs employed in the past five years by organisations participating in the Talent-Wise Employment Charter (Charter), and a breakdown of such number by employment period, as well as breakdowns by name of organisation, whether the organisation was a public or private one and type of disability of such employees; and

(7) given that the Government has in the past resolved to enact the Minimum Wage Ordinance (Cap. 608) on the basis that the Wage Protection Movement was ineffective, and that currently there are comments alleging that the Charter is ineffective, whether the Government will establish a mandatory quota system for employing PWDs in place of the non-binding Charter; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the relevant bureaux and departments, I provide a consolidated reply to the Hon Shiu Ka-chun's question as follows:

(1) The number of participants of the On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities (OJT) and the number of participants who successfully secured employment after training in each of the past five years are set out in Table 1 in the Annex. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) does not have information from individual organisations on the age of participants, the type of disability involved, the operators providing the services, or the average number of months of post-placement service provided for OJT participants.

(2) The number of participants of the Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities (Sunnyway) and the number of participants who successfully secured employment in each of the past five years are set out in Table 2 in the Annex. The SWD does not have information from individual organisations on the age of participants, the type of mental illness involved, the operators providing the services, or the average number of months of post-placement service provided for Sunnyway participants.

(3) The Labour Department (LD) implements the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) to encourage employers to hire job seekers with disabilities and provide them with coaching and support through the provision of an allowance. There were 396, 364, 383, 376 and 391 organisations participating in the WOPS and employing persons with disabilities in the past five years respectively. During the same period, the LD recorded 661, 805, 811, 816 and 802 placements under the WOPS respectively. Breakdowns of WOPS placements by type of disability suffered by job seekers and employment period are set out in Table 3 and Table 4 in the Annex.

(4) The Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities was launched in June 2013. The number of applications received and the total amount of funding granted in each of the past five years are set out in Table 5 in the

Annex. In the past five years, 91.3 per cent of the approved applications were for purchase of assistive devices, 7 per cent for workplace modification while 1.7 per cent involved both purchase of assistive devices and workplace modification. Normally, the applicant and referring organisations will be informed of the result of application in writing within three months after the application deadline.

(5) There is no requirement for applicants for government jobs and serving officers to declare their disabilities, if any. The situation of persons with disabilities employed in the civil service is known to the Civil Service Bureau on the basis of information available to bureaux/departments (e.g. through requests of applicants during the recruitment process for special arrangements for selection interview/test having regard to their disabilities, or applications from serving officers with disabilities for financial assistance to purchase technical aids to assist in their performance of duties). According to the relevant information, the number of civil servants who declared their disabilities to the Government and the number of new recruits who declared their disabilities to the Government during the recruitment process, as well as their percentages in the strength of the civil service in each of the past five years, broken down by type of disability (Note) and bureau/department, are set out in Table 6 to Table 9 in the Annex. The Government does not collect statistics on civil servants who became disabled due to injury on duty.

(6) The Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme is a publicity and public education programme aiming to encourage through awards the business sector, public bodies, subvented organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as government departments to adopt various measures to promote internship and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. These measures include not only directly employing persons with disabilities by employer organisations, but also using products or services provided by rehabilitation social enterprises, and setting aside shops or stalls for social enterprises or self-employed persons with disabilities to run business or sell their products. As at December 2018, 247 public and government-subvented organisations and 363 private organisations participated in the scheme. Given the nature of the scheme, the Labour Welfare Bureau does not require the participating organisations to provide information on the number of persons with disabilities employed by them.

(7) The Government's policy objectives are to provide skill training and support services for persons with disabilities to enable them to take up productive and gainful employment in the open market on the basis of their abilities rather than disabilities; provide assistance for employers; and strive to promote an inclusive society. Establishing a mandatory employment quota system for persons with disabilities to require enterprises to employ a certain number or percentage of persons with disabilities may create a negative labelling effect on these persons, which is not conducive to their integration into the community. At present, the Government has no plan to introduce such a system for persons with disabilities. The Government will continue to implement various measures to promote employment of persons with

disabilities, including providing vocational rehabilitation and training services for them, providing job matching services in the open market for them, offering financial incentives to encourage employers to hire them, enhancing their abilities, strengthening the support for them, and promoting an inclusive culture. The Government also offers grants for NGOs to set up social enterprises with a view to creating more employment and on-the-job training opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Note: Excluding persons with colour blindness or defective colour perception.

HKMA holds high-level Fintech Roundtable (with photo)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) today (January 9) held a high-level Fintech Roundtable, which was attended by about 45 senior representatives from six international organisations and around 30 central banks or regulatory authorities in 18 jurisdictions.

The Roundtable facilitated exchange of ideas and discussions on current fintech topics which are of mutual interests. It also aimed to strengthen cross-border fintech collaboration among jurisdictions in order to promote innovation and technology adoption that would bring greater convenience, efficiency and security to the public and at the same time ensure financial stability.

Titled "From Mutual Understanding to Global Collaboration", the Roundtable comprised presentations and panel discussions that covered a range of topics including case studies of cross-border collaborations, open banking, and the use of emerging technologies in providing financial services. Participants discussed issues that merit each other's attention and shared their experience and insights into these topics.

Deputy Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Howard Lee, said, "One of the key characteristics of fintech is that it is borderless. As fintech develops, cross-border issues are likely to gain importance. It is therefore crucial that we deepen mutual understanding and step up global collaboration to ensure a well-functioning financial system. Today's Roundtable demonstrates the HKMA's commitment in this regard. I am pleased to see the positive outcome of the event and the strong support we received from the participants. The HKMA will continue to foster cross-border fintech collaboration and facilitate the creation of a conducive ecosystem for fintech innovation."

The HKMA will also host a two-day Financial Stability Board Financial

Innovation Network meeting on January 10 and 11, immediately after the Roundtable.



LCQ11: Development of local tourism industry

Following is a question by the Hon Claudia Mo and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (January 9):

Question:

The Financial Secretary said last month that visitor arrivals in 2018 would exceed 60 million, breaking the record of 2014. Regarding the local tourism industry, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in respect of (i) overnight visitors to Hong Kong, (ii) same-day visitors to Hong Kong and (iii) all visitors to Hong Kong respectively, of their overall numbers and annual growth rates and, among them, the relevant figures respectively for those who came from the Mainland and other places, in each of the years from 2013 to 2018 (set out in tables of the same format as the table below);

(i) Overnight visitors to Hong Kong

Year	Overall		From the Mainland		From other places	
	Number of arrivals	Annual growth rate	Number of arrivals	Annual growth rate	Number of arrivals	Annual growth rate
2013						
2014						
2015						

2016						
2017						
2018						

(2) whether there was an increase in the number of visitors to Hong Kong in the past three months as compared with the preceding three months; if so, of the markets with the major growth; whether it has studied the reasons for the growth in the number of visitors, and whether those reasons include the recent commissioning of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) and the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link;

(3) of the visitor throughput of the various boundary control points in each month of last year;

(4) as the Financial Secretary pointed out last month that to continuously strengthen the tourism industry is an integral part of the Government to "stabilise the economy", of the new measures put in place by the Government to balance the economic contributions made by the tourism industry and its impact on the daily lives of members of the public;

(5) whether it will roll out new measures in the coming three months to alleviate the problem of an excessive number of visitors in Tung Chung caused by the commissioning of HZMB;

(6) whether it will consider setting up a steering committee led by the Chief Secretary for Administration to take charge of the co-ordination among the various policy bureaux and government departments on handling and following up the impacts of visitors on people's livelihood, as well as formulating mitigation measures; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(7) whether it will discuss with the Central Authorities the tightening of the Individual Visit Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(8) as the Financial Secretary indicated last month that the Government would consider relaxing the visa arrangements for residents of the Belt and Road countries and regions to visit Hong Kong, of the Belt and Road countries and regions with which the Government is holding or plans to hold discussions on the relevant arrangements, as well as the details of the discussions?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the sustainable and healthy development of the tourism industry. Whilst ensuring the industry's stable and orderly growth, we also seek to minimise as far as possible the impact of tourist activities on the local community. With the relevant bureaux and departments consulted, our reply to the question raised by the Hon Claudia Mo

is set out below.

(1) The figures and the annual growth rate of overnight, same-day, and overall visitor arrivals to Hong Kong provided by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), as well as the breakdown of number of visitors from the Mainland and non-Mainland source markets, are at Annex I.

(2) and (3) The number of visitor arrivals to Hong Kong during September to November 2018 increased by about 500 000 as compared to that during June to August, and increased by about 11.5 per cent as compared to the same period in 2017. Among them, the number of arrivals in October and November 2018 grew by 11.5 per cent and 20.6 per cent over a year earlier respectively, while those from the Mainland surged by 15.4 per cent and 25.8 per cent respectively. These show that the rise of Mainland visitor arrivals is the main driver of overall visitor arrival growth after the commencement of services of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) which commenced operation on September 23 and October 24, 2018 respectively. Although the number of visitors using other control points has seemingly declined during the same period, it is likely that some visitors (same-day visitors in particular) came visiting Hong Kong for experiencing the newly opened XRL and HZMB. Whether XRL and HZMB will become the main control points used by new visitors remains to be seen, and the Government will continue to monitor the situation closely.

The monthly figures of visitor throughput of various boundary control points in 2018 are provided at Annex II.

(4) In view of the steady growth in overall visitor arrivals to Hong Kong in recent years and the successive commissioning of various cross-boundary infrastructures, the Government has strived to increase and improve Hong Kong's tourism facilities, as well as to enhance the city's tourist-receiving capacity. In the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry published in October 2017, one of the four development strategies therein is to nurture and develop tourism products and initiatives with local and international characteristics to cater for the needs and preferences of different visitor segments, thereby diverting tourists to sightsee and shop in different districts of Hong Kong as planned, and increasing the overall economic benefits brought by the tourism industry to all citizens in Hong Kong.

The Government is developing new tourist attractions and implementing various cultural and creative tourism projects in different districts, as well as promoting green tourism development in New Territories and outlying islands along the principles of nature conservation and sustainable development. Apart from the the revitalisation of Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail completed earlier on and the promotion campaign "Old Town Central" launched by the HKTB, the Government will enhance the appeal of Sham Shui Po and Wan Chai as tourism spots, through collaboration with the Hong Kong Design Centre and the Hong Kong Comics and Animation Federation, by launching the "Design District Hong Kong" project, which comprises public art place-making works, creative tourism events, local comic characters with Hong

Kong's originality, multimedia and creative technology, etc. The HKTb also rolled out the "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods – Sham Shui Po" campaign in September 2018, which encourages visitors to explore the district and experience the local culture and characteristics. Besides, a number of facilities in the West Kowloon Cultural District will also be completed in phases in the next few years. This, coupled with HKTb's efforts in promoting various activities in relation to traditional festivals with local distinctive characteristics, can also entice more tourists to patronise different districts of Hong Kong.

In respect of theme parks, the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort is taking forward its expansion and development plan. Following the launch of new stage show "Moana: A Homecoming Celebration" last year, the new ride "Ant-Man and The Wasp: Nano Battle!" will be opened this year. Other attractions will also be completed progressively in the coming years. As regards the Ocean Park, it is taking forward its all-weather water park and two new hotels. Whilst one of the hotels was soft-launched in October 2018, the water park and the other hotel will be completed progressively by 2021.

Furthermore, the Government has been pragmatic in tackling problems brought about by tourist flows in different districts. In view of the inconvenience caused by inbound tour groups to the community, the Government has, in collaboration with the trade, adopted various targeted measures to minimise the impact to the community. Such measures include encouraging tour coaches to use legal parking spaces, appealing to the trade to maintain order when receiving tour groups and make good use of information technology to strengthen visitor and vehicular flow control, etc. As regards crowd management, in case of tourists crowding up in certain areas, the Police will deploy more manpower on a need basis to maintain public order and public safety, as well as smooth traffic flow thereat.

(5) Since the commissioning of the HZMB, the Government has been monitoring the vehicular and passenger flows crossing the border through the HZMB and the operation of the Hong Kong Port (HKP). The Government has convened several inter-departmental meetings and rolled out various measures within a short period of time to alleviate the pressure on the HKP and areas nearby. The measures include: simplifying the application arrangements for domestic coaches to enter the HKP's designated pick-up areas; launching a pre-booking system for group visitors taking shuttle buses; co-ordinating the local trade in easing the visitor flow near the HKP and encouraging them (including operators of the tourist attractions) to launch travel itineraries and products to help divert tourists; and improving the queuing and boarding/alighting arrangements of Route B6 in Tung Chung, such as arranging passengers to buy return tickets in advance, arranging passengers to get aboard two buses at a time during peak hours, and deploying more staff and mounting railings to facilitate passengers boarding in a swift and orderly manner, in order to minimise the impact on local residents. Moreover, the Police has, depending on the developing crowd situation, suitably deployed additional manpower to maintain public order and public safety on site.

After the implementation of the aforementioned measures, the situation

in Tung Chung has improved since late November 2018. Meanwhile, the passenger flow of HZMB in the last weekend of December was almost 30 per cent less than that of the peak in mid-November. To further alleviate the impact of tourist activities on Tung Chung residents, the government departments concerned are actively processing the occupation application of the new public transport interchange (PTI) at Citygate with a view to securing the early completion of the acceptance inspection to provide additional pick-up/ drop-off spaces for use by franchised buses. By the time the PTI is commissioned, the Transport Department (TD) will relocate the bus stop of Route B6 now located in Tung Chung Town Centre to reduce the impact of tourist activities on residents nearby. Furthermore, in view of Islands District Council Members' concerns and suggestions, the TD has looked into and evaluated the proposals of temporary relocation of Route B6 prior to the commissioning of the new PTI. Consultation with the Islands District Council on the evaluation findings is under way.

The Government will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the various measures and make adjustments as necessary.

(6) High-level tourism co-ordinating meetings are chaired by the Financial Secretary. Two meetings were already convened in 2017 and 2018. At the meetings, the Financial Secretary directed bureaux and departments to drive the implementation of various tourism-related measures in the areas of tourist support and management, planning of tourism facilities and transport support, and tourism diversification through closer co-operation and co-ordination.

The Tourism Commission (TC) will continue to play its role in tourism policy planning and, in accordance with the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry, collaborate with relevant bureaux and departments, as well as different stakeholders including the HKTb and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, to ensure the industry's stable and orderly growth and seek to minimise as far as possible the impact of tourist activities on the local community at the same time.

(7) The Government attaches great importance to the policy for Mainland tourists to visit Hong Kong as it is crucial to the Government's overall administration and planning. TC will continue to closely monitor the travel patterns of Mainland tourists and maintain close liaison with the Mainland authorities on relevant arrangements.

(8) Hong Kong has all along adopted an open immigration policy to facilitate entry of bona-fide visitors. At present, nationals of about 170 foreign countries and territories, including some Belt and Road countries, may visit Hong Kong visa-free.

The Government reviews its visa policy from time to time. Factors to be considered include immigration control and security, bilateral economic, social and cultural ties between Hong Kong and the countries concerned, track records of its nationals visiting Hong Kong and the circumstances of the individual country. In negotiating mutual visa exemption arrangements with

the Belt and Road countries, the Government will make holistic consideration with a view to providing more travel convenience to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region passport holders and genuine visitors to Hong Kong on the one hand, and maintaining effective immigration control on the other.

CHP investigates imported case of Shiga toxin-producing E. coli infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 9) investigating an imported case of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) infection, and hence reminded the public to maintain good personal, food and environmental hygiene against intestinal infections.

The case involves a 65-year-old woman with good past health, who has presented with vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea since December 21 last year. She was admitted to a private hospital on December 24 and was discharged on the next day. The patient has been in a stable condition all along.

Her stool specimen grew STEC upon laboratory testing.

Initial enquiries of the CHP revealed that the patient had travelled to India from December 12 to 24 last year. Investigations are ongoing.

"Escherichia coli (E. coli) is a bacterium that is commonly found in the gut of humans and warm-blooded animals. Most strains of E. coli are harmless. Some strains, however, such as STEC, can produce powerful toxins and cause severe food-borne disease. The most recognised serogroup of STEC is E. coli O157:H7," a spokesman for the CHP explained.

Preventive measures for STEC infection are similar to those recommended for other food-borne diseases. The public are advised to observe good personal and food hygiene:

- Adopt the 5 Keys to Food Safety in handling food, i.e. Choose (choose safe raw materials), Clean (keep hands and utensils clean), Separate (separate raw and cooked food), Cook (cook thoroughly) and Safe Temperature (keep food at a safe temperature) to prevent food-borne diseases;
- Wash hands properly with liquid soap and water before handling food, after handling raw meat or poultry and before eating, and after going to the toilet or changing diapers;
- Cook food and boil water thoroughly before consumption. When cooking or

reheating, the core temperature of the food should reach at least 75 degrees Celsius;

- Avoid consumption of unpasteurised milk or undercooked food; and
- Consult your doctor immediately if you have symptoms of STEC infection, particularly bloody diarrhoea.

The public may visit the CHP's [STEC page](#) for more information.

Cluster of Influenza A cases in Tung Wah Eastern Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Tung Wah Eastern Hospital made the following announcement today (January 9):

Six patients (aged 78 to 93) in a female medical ward presented with respiratory symptoms since December 31, 2018. Appropriate tests were arranged for the patients concerned and their results were positive for Influenza Virus A (H3). A 83-year-old patient passed away on January 9 due to pneumonia. The remaining five patients are being treated under isolation with stable condition.

Admission has been suspended in the ward concerned and infection control measures have already been stepped up according to established guidelines. All other patients in the ward are under close surveillance.

The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.