

LCQ3: Government public transport fare concession scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Tik Chi-yuen and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (June 7):

Question:

Under the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (commonly known as the \$2 Scheme), elderly persons aged 60 or above and eligible persons with disabilities only need to pay \$2 per trip to travel on public transport modes covered by the Scheme, with the exception of some routes and services. However, it has been reported that the Convenor of the Executive Council and the former Secretary for Transport and Housing have considered that the Scheme would impose a huge financial burden on the Government and requested that a review be conducted. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views that the expenditure of the \$2 Scheme is a bottomless pit, and the decision to lower the eligible age to 60 years old was lightly made, how the Government responds to such views;

(2) of the respective amounts of subsidies granted by the Government to various public transport operators under the \$2 Scheme in the past five years, and whether it has investigated the amounts involved in suspected abuse of the Scheme, including but not limited to "taking long-haul routes for short journeys"; if so, of the relevant amounts, and how the Government eradicates the problems concerned; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it has plans to raise the fare under the \$2 Scheme to \$3; if so, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In 2012, the Government launched the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities, commonly known as the \$2 Scheme, to enable elderly people and eligible persons with disabilities to travel on designated public transport modes and services at a concessionary fare of \$2 per trip. The \$2 Scheme aims to build a caring and inclusive society by encouraging the beneficiaries to participate more in community activities. Since February 27, 2022, the Government has implemented various enhancement measures of the \$2 Scheme, including lowering the eligible age from 65 to 60, benefitting more than 600 000 people in the age group of 60-64, and extending the \$2 Scheme to cover red minibuses, kaitos, trams and residents' buses.

In consultation with the Transport and Logistics Bureau, I would like to reply to the question raised by the Hon Tik as follows:

(1) The previous term Government announced in early 2020 that the eligible age for the \$2 Scheme would be lowered to 60. In drawing up the budget for the \$2 Scheme, the Government had taken into account the factors that the expenditure of the scheme would increase due to ageing population of beneficiaries, upward adjustment of transport fares, increase in the number of participating public transport operators (PTOs), etc. With the implementation of the enhancement measures since end-February 2022, the actual expenditure of the \$2 Scheme in 2022-23 is within the range of estimated expenditure.

(2) The Government reimburses the PTOs the actual applicable fare after deducting any concessions offered by the PTOs minus the uniform flat rate of \$2 per trip paid by an eligible beneficiary on an accountable basis. The amount of subsidies reimbursed by the Government to the PTOs under the \$2 Scheme has increased from around \$1.2 billion in 2018-19 to around \$3.1 billion in 2022-23. A breakdown of the amount of subsidies by year and PTO in the past five years is at Annex.

The Government has all along been combating abuses of the \$2 Scheme by ineligible passengers. During site monitoring surveys jointly conducted by the Transport Department (TD) and PTOs between 2018 and 2022 on the Mass Transit Railway (MTR), buses, ferries, kaitos, minibuses, trams and residents' buses, 1 304 suspected abuse cases were found. Since the passengers concerned are normally required to pay the shortfall on the spot and no Government's reimbursement is involved, the Government does not keep the figures on the amount of differential fares involved in the above suspected cases.

To step up enforcement actions against abuses of the \$2 Scheme by ineligible persons, the TD will conduct territory-wide joint enforcement actions with PTOs within this month. The MTR Corporation Limited will enhance publicity and education, strengthen ticket inspection and impose a surcharge on all ineligible passengers travelling at the concessionary fares, and will raise the amount of surcharge: the surcharge will be raised from \$500 to \$1,000 for heavy rail and from \$290 to \$370 for light rail. The TD will also set up a dedicated team to conduct joint actions with operators of franchised bus and ferries, etc. to combat abuses. I would like to remind the public that once a passenger is found to abuse the \$2 Scheme, that is, non-eligible persons using other persons' cards, the passenger will not only be required to pay the shortfall or a surcharge on the spot, but the case will also be referred to the Police for investigation and follow-up. It is an offence for an ineligible person to abuse the \$2 Scheme. Any person who is convicted is liable to imprisonment. The Government has launched a new round of publicity programmes to remind members of the public not to defy the law through TV and radio announcements in the public interest (APIs) and posters.

The TD has all along been encouraging franchised bus and green minibus operators to provide fare concession schemes, including section fares or two-way section fares, as far as possible taking into account their commercial

considerations, including operating and financial conditions, overall economic environment, passenger needs and impact on vehicle resources, etc. The Government has rolled out TV and radio APIs and posted posters at major public bus and public light bus termini as well as public light bus compartments on the routes for which two-way section fares are offered to encourage beneficiaries of the \$2 Scheme to make appropriate use of short-haul routes and to assist passengers to understand the operation of two-way section fare, so as to reduce the differential fares under the \$2 Scheme and ensure proper use of public funds. The TD will devise a feasible plan to collect data on beneficiaries taking long-haul routes for short trips as soon as possible.

(3) The Government is mindful of the recent different opinions on the \$2 Scheme in society. As the enhancement and anti-abuse measures of the \$2 Scheme have been implemented progressively for just over a year since end-February 2022, the Government's work focus at this stage is to step up efforts to combat abuse by ineligible persons. The Government will also strengthen joint enforcement actions with PTOs to enhance the deterrent effect to ensure that the resources of the \$2 Scheme are spent on target beneficiaries.

Thank you, President.

LCQ5: Protecting labour rights and interests of non-local care workers

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (June 7):

Question:

It has been reported that some residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHs) have employed non-local care workers through the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS), and have deprived such workers of their labour rights and interests, such as making use of "dual contracts" to wrongfully deduct part of their salary, compensating their overtime work at an hourly rate lower than the statutory minimum wage, failing to provide accommodation allowance, and requiring them to take up work which are outside their scope of duties and to work as substitute staff on rest days. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of RCHs granted approval for importing care workers through the SLS in the past three years; the total number of inspections of such RCHs conducted by the Labour Department (LD), together with the number and details

of follow-up or punitive actions taken, including the number of RCHs on which administrative sanction was imposed;

(2) given that there are views that as quite a number of non-local care workers are worried about being dismissed or even retaliated against by their employers, they often dare not to report their employers' acts of contravention in their employers' presence during the LD's inspections, how the LD ensures the confidentiality of the reports and protects the privacy of the persons who make the reports; and

(3) how the LD ensures that inspection operations will all be conducted on a surprise basis, under which RCHs will not receive notice beforehand and public officers will not divulge the operational deployment, and what measures are in place to step up inspection and monitoring efforts, so as to ensure that labour rights and interests of non-local care workers are protected?

Reply:

President,

The Labour Department (LD) attaches great importance to protecting the employment rights of imported workers (including imported care workers) under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS). Imported workers enjoy the same protection as local workers under Hong Kong's labour laws, including the protection on payment of wages and restrictions on deduction of wages under the Employment Ordinance (EO). In addition, imported workers and employers must sign a Standard Employment Contract (SEC) prescribed under the SLS to further protect the employment rights and benefits of imported workers. The SEC stipulates that employers must pay wages to each imported worker by means of auto-pay and arrange imported workers to attend briefings on employment rights organised by the LD, so as to facilitate their understanding of employment rights and benefits, as well as the channels for seeking assistance and making complaints.

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The numbers of applications in respect of the care sector approved under the SLS in 2020, 2021 and 2022 were 458, 513 and 772 respectively, and the involved numbers of imported care workers approved were 1 601, 1 699 and 3 721 respectively. The Government implemented time-limited relaxation measures for the care sector under the SLS during March to May 2022 to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, hence the numbers of applications and imported care workers approved increased in that year. The number of residential care homes (RCHs) granted approval for importing care workers each year is broadly comparable to the number of applications approved.

Labour Inspectors (LIs) of the LD from time to time carry out inspections of workplaces and accommodations of imported workers provided by employers, and also stage targeted inspection campaigns in the light of the circumstances. In 2020, 2021 and 2022, LIs conducted respectively 1 252, 1 880 and 1 848 inspections of RCHs, and issued respectively 35, 48 and 50

written warnings each year.

During the aforesaid period, the LD imposed administrative sanction on six employers (including one employer of RCH for the elderly) after conviction for contravening the Immigration Ordinance, the Employees' Compensation Ordinance or the Employment Ordinance. All the valid approvals for the employers to import workers were withdrawn and the employers were debarred from participation in the SLS for two years.

(2) If imported workers suspect their employment rights have been deprived, they can call the LD's hotlines. They may also approach the offices of the Labour Relations Division of the LD to report or make enquiries. All complaints are handled in confidence.

During inspections, LIs conduct interviews with imported workers individually without the interference of any third party (including employers) to check whether employers have complied with the requirements of the EO and the SLS, and to ensure that the imported workers can express their views or lodge complaints with LIs on employment issues. LIs also on the spot provide imported workers with information cards on protection of employment rights featuring hotlines of the LD, the Immigration Department, the Hong Kong Police Force and the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority. Imported workers can call the hotlines to report or make enquiries at an appropriate time.

To protect employees' rights, the EO prohibits employers from terminating employees who provide evidence or information to the authorities. The EO stipulates that an employer may not terminate an employee for providing evidence or information in legal proceedings for the purpose or in connection with the enforcement of the EO. Offenders may be prosecuted and fined up to \$100,000 upon conviction. Employers are also required to make compensation to employees in accordance with the provisions of the EO.

(3) LIs arranges inspections of imported workers' workplaces and accommodations provided by employers, having regard to such factors as the nature of the sectors, the risks of violations, and records of non-compliance and complaints.

The LD will not notify the responsible persons of workplaces before conducting inspections of workplaces. For effective enforcement, the LD may meet with employers or imported workers by appointment to check relevant information when necessary, such as employment records and attendance records. Such arrangements will not undermine the enforcement effectiveness.

The LD will continue to adopt a multi-pronged strategy, including inspections, law enforcement, administrative sanction, education and promotion, to protect the rights and benefits of imported workers.

LCQ7: MTR Special Fare Days

Following is a question by the Hon Gary Zhang and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (June 7):

Question:

The review of the MTR Fare Adjustment Mechanism (FAM) conducted by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) was approved by the Executive Council in March this year. Under the enhanced FAM, MTRCL is required to adjust the amount to be set aside for incidents under the Service Performance Rebate (SPR) arrangement, and to use the amount set aside to launch Special Fare Days (or "Thank You Days") to provide half-fare concessions to passengers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the actual amount of fare rebates committed by MTRCL in each of the past 10 years according to the Service Performance-linked Arrangement and Profitability-linked Arrangement under the prevailing FAM and the corresponding fare rebate periods (set out in a table);
- (2) whether it knows MTR's (i) daily patronage and (ii) daily total amount of rebate offered to passengers for its Thank You Day during the four Thank You Days that took place in April and May this year, as well as the total amount of publicity and administrative expenses involved; and
- (3) given that under FAM, MTRCL will arrange a Special Fare Day to rebate passengers once the concession amount set aside under SPR reaches \$25 million, whether the Government knows how MTRCL will handle (i) the balance of the amount which has not been actually rebated to passengers on the Special Fare Days, and (ii) the amount set aside for the purpose of "special fare rebate" that does not reach \$25 million by the end of each year?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Gary Zhang is as follows:

(1) To address public concern on the linkage between the profitability and service performance of the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and its fares, the Profitability-linked Arrangement (PLA) and the Service Performance-linked Arrangement (SPA) were introduced to the Fare Adjustment Mechanism (FAM) of the MTRCL after the first review of the FAM in 2013. The MTRCL would provide fare concessions based on its underlying business profit level each year under the PLA while setting aside an amount for serious service disruptions (of 31 minutes or above) caused by factors within its control to be given back to passengers through fare concessions under the SPA.

According to the arrangement after the 2013 FAM review, the amount set

aside for fare concessions under the PLA and SPA would be returned to passengers under the "10% Same-Day Second-Trip Discount" scheme (Note 1). The scheme was replaced after the 2017 FAM review by a 3 per cent fare discount per trip to passengers for at least six months each year (Note 2).

The respective fare concession amount set aside by the MTRCL under the PLA and SPA as well as the corresponding concession arrangements since the introduction of the arrangements in 2013 to 2022 are set out in Annex.

(2) and (3) The Government and the MTRCL jointly announced the outcome of the latest FAM review on March 21, 2023. Amongst which, the calculation method of the Productivity Factor in the FAM formula has been revised to link with the MTRCL's Hong Kong property development profits, with a view to addressing the on-going demand from the public for linking the MTR fares with its profits as well as lowering the MTR fare base in the long run to benefit all passengers.

Moreover, under the enhanced Service Performance Rebate (SPR), the amount to be set aside by the MTRCL for incidents that cause disruptions of more than three hours has been increased while the maximum amount to be set aside per incident has been adjusted upward to \$40 million, and a peak hour multiplier has been introduced to more duly reflect the impact of train service disruptions on passengers. Once the amount set aside under the SPR funding pool reaches \$25 million, the MTRCL will arrange a Special Fare Day on a specific Saturday or Sunday to let passengers take the MTR at half price. The whole amount set aside under the SPR funding pool will be returned to passengers in full through the Special Fare Days.

Under the new arrangement, the MTRCL shall set aside \$103 million for incidents that took place in 2022. Four Special Fare Days have been arranged on April 8 and 9 as well as May 13 and 14. A total of about 18 million passenger trips benefitted from the four Special Fare Days, involving a total rebate of about \$72 million.

As there is a remaining balance of more than \$25 million to be rebated to passengers after the four Special Fare Days, the MTRCL will arrange an additional Special Fare Day on August 19, 2023 (Saturday). Any remaining amount after the additional Special Fare Day will be accrued under the SPR. When it reaches \$25 million again, the MTRCL will arrange another Special Fare Day to benefit the passengers.

The publicity and administrative expenses for Special Fare Days are absorbed by the internal cost of the MTRCL, which is excluded from the amount under the mechanism.

Note 1: The duration of the fare discount scheme depended on the amount set aside under the PLA and SPA during the year involved.

Note 2: Under the arrangement, if the amount set aside for fare concessions under the PLA and SPA in any given year were sufficient to provide a 3 per cent fare discount for more than six months in that year, the MTRCL would offer the discount to passengers until such amount was exhausted. On the contrary, if the fare concession amount set aside could not sustain the

provision of a 3 per cent fare discount for six months in any given year, the MTRCL would top up the difference with additional funding to ensure that a 3 per cent fare discount would be offered to passengers for six months in that year.

LCQ20: Power supply incidents of two power companies

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hok-fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (June 7):

Question:

It has been reported that the Incident Investigation Report on the Incident of a 275-kV Fault in HK Electric's Power System on April 19, 2023, submitted to the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department by the Hongkong Electric Company, Limited has pointed out that, a short circuit caused by its engineer's mistake in energising a spare cable led to a power outage in some areas on Hong Kong Island in the early hours of April 19 this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the respective numbers and details of power supply incidents of the two power companies in the past five years (set out in a table);
- (2) whether it knows if, in the event of a failure of the power system, the two power companies currently have installed backup systems that will activate automatically for restoring power supply, or engineers are required to manually restart the relevant systems for restoring power supply; if the two power companies do not, whether it will request them to install such systems; and
- (3) as it has been reported that the aforesaid incident was related to the failure to update the circuit diagrams of the Energy Management System of the Cyberport 275-kV Switching Station in a timely manner, whether it will request the two power companies to devise mechanisms to ensure the timely updating of various types of circuit diagrams, thereby reducing the risk of misconnection of cables?

Reply:

President,

The Government is very concerned about the power supply incident in some areas on Hong Kong Island of the Hongkong Electric Company, Limited (HEC) at

around 0.45am on April 19, 2023, and has been closely following up with HEC on the development of the incident. After the incident, the Government requested HEC to conduct in-depth investigation of the cause of the incident, and has been monitoring the implementation of remedial measures. HEC submitted an investigation report to the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services (the Director) on May 15. With assistance from an independent third-party expert, the Government is examining the report, including assessing whether the identified cause is well-founded and whether rectification measures are appropriate, and will request HEC to make clarifications or provide further information if necessary. The Government urges HEC to implement improvement measures to prevent similar incidents from happening again.

Regarding the question raised by the Hon Chan Hok-fung, our reply is as follows:

(1) Whole-year figures and details of the incidents causing power interruption of the two power companies since the current Scheme of Control Agreements came into effect in late 2018/early 2019 are set out at Annex.

(2) When there is an electrical fault in the power system, the electrical protection system operates automatically to isolate the faulted equipment, so as to reduce the impact on the power system. In general, if a power interruption is caused by an electrical fault, the operator of the system control centre first has to confirm and verify the status of the system and the concerned faulted equipment, and then manually carries out power supply restoration work by remote control at a suitable time, in order to prevent further impact on the system. Under some special circumstances, the power companies also adopt automatic power supply restoration systems. For example, power supply automatic restoration systems are generally adopted for high voltage overhead lines as they are usually not damaged after lightning strikes.

(3) In general, there are different types of drawings of different purposes for the power supply systems of the two power companies. Under the existing mechanism, the two power companies are obliged to timely update the relevant drawings with regard to any changes on the power supply systems, including commission of new equipment or retirement of old equipment.

According to the investigation report of the power supply incident in some areas on Hong Kong Island on April 19 submitted by HEC to the Director, HEC indicated that the relevant drawings with specific uses were updated after the completion of the power network enhancement project at the Cyberport Substation in 2009. HEC explained that as the spare cable circuits were not used in the daily operation of the power network, the updates were not included in all drawings.

While the investigation by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department is still underway, HEC's report has reflected HEC's inadequacies in the management of the drawings. In this regard, HEC is obliged for immediately formulating improvement measures on different aspects, including establishing guidelines on updating detailed transmission schematic drawings,

single-line diagrams and circuit diagrams of energy management systems, as well as their respective methods of use and limitations, etc, in order to prevent reoccurrence of similar incidents.

LCQ19: Regulation of veterinary surgeons and veterinary clinics

Following is a question by the Hon Adrian Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (June 7):

Question:

The Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong (VSB) is a statutory body established under the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance (Cap. 529) which is responsible for the regulation of the practice of veterinary surgery in Hong Kong. Regarding the regulation of veterinary surgeons and veterinary clinics, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of veterinary surgeons registered under Cap. 529 in each of the past five years;

(2) of the number of complaints about veterinary surgeons and veterinary clinics received by VSB in each of the past five years, and the subject matters of such complaints; among such complaints, the respective numbers of those which required the conduct of disciplinary inquiries and those in which a conviction of a disciplinary offence was obtained; the orders made by the Inquiry Committee against the veterinary surgeons convicted of disciplinary offences;

(3) of the average time taken by VSB to complete the investigation of each case in the past five years; the longest time taken for investigating the cases and the reasons for that;

(4) whether the authorities have regularly deployed staff to conduct inspections on various veterinary clinics across the territory; if so, of the timetable of the inspections conducted by the authorities in the past five years; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) as there are views that there is insufficient transparency in VSB's current practices of only publishing on its website the orders of the disciplinary inquiries made by the Inquiry Committee within one year and publishing on an anonymous basis the records of disciplinary inquiries held in the recent three years, whether the Government will recommend or request that VSB set out clearly the information of all non-compliant veterinary

surgeons and the names of veterinary clinics involved, so as to ensure the public's right to know?

Reply:

President,

The Veterinary Surgeons Board (VSB) is a statutory body established under the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance (Cap. 529) (the Ordinance), and is responsible for the regulation, registration and disciplinary control of veterinary surgeons, to ensure a high standard of veterinary services in Hong Kong. All veterinary surgeons must obtain the qualifications for registration specified under the Ordinance before practising in Hong Kong. They should also comply with the Ordinance and Code of Practice for the Guidance of Registered Veterinary Surgeons (the Code) promulgated by the VSB. The Code provides veterinary surgeons with guidelines on conduct, in various aspects including professional ethics, clinic premises and equipment, advertising and other operational details etc. If a veterinary surgeon breaches the Code, the VSB may take disciplinary actions against the surgeon.

If a complaint is received, the VSB must conduct investigation and follow up on the case according to the procedures laid down in the Ordinance and Rules of the Veterinary Surgeons Board (Disciplinary Proceedings) (the Rules). Every case should first be investigated by a Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) of the VSB, to decide if it should be referred to an Inquiry Committee (IC) established under the Ordinance for disciplinary inquiries.

On the questions raised by the Hon Adrian Ho, we would like to reply as follows:

(1) In the past five years, the number of veterinary surgeons registered with the VSB under the Ordinance are as follows:

Year	Number of registered veterinary surgeons
2018	988
2019	1 049
2020	1 075
2021	1 090
2022	1 104

(2) In the past five years, the number of complaints received by the VSB, cases referred to IC for disciplinary inquiry after preliminary investigation and complaints found substantiated upon inquiry are tabulated as follows:

Year	Number of complaints received (Note 1)	Number of complaints not referred to IC after preliminary investigation	Number of complaints received that year that are still under preliminary investigation	Number of cases referred to IC after preliminary investigation	Number of inquiries completed (Note 2)	Number of complaints found substantiated
2018	51	44	2	5	8	7
2019 (Note 3)	41	36	2	3	2	1
2020 (Note 3)	42	33	7	2	2	2
2021	40	33	7	0	14	11
2022	59	33	26	0	8	6

Note 1: PICs are still investigating some of the complaints.

Note 2: Including cases received and referred for disciplinary inquiry before that year.

Note 3: To complement the holding of the first Election of VSB Members in 2020 in accordance with the Veterinary Surgeons Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 2015, disciplinary inquiry hearings were suspended from the second half of 2019 to the first half of 2020. Subsequent to the commencement of the amendments to the Ordinance on October 1, 2020, the VSB resumed disciplinary inquiry hearings in November 2020. In addition, inquiry hearings of some cases were repeatedly deferred due to the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

In the past five years, the nature of complaint cases received by the VSB involving registered veterinary surgeons and veterinary clinics are as follows:

Nature of complaints	Percentage
Disregard of professional responsibility to animals	71%
Communication with clients	11%
Medical records	5%
Charges	5%
Others	8%

In the past five years, ICs completed 34 inquiries, 27 of which were found substantiated, involving 30 veterinary surgeons having committed a disciplinary offence. Orders made by ICs in respect of these veterinary surgeons are tabulated as follows:

Relevant Order	Number of persons
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Removal of name(s) of relevant veterinary surgeon(s) from the register for three months, reprimand in writing and compulsory participation in continuing professional development programme or professional seminar	1
Reprimand in writing and compulsory participation in continuing professional development programme or professional seminar	18
Reprimand in writing	11
Total	30

(3) Amongst the inquiry cases received and completed in the past five years, the average processing time was around 10 months and the longest one was about 37 months. The investigation and collection of required information and supporting evidence often take time. Processing times of complaints also depend on a number of factors, including the time required by relevant parties (the complainant and the veterinary surgeon being complained of, etc.) to provide necessary information and the complexity of the cases (e.g. whether multiple veterinary surgeons or other law enforcement agencies are involved, etc.).

Upon the reconstitution of the VSB in 2020, the membership increased from 10 to 19 and a panel of 18 assessors was set up. These members and assessors can join PICs and ICs, thus helping expedite the processing of complaints.

(4) The VSB has clear requirements and guidelines on the conduct of registered veterinary surgeons in Hong Kong. The VSB publishes the Code, leaflet and complaint form on its website, to provide the public with information about lodging complaints against veterinary surgeons with suspected professional misconduct or negligence. In addition, veterinary surgeons must hold a valid practising certificate issued by the VSB in order to provide veterinary services. The certificate must be renewed annually, and when applying for renewal, the veterinary surgeon must declare whether he has been convicted of professional misconduct in Hong Kong or elsewhere.

Currently, the VSB mainly acts on complaints and does not conduct proactive inspections. If a registered veterinary surgeon is suspected of committing a disciplinary offence, the VSB will handle the complaint seriously in accordance with the complaint mechanism and disciplinary proceedings stipulated in the Ordinance and Rules.

(5) Such arrangement was decided by the VSB after its review on publications of disciplinary orders. The Government has earlier on recommended the VSB to review the current arrangement, with reference to practices of other professional bodies, to further enhance transparency.