

For discussion
12 February 2004

LegCo Panel on Manpower

Extension of Temporary Jobs in the Public Sector

Purpose

This paper sets out the Administration's proposal to extend 11 700 temporary jobs created under various employment initiatives since 2000.

Background

2. The Administration attaches great importance to promoting employment opportunities. In 2000 and 2001, the Administration created a number of temporary jobs to help the unemployed enter the labour market. These include :

- (a) the Initiatives for Wider Economic Participation (IWEP) announced in the 2000 Policy Address to improve the environment and increase greenery, enhance welfare and hospital services, and implement small environmental improvement and community building projects as well as health campaign. Departments involved in the exercise include the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), Home Affairs Department (HAD), Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Hospital Authority (HA), etc.; and
- (b) the initiatives announced in the 2001 Policy Address to accelerate works projects and enhance property management, education, welfare, health and other services and environmental improvement work. The departments involved include FEHD and SWD.

3. In response to the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, the Administration introduced in 2003 two employment-cum-training packages¹ to improve the environmental hygiene of streets, public places, country parks and public leisure venues and assist the needy to enhance the hygienic condition at home. Temporary jobs for

¹ The two packages were the \$432-million package implemented in May 2003 and the \$715-million package launched in August 2003.

youths were also created in areas covering tourism, leisure, arts and cultural sectors, as well as for community building. Departments involved include AFCD, FEHD, LCSO, HAD, the Housing Department, SWD and Tourism Commission (TC).

4. Altogether, these measures have created 29 800 low-skilled temporary jobs. They are designed to meet ad hoc operational needs and provide short-term relief to the unemployed. Of these, some 6 400 jobs (e.g. jobs under Operation CARE) had expired by November 2003 and about 18 900 will expire by end-March 2004.

5. Although the unemployment rate has declined from the all-time high of 8.7% during May to July 2003 to 7.3% during October to December 2003, the Administration, as announced by the Chief Executive in his 2004 Policy Address, proposes to extend some 11 700 temporary jobs. The purpose is to continue the provision of short-term relief to those with less education, lower skills and limited work experience. This decision was made after careful consideration of the operational needs for retaining the jobs by the relevant departments. For those whose temporary jobs will not be extended, the Labour Department (LD), together with the host departments and non-government organizations (NGOs), will provide assistance to them. Details are set out in paragraphs 14 to 16.

Proposal

6. We propose to extend **11 700 temporary jobs** at an estimated cost of **\$873.76 million** (including \$37.30 million to be met from redeployment of resources by the concerned department). Of these jobs, some 3 500 are for youths and the remaining for other age groups, primarily the middle-aged. The following paragraphs set out the details of the proposal. A summary table is at Annex.

(I) AFCD

7. AFCD proposes to extend **280 jobs** to provide cleansing and maintenance services (such as grass-cutting) in various country parks as well as to maintain hygiene standards and animal welfare in animal management centres for a period of **one year** at an estimated cost of **\$23 million**.

(II) FEHD

8. FEHD proposes to extend **3 287 temporary jobs**, for a period of **six to twelve months**, at an estimated cost of **\$270 million**. The jobs will

mainly be created in the private sector to provide cleansing and cleansing-related services (such as rodent and pest control work) in streets, public places and venues (such as public toilets and markets).

(III) HAD

9. HAD proposes to extend **358 jobs** for community building, local community economy, building management and environmental improvement. These jobs will be extended **for various durations up to 12 months** at an estimated cost of **\$17.69 million**.

(IV) HA

10. HA proposes to extend **2 420 jobs** for **10 to 12 months** at an estimated cost of **\$204.72 million**. Of these, 1 920 are care assistants and general workers, who will provide support to clinicians, nurses and other health professionals in mundane duties, so that the latter could concentrate on patient care and other infection control/health measures. These care workers also perform general cleansing, portering and other housekeeping and domestic services in wards and general areas which greatly assist in maintaining the hygiene standard of hospitals and clinics. Another 500 are construction workers and related supervisory staff, who will carry out minor repair and improvement works in hospitals and clinics to maintain and improve their physical environment.

(V) LCSD

11. LCSD proposes to extend **549 youth training jobs** for periods of **three to six months** at an estimated cost of **\$13.31 million**. This aims to provide assistance to, for example, the operation of public libraries, as well as sports and cultural venues/programmes. LCSD also considers it necessary to extend another **800 temporary jobs** to continue the cleansing service for some 1 400 public leisure venues for a period of **12 months** at an estimated cost of **\$60 million**.

(VI) SWD

12. SWD proposes to extend **3 855 jobs** for **10 to 12 months** at an estimated cost of **\$278.04 million**. These include 126 community work organizers (to reinforce the Support for Self-reliance Scheme), 2 000 youth ambassadors (to assist in the organization of promotional activities on personal hygiene among the elderly and for Team Clean), 150 peer counsellors (to help social workers in providing assistance to Form 3 school

leavers), 1 249 programme assistants (to help social workers in the organization of activities for the disabled, elderly, family and youth), 236 care assistants (to enhance the personal care services for frail elders), and 94 employment assistance coordinators (to implement the Active Employment Assistance Programme). Of the 3 855 temporary jobs, 120 (26 community work organizer and 94 employment assistance coordinator openings) will be extended through SWD's internal redeployment of resources.

(VII) TC

13. A total of **205 Tourism Development Assistants (TDAs)**, primarily for land border control points, will be extended for **six months** at an estimated cost of **\$7 million**. They will help ease the flow of visitors at the immigration clearance counters, and distribute information leaflets on personal health and hygiene, as well as tourist attractions to visitors from the Mainland.

Support services for those whose temporary jobs will not be extended

14. For youths whose temporary jobs will not be extended, LD will help them find jobs in the open market. The host departments and NGOs will also provide information on job search. LD will liaise with potential employers in the private sector to canvass suitable openings and organize a one-day special job fair for these youths in early April. As the economy and labour market continue to improve, there will be more opportunities in the private sector.

15. In addition, those who are eligible can join LD's Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme, which aims to provide on-the-job training and work experience to young people aged 15 to 24, with education attainment below degree level. The Administration has decided to extend the scheme for another two years at a cost of \$300 million to cater for 10 000 youths. Those interested in self-employment may consider joining the \$30 million Youth Self-employment Support Scheme which will be launched in the second quarter of 2004 to help 1 000 youths.

16. As for job-seekers in other age groups, they can make use of LD's diversified employment services, including the Job Matching Programme which provides more personalized services to individual job-seekers. Those aged 40 and above may join the Re-employment Training Programme for the Middle-aged. Some 10 000 places are available under the programme. There are also some 7 000 quotas under the Local Domestic Helpers Incentive Allowance Scheme.

Way Forward

17. We plan to seek Finance Committee's funding approval at the end of February 2004.

Economic Development and Labour Bureau
Labour Department
February 2004

A summary of temporary jobs to be extended

Department concerned	Type of jobs	Number of jobs²	Duration (months)²	Estimated funding required (\$ million)
AFCD	Jobs to provide cleansing and maintenance services to country parks as well as to maintain hygiene standards and animal welfare in animal management centres	280	12	23.00
FEHD	Jobs to provide cleansing and cleansing-related services to streets and public venues/places	3 287	6 to 12	270.00
HAD	Jobs for community building, local community economy, building management and environmental improvement	358	Up to 12	17.69
HA	Care assistants and general workers to provide support to clinicians, nurses and other health professionals; construction workers and other staff to carry out minor repair and maintenance works in hospitals and clinics	2 420	10 to 12	204.72
LCSD	Trainees to provide assistance to, for example, the operation of public libraries, as well as sports and cultural venues/programmes; workers to continue the cleansing services for some 1 400 public leisure venues	1 349	3 to 12	73.31

² To provide flexibility and to maximize the resources allocated to the extension exercise, the number and duration of jobs extended might vary.

Department concerned	Type of jobs	Number of jobs²	Duration (months)²	Estimated funding required (\$ million)
SWD	Community work organizers (to reinforce the Support for Self-reliance Scheme); youth ambassadors (to assist in the organization of promotional activities on personal hygiene among the elderly and for Team Clean); peer counsellors (to help social workers in providing assistance to Form 3 school leavers); programme assistants (to help social workers in the organization of activities for the disabled, elderly, family and youth); care assistants (to enhance the personal care services for frail elders); employment assistance co-ordinators (to implement the Active Employment Assistance Programme)	3 855 ³	10 to 12	278.04 ⁴
TC	Tourism Development Assistants to help ease the flow of visitors at the immigration clearance counters, distribute information leaflets on personal health and hygiene, and introduce tourist attractions to visitors from the Mainland	205	6	7.00
<i>Overall Total</i>		<i>11 754³</i>		<i>873.76⁴</i>

³ Of these, 120 (26 community work organizer and 94 employment assistance coordinator openings) will be extended through SWD's internal redeployment of resources.

⁴ Of this, \$37.30 million is to be redeployed from existing resources of SWD.