

**Presentation by Secretary for Health and Welfare
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on Wednesday, 27 March 2002**

Mr Chairman,

In the coming year, we propose to allocate **\$68.2 billion** for health and welfare services to meet our targets in these policy areas as well as to support the work of the Women's Commission. This represents **23.7%** of the Total Public Expenditure.

Health

On healthcare services, we propose to spend **\$32.4 billion** on recurrent expenditure, representing a real growth of **3.6%** and accounting for **14.8%** of the Total Recurrent Public Expenditure.

In 2002-03, the Department of Health (DH) will start to re-engineer and strengthen its preventive healthcare services into a comprehensive, holistic and lifelong health promotion and preventive care programme for the community. It will set up outreaching teams to promote psychosocial health among secondary school students, implement a parenting programme, extend the women health service, plan for a cervical cancer screening programme, and pilot a men's health programme. These efforts will bring returns in the form of a healthier community.

In the development of Chinese medicine, DH will start to develop regulatory standards for some commonly used Chinese medicinal herbs. The Government Laboratory, at the same time, will strengthen its analytical capabilities in the safety evaluation of Chinese medicines. In addition, plans to introduce Chinese medicine into the public healthcare system will be put in place.

In the coming year, HA will open **366** new beds and **80** day places, and will enhance the community and outreach services. It will implement a pilot EXITERS (EXtended-care patients Intensive Treatment, Early diversion and Rehabilitation Stepping-stone) Project to provide a one-year intensive rehabilitation and treatment programme for suitable psychiatric patients with a view to facilitating their early integration with the community. An elderly suicide prevention programme will also be established to help elders with psychiatric problems. In addition, **10** hospital and community-based smoking counselling and cessation centers will be established to provide cessation counselling to tobacco users and counselling

to children, adolescents and non-smokers aimed at preventing initiation.

Social Welfare

In 2002-03, we propose to spend **\$32.1 billion** on social welfare services to achieve a real growth of **9.0%** over the current year. This will account for **14.6%** of the Total Recurrent Public Expenditure. We will continue to provide services in various social welfare programmes to assist the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.

Services for Elders

In the coming year, we will spend **\$3.5 billion** on services for elders, **14.3%** increase over the current year. We will provide an additional **2 702** subsidised residential care places for elders through a mixed mode of service provision with participation from both the NGOs and the private sector.

To meet elders' preference to age at home, we will expand the provision of enhanced home and community care services to serve an additional **1 845** frail elders, and re-engineer existing home help service to benefit more frail elders. We will also provide additional community elderly services through a new mode of integrated care facilities.

Social Security

On social security front, we propose **\$22.5 billion** financial assistance to those in need, including **\$16 billion** for CSSA Scheme. This represents a net increase of **8.2%** over the current year. To encourage more able-bodied CSSA recipients to overcome barriers to work, we will implement a package of measures to help single-parent CSSA recipients to become self-reliant and reduce their risk of social exclusion.

Other Direct Welfare Services

We propose to spend **\$1.3 billion** on youth services. This represents an increase of **6.7%** over the current year. We will expedite the formation of integrated teams, provide **150** peer counsellors, implement the Understanding the Adolescent Project in another **154** secondary schools and strengthen outreach services for youth at risk.

We will spend **\$1.8 billion** on family and child welfare. This represents an increase of **2.8%** over the current year. In the light of the rising trend of family problems, we have adopted a three-pronged approach to strengthen support for families and to provide more responsive and targeted assistance. At the primary level, we strengthen preventive work through family education and early identification of families at risk through outreach

efforts. At the secondary level, we will transform family services centres into integrated family services centres, providing a full range of resource, support and counselling services. At the tertiary level, we have specialised service units to provide intensive and immediate crisis intervention.

To ensure people with disabilities are provided with the necessary care and support, we propose to spend **\$2.7 billion** on rehabilitation services, an increase of **8.1%** over the current year. New initiatives include additional residential and day places, and extended community support network for the ex-mentally ill.

Community Investment

It is the Government's firm commitment to strengthen our community support network and to foster a caring society. In the coming year, we will continue to provide resources to promote community participation for individuals and families, especially the vulnerable groups. The Chief Executive (CE) pledged in his 2001 Policy Address to provide an initial **\$300M** grant to establish the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund. We will invite applications from various organizations, in particular, welfare organizations, community groups and women's groups. We expect to disburse grants for successful applications in early 2002-03.

Women's Interests

The establishment of the Women's Commission is a significant milestone in the Administration's drive to promote the advancement of women in Hong Kong. The Commission, established in January 2001, is a central mechanism tasked to advise the Administration on a strategic overview of women's issues and the development of a long-term vision and strategies for advancement of women. Under the 2002-03 draft Estimates, recurrent expenditure of **\$23.7M** is provided to facilitate the work of the Women's Commission.

The Commission has set itself the mission to enable women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. Three priority areas of action, namely gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women and public education, have been identified. Specific action plans and programmes on these three areas have been devised.