

**LegCo Panel on Manpower
(Meeting on 19 June 2003)**

**Enhanced Employment Measures to Further Relieve Impact
of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Administration's proposed initiatives to create employment and training opportunities.

Background

2. The outbreak of SARS in Hong Kong in March this year has brought about a slowdown in our economic activities. Businesses in many sectors have been hard hit. There have been a number of business closures and suspension, and employees affected have been laid off or are taking no-pay leave. The unemployment rate rose to 8.3% for the period March to May 2003, reflecting the fuller impact of SARS on the labour market. This translates into some 287 000 people out of work. With a large number of fresh graduates and school leavers entering the labour force during the summer months, there is pressure on unemployment in the near term.

3. The Administration is concerned about the problem of unemployment and has all along been taking steps to ease the situation. In addition to the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme (YPTP) and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YWETS), since April this year, we have introduced the Re-employment Training Programme for the Middle-aged, District Employment Programme for the Middle-aged, and the Graduate Employment Training Scheme to meet the employment needs of both the middle-aged and university graduates. In the light of the outbreak of SARS, we devised an employment-cum-training package amounting to \$432 million in May this year to provide about 21 500 short-term employment and training opportunities.

Proposal

4. Against this background and in the light of the views of Legislative Council members, political parties and members of the Task Force on Employment and the wider community, the Administration now proposes to introduce a package of enhanced employment measures to create about 32 000 additional employment and training opportunities. The package will require funding of \$715 million.

5. Together with the 21 500 training places and short-term jobs created under the \$432 million relief package implemented last month, altogether 53 500 employment and training openings will be created since the outbreak of SARS.

6. The new package will focus on the two most vulnerable groups of unemployed: the youths and the middle-aged. About half (14 350) of the training and employment opportunities are geared for unemployed youth, including school leavers, whilst the rest (17 700) are suitable for the middle-aged.

7. As easing unemployment requires the collective effort of the community, we will mobilize Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), district organisations, community bodies, arts, culture, leisure and sports groups in this exercise. Through collaboration with NGOs and community organisations, the new programmes will not only create jobs but also help foster social cohesion and community building. Our package will create employment and provide training in areas where long-term investment in respect of public services or economic growth is required. It will cater for both the needs of employment and training as well as the long-term development requirement of our society. It demonstrates the Administration's commitment to easing unemployment and making the best of the current adversity to enhance the employability of our young people and to re-equip and upgrade our workforce.

Initiatives for Young People

8. The first category of the programme focuses on the employment needs of young people. With the advent of summer, a large number of

secondary school graduates/leavers will join the labour force and will thus add pressure to the employment market. With no or very little working experience, these young people often find it difficult to seek suitable jobs. To address their needs, we have devised eight programmes which would enhance their skills and provide them with valuable work experience. These include strengthening the YPTP and creating about 8 300 job opportunities for young people.

Youth Pre-employment Training Programme

9. Since 1999, the Labour Department has implemented the YPTP to provide comprehensive pre-employment training and workplace attachment to school-leavers aged 15 to 19. We will augment the provision by \$45 million for YPTP in 2002-03 such that an additional 6 000 places can be provided.

Employment programmes

10. Jobs under the employment programmes cover a wide spectrum of arts, cultural, social, tourism, environmental and leisure-related areas, which should offer attractive prospects to the young people while enriching their experience. These jobs will be for six months and, except for supervisory ranks, offer a monthly remuneration of \$4 000. We will arrange training pertinent to the job requirements so that the participating youths would not only gain working experience, but also obtain useful job-related training. This will improve the employability of the young people in future.

(i) Tourism Development Assistant Training Project

- Purpose – promote healthy tourism, remind travellers to comply with hygiene standards and assist in organising tourism programmes.
- Number of jobs – 3 000
- Cost - \$98 million (this includes wages and related benefits, administration and training cost, equipment such as uniform and travelling expenses)
- Relevant bureau/department – Tourism Commission
- Implementation – August 2003

(ii) *Community Building Project*

- Purpose –assist, organise and promote community building activities, provide support for election activities, promote Local Community Economy and building management, etc.
- Number of jobs – 1 000
- Cost - \$30 million (this includes wages and related benefits, administration, training and material cost)
- Relevant bureau/department – Home Affairs Department
- Implementation – August 2003

(iii) *Positive Life Project*

- Purpose – publicise and promote message on maintaining a positive outlook in life and foster a culture of creativity
- Number of jobs – 500
- Cost - \$15 million (this includes wages and related benefits, administration, training and material cost)
- Relevant bureau/department – Home Affairs Department
- Implementation – August 2003

(iv) *Leisure, Cultural, Sport and Arts Training Project*

- Purpose – promote cultural, sport and performing art by attaching youngsters for training and providing workplace experience in the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, performing art venues and sport associations.
- Number of jobs – 1 250
- Cost – \$35.7 million (this include wages and related benefits, administration and training cost)
- Relevant bureau/department - Leisure and Cultural Services Department
- Implementation – August 2003

(v) *Leisure and Cultural Guide Project*

- Purpose - guide tourists and students on historical background and features of cultural heritage, gardening and species of flowers
- Number of jobs – 100
- Cost – \$2.8 million (this includes wages and related benefits, administration, training and material cost)
- Relevant bureau/department – Leisure and Cultural Services Department
- Implementation – August 2003

(vi) Promoting Natural Environment Project

- Purpose – help young people to acquire knowledge about Hong Kong’s natural environment and nature appreciation techniques; promote good practice in nature appreciation and improve the natural environment with hands-on experience through conducting guided visits and fieldwork.
- Number of jobs – 500
- Cost - \$16.7 million (this includes wages and related benefits, administration, training and material cost as well as travelling expenses)
- Relevant bureau/department – Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
- Implementation – August 2003

(vii) Community Care Project

- Purpose - promote environmental and personal hygiene among the elderly and other community members, assist in organizing such activities and offer logistical help to promotional and educational activities organized in support of the “Team Clean” initiatives
- Number of jobs – 2 000
- Cost - \$60 million (this includes wages and related benefits, administration, training and material cost)
- Relevant bureau/department – Social Welfare Department
- Implementation – August 2003

Initiatives for Other Groups

11. The second category of initiatives caters for the employment and career needs of other groups. These include the provision of additional training places for the Skills Enhancement Project (SEP) and employment opportunities that are suitable for the middle-aged with low skills and low education attainment.

Training programmes – Skills Enhancement Project

12. We will strengthen the Skills Enhancement Project (SEP) introduced in June this year by providing 5 000 additional short-term training opportunities to employees on no-pay leave or employees previously employed in catering, hotel, retail, tourism and building decoration industries. As in the original programme, the training will last for two months. The special tailor-made skills enhancement training will be delivered by the Skills Upgrading Scheme Secretariat and the complementary generic training will be carried out by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB). Each participant of the course will receive a monthly allowance of \$4 000 during the training period. The additional cost will be \$60 million.

13. We will also provide, under SEP, 2 000 places of 2-week tailor-made training for airport-related sectors, which are hard hit by the outbreak of SARS. The training will be delivered by the ERB. Each participant will receive a special weekly training allowance of \$1 000 during the training period. The cost of the project will be around \$10 million. However, no additional resources will be required as the amount will be covered by the financial provision previously approved for the SEP.

Employment programmes

14. To tie in with the efforts of the Administration to clean up Hong Kong, we will create about 6 700 job opportunities to reinforce the cleansing work and improve environmental hygiene in various areas, including public housing estates, streets/backlanes, common parts of old tenement buildings, leisure facilities and country parks. Most of the cleansing jobs will be contracted out. To protect the interest of the workers, concerned departments will follow the guideline issued by the

Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau on the engagement and monitoring of Government service contracts. They will require the contractors to specify in their proposals the wages and working hours of their unskilled workers. The Departments will monitor closely compliance by contractors and follow up on any complaints from the workers. We will also create jobs to administer enhanced voluntary community work under the “Support for Self-Reliance Scheme”, which aims at assisting more able-bodied Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients going back to work, as well as doubling the capacity of the Incentive Allowance Scheme for local domestic helpers.

(i) Provision of special incentive allowance to LDHs

- Purpose – provide special incentive allowance (at a daily maximum of \$50 or monthly maximum of \$1 200) to qualified LDHs who are willing to work across the harbour or during unsocial hours
- Number of places – 4 000 (in addition to the 4 000 places under the existing Scheme)
- Cost - \$30 million (this includes payment of incentive allowance to LDHs and administration cost)
- Relevant bureau/department – Labour Department (implemented through ERB’s Integrated Scheme for LDHs)
- Duration – allowance payable for a maximum of 6 months for each qualified LDH
- Implementation – July 2003

(ii) Provision of enhanced improvement in environmental hygiene

- Purpose – step up efforts to clean Hong Kong
- Number of places – 4 250 (including extending the 3 000 jobs provided in the \$432 million package)
- Cost - \$215 million (this includes the cost to contract out the service, the provision of material and equipment, and administration/supervision cost)
- Relevant bureau/department – Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
- Duration – six months
- Implementation – the 1 250 new jobs in September 2003

(iii) Provision of special improvement in environmental hygiene in public housing estates

- Purpose – step up efforts to clean up public housing estates and their surrounding areas and promote the need to keep the environment tidy and clean
- Number of jobs – 580
- Cost - \$23 million (this includes wages and related benefits, as well as administration cost)
- Relevant bureau/department – Housing Department
- Duration – six months
- Implementation – August 2003

(iv) Provision of cleaning-related service to public leisure venues

- Purpose – provide cleaning-related service to 1 400 leisure venues under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department
- Number of jobs – 800
- Cost – \$30 million (this includes the cost to contract out the service, administration cost and the provision of material and equipment)
- Relevant bureau/department – Leisure and Cultural Services Department
- Duration – six months
- Implementation – August 2003

(v) Provision of additional maintenance service to country parks

- Purpose – provide additional service to maintain country parks clean and green and cleaning-related service to other Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department venues (such as farms, markets, kennels, etc.)
- Number of jobs – 970
- Cost – \$44.3 million (this includes wages and related benefits, administration cost and the provision of material and equipment)
- Relevant bureau/department – Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
- Duration – six months

- Implementation – August 2003

(vi) *Provision of additional support measures under the intensified Support for Self-reliance Scheme*

- Purpose – provide support to the Scheme which aims to help employable CSSA recipients develop a work habit and increase self-esteem through participating in community work, thus paving way for employment
- Number of jobs – 100
- Cost – \$9.5 million (this includes wage and related benefit as well as administrative cost)
- Relevant bureau/department – Social Welfare Department
- Duration – one year
- Implementation – August 2003

15. For ease of reference, a summary table of these 16 initiatives are at **Annex**.

Way Forward

16. Following consultation with the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower and subject to the approval of funding by Finance Committee, we plan to implement the initiatives in July/August 2003.

Economic Development and Labour Bureau (Labour Branch)
June 2003

ANNEX**Provision of Employment and Training Places to Relieve Unemployment****Summary of Training/Job Vacancies**

Project	Content	Duration of Employment/ Training	Relevant Department/ Organisation	No. of New Vacancies/ Training Places	Implementation Date	New Provision (\$ million)
Target group: Youth						
1. Youth Pre-employment Training Programme	Providing comprehensive pre-employment training and one-month workplace attachment for school leavers aged 15 to 19.	6 to 8 months	Labour Department	6 000 (Increasing annual intake from 12 000 to 18 000)	Joint recruitment with the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme during 26 July and 18 August 2003	45
2. Tourism Development Assistant Training Project	- Promoting healthy tourism; - Reminding travellers to comply with hygiene standards; - Assisting in tourism programmes.	6 months	Tourism Commission	3 000	August 2003	98
3. Community Building Project	Assisting, organizing and promoting community building activities, providing support for the activities of election, promoting Local Community Economy and building management, etc.	6 months	Home Affairs Department (HAD)	1 000	August 2003	30
4. Positive Life Project	Publicizing and promoting message on maintaining a positive outlook in life, and fostering culture of creativity;	6 months	HAD	500	August 2003	15
5. Leisure, Cultural, Sport and Arts Training Project	Providing attachment training and workplace experience in the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), performing art venues and sport associations, and performing duties to promote cultural, sport and performing art	6 months	LCSD	1 250	August 2003	35.7
6. Leisure and Cultural Guide Project	Guiding tourists and students on historical background and features of cultural heritages, gardening and species of flowers.	6 months	LCSD	100	August 2003	2.8
7. Promoting Natural Environmental Project	Acquiring knowledge about Hong Kong's natural environment and nature appreciation technique; promoting good practice in nature appreciation and improving the natural environment with hands-on experiences through conducting guided visits and fieldwork.	6 months	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)	500	August 2003	16.7

Project	Content	Duration of Employment/ Training	Relevant Department/ Organisation	No. of New Vacancies/ Training Places	Implementation Date	New Provision (\$ million)
8. Community Care Project	Promoting environmental and personal hygiene among the elderly and other community members, assisting in organizing such activities, offering logistical support to promotional and educational activities organized by "Team Clean".	6 months	Social Welfare Department (SWD)	2 000	August 2003	60
Subtotal				14 350		303.2
Target group: Others						
1. Skills Enhancement Project (SEP)	Providing training to unemployed workers or those on no-pay leave of, for example, the catering, building decoration, hotel, retail and tourism industries. Trainees will receive 4-week trade-specific skills enhancement (by the Skills Upgrading Scheme Secretariat (SUSS)) and 4-week generic skills (by Employees Retraining Board (ERB)) training. Those with an attendance rate of 90% or above will receive a special allowance of a maximum of \$4000 per month.	8 weeks	ERB and SUSS	5 000 (Increasing the number of training places from the original target of 10 000 to 15 000)	August 2003	60
2. SEP – training for workers employed in the airport-related sectors	Providing 2-week tailor-made training to unemployed workers or those on no-pay leave in the airport-related sectors. Trainees with an attendance rate of 90% or above will receive a special allowance of a maximum of \$1000 per week.	2 weeks	ERB	2 000	July 2003	See Footnote ¹
3. Provision of special incentive allowance to Local Domestic Helpers (LDHs)	Providing special incentive allowance (at a daily maximum of \$50 or monthly maximum of \$1 200) to qualified LDHs who are willing to work across the harbour or during unsocial hours.	Allowance payable for a maximum of 6 months for each qualified LDH	LD	4 000 (In addition to the 4 000 places under the existing scheme)	July 2003	30
4. Provision of enhanced improvement in environmental hygiene to reinforce the Government's effort to clean Hong Kong	Creating job opportunities for cleaning workers through contracting out to step up the effort to clean Hong Kong.	6 months	Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	4 250 (Including extending the 3 000 jobs started since May to July 2003)	1 250 new jobs : September 2003 3 000 extended jobs : November 2003 to January 2004	215
5. Provision of special improvement in environmental hygiene in public housing estates	Recruiting workers to step up cleaning services at public housing estates and their surrounding areas and to promote the need to keep the environment tidy and clean.	6 months	Housing Department	580	August 2003	23

¹ The amount required (i.e. \$10.34 m) will be covered by the financial provision reserved under the original SEP

Project	Content	Duration of Employment/ Training	Relevant Department/ Organisation	No. of New Vacancies/ Training Places	Implementation Date	New Provision (\$ million)
6. Provision of cleaning-related service to public leisure venues	Providing cleaning-related service to 1 400 LCSD leisure venues. The service will be provided by private contractor(s).	6 months	LCSD	800	August 2003	30
7. Provision of additional maintenance service to country parks	Recruiting workers to provide additional service to maintain country parks clean and green and cleaning-related service to other AFCD venues (such as farms, markets, kennels, etc.).	6 months	AFCD	970	August 2003	44.3
8. Provision of additional support to measures under the intensified Support for Self-reliance Scheme	Recruiting "Community Work Organizers" to provide additional support to the Scheme, which aims to help employable CSSA recipients develop a work habit and increase self-esteem through participating in community work, thus paving way for employment.	1 year	SWD	100	August 2003	9.5
Subtotal				17 700		411.8
Overall total				32 050		715