

For information
on 18 December 2003

LegCo Panel on Manpower

New Measures to Enhance Labour Department's Employment Service

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the new measures to enhance the employment service provided by the Labour Department (“LD”).

Employment Service provided by LD

2. The LD provides a comprehensive range of free employment service to help job-seekers find suitable jobs and employers fill their vacancies. Our services are set out below.

Job Centres

3. We operate 11 Job Centres to help place job-seekers into employment. Job-seekers may apply for jobs through referrals by Job Centres or direct approach to employers where appropriate. Telephones, fax machines and computers with Internet connection are available in the Job Centres to facilitate job-seekers to search suitable jobs on the Internet, prepare resumes and application letters. Job-seekers can use the facilities provided there to complete the whole job-hunting process all at one stop.

Vacancy Search Terminals

4. We have installed new Vacancy Search Terminals at all Job Centres to facilitate job-seekers to access our huge vacancy data bank. The terminals are also equipped with user-friendly search engines and printing facilities which enable job seekers to choose vacancies according to various selection criteria and print out information on their selected vacancies for job application.

Interactive Employment Service

5. Job-seekers can access vacancy information round-the-clock through the Interactive Employment Service (“iES”) web site on the internet (the address is www.jobs.gov.hk). The iES plays an important role in the dissemination of job market information to the community and has become the Government’s most popular website. In November 2003, for example, a total of 43 million page views were recorded, averaging 1.46 million per day.

6. Among the many dedicated webpages in the website, the Information on Employment on the Mainland webpage was revamped this year to provide more essential information on preparation for employment in the Mainland which job-seekers mostly look for, such as China labour laws, employment protection, taxation, accommodation, children’s education, etc. At present, we have about 1 000 vacancies from local employers who are looking for job-seekers working in their operations on the Mainland. The Mainland webpage is also hyperlinked to the official websites in various major provinces and cities on the Mainland. This affords easy access to the latest market situation across the border. LD’s Mainland webpage also serves as an important vehicle for career masters in secondary schools to counsel their students on job opportunities on the Mainland.

Telephone Employment Service

7. We launched the Telephone Employment Service (TES) in 1998. Through this user-friendly mode of service, job-seekers who have registered with the Employment Services Division of the LD can obtain job referrals over the telephone without visiting a Job Centre. The TES handles on average about 1 000 calls daily.

Special Employment Programmes

8. To address the needs of those job-seekers who have special difficulties in seeking employment, the LD has launched three special employment programmes this year: Re-employment Training Programme for the Middle-aged; District Employment Programme for the Middle-aged; and Graduate Employment Training Scheme. Details of these programmes are in paragraphs 9-11.

Re-employment Training Programme for the Middle-aged

9. This Programme seeks to encourage employers to engage the middle-aged unemployed and provide them with on-the-job training. Employers who engage a job-seeker aged 40 and above and having been unemployed for three months under the programme and provide on-the-job training will be granted a training allowance of \$1,500 per month for each trainee for a maximum of three months.

District Employment Programme for the Middle-aged

10. The objective of the programme is to mobilise Non-Government Organisations (“NGOs”) to identify job vacancies at the district and neighbourhood levels in order to help those middle-aged unemployed looking for job opportunities close to their homes. Under this pilot Programme, the LD refers job-seekers to the eight participating NGOs to receive employment counselling, placement and social support services.

Graduate Employment Training Scheme

11. This Scheme is designed to assist fresh university graduates in 2003/04 to be placed into jobs with on-the-job training. For each trainee engaged, the employer will receive a training allowance of \$2,000 per month for up to six months. The seven local universities will be responsible for placing their own graduates while the LD will help graduates from other universities and those returning from overseas.

New Measures

12. In face of high unemployment, the LD has been leaving no stone unturned in canvassing job vacancies and enhancing its placement service. It is encouraging to note that remarkable achievements have been made in recent months. In August this year, altogether 24 621 vacancies from the private sector were captured by the Department. This was an all-time record. Since then, the monthly figure on vacancies received from the private sector has remained at a high level compared with the same period last year, (i.e. 21 709 for September, 22 083 for October and 18 841 for November). Meanwhile, notable increases were also achieved for LD’s job placements. In

October this year, an all-time high of 6 739 placements was registered. This came on the heels of the record figure of 6 211 in the preceding month. The figure for November remained at a high level of 6 729, and was 22% higher than that of the corresponding month in 2002.

13. The LD will continue to adopt a proactive, innovative, flexible and cost-effective approach in further strengthening its employment service to help the unemployed to re-enter the labour market and to meet the recruitment needs of employers. To this end, LD has mapped out four new measures, three of which have just been introduced. These are set out below.

Job Fairs at Job Centres

14. As part of our on-going activities, LD organizes large-scale job fairs to facilitate job-seekers to make applications to employers on the spot. To respond more promptly to the recruitment needs of employers and provide a more user-friendly service to job-seekers, LD has since November 2003 held job fairs at its major Job Centres to enable job-seekers to participate in job interviews on the spot and assist employers to recruit staff. The recruitment activity is targeted at employers who have the need to interview a large number of candidates within a short time frame.

15. We have so far held three such job fairs at Job Centres (one each at the Hong Kong East, the Kowloon West and the Tsuen Wan Job Centres). Response from employers and job-seekers has been highly positive. Depending on the needs of employers, we intend to hold such job fairs at regular intervals. It is important to note that these fairs are in addition to the large-scale job fairs which will continue to be organised in future.

Strengthening Job Placement Service

16. To improve the utilization of job vacancies, the LD has engaged additional temporary staff to provide employer-focused recruitment services. Under this project, dedicated staff would contact employers with large number of vacancies to work out the recruitment arrangement and actively identify suitable job-seekers for selection by employers in a bulk. The dedicated officers would also follow up closely the recruitment result and, where necessary, review the specifications of the job requirements with the

employers so as to enhance the filling up of the vacancies.

Publicising LD's Employment Services to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises ("SME")

17. To reach out to SMEs with a view to canvassing more vacancies, the LD has recently sent publicity leaflets to some 80,000 SMEs. Through this exercise, it aims at widely publicising its employment service to employers with recruitment needs, thereby providing more vacancies to job-seekers.

18. Publicity leaflets were also distributed at the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) SME Expo held on 2 and 3 December 2003 to promote our services to SMEs which are likely to benefit from CEPA. We would also request the Trade and Industry Department to distribute publicity leaflets on our employment services to employers when relevant certificates on CEPA are issued.

Installing Vacancy Search Terminals in Social Security Field Units ("SSFUs") of the Social Welfare Department ("SWD")

19. LD plans to install the highly popular Vacancy Search Terminals in the SSFUs of SWD so as to provide their clients with a more convenient channel to access information on vacancies notified to the LD. These terminals will facilitate recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance to find jobs. It is expected that the installation work will be completed by the first quarter of 2004. Altogether, 38 terminals will be installed at a total cost of about \$2 million.

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