

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, after attending the special meeting of the Legislative Council's Finance Committee today (April 11):

Reporter: Do you think the Hong Kong Medical Council should approve the ... as soon as possible and they should abandon the secret ballot?

Secretary for Food and Health: The Food and Health Bureau welcomes any measures that will increase the attractiveness to overseas doctors to come back to work in Hong Kong because we face manpower shortage. The Medical Council would be discussing in the upcoming meeting those proposals that they had proposed last time about waiving the internship requirement for overseas doctors. The Food and Health Bureau welcomes those proposals, but as I have said before, I think this is only one small step. For other measures that would improve or increase the attractiveness of getting more overseas doctors to come back to work in Hong Kong, we are now working very closely together with the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine, the Hospital Authority, the Department of Health and also the key stakeholders of medical associations in order to come together to work out some improvement measures.

Reporter: Are you positive about it, because they have already voted down once?

Secretary for Food and Health: According to media reports, actually many doctors' associations and stakeholders are disappointed about the result. I think that is why the Hong Kong Medical Council has decided to very quickly discuss the proposals. I am confident that they will come up with some proposals that would achieve the purpose.

Reporter: Is there anything that the Government can do to monitor the Hong Kong Medical Council better and to step up their role in this matter?

Secretary for Food and Health: The Hong Kong Medical Council is a statutory and independent body. Of course we do have government representatives but the number is small. But in any case, our government members would obviously voice their concern, opinions and suggestions. I think what the Hong Kong Medical Council is proposing is one but a small step in attracting overseas doctors. We will pursue other measures such as providing more resources to the Hospital Authority to hire more doctors under Limited Registration. Those doctors may not be specialists, but they may be at intermediate level and also doctors at different levels. I think we should introduce measures to attract those people as well.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)