

民政事務總署

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By fax and by post

30 May 2008

The Honourable Margaret NG
 Room 116, New Henry House,
 10 Ice House Street,
 Central, Hong Kong.

Dear Hon. Margaret NG,

Support for New Arrivals from the Mainland

You raised a supplementary question (Serial No. R30) on 5 March 2008 on Government's policies or proposals to support Hong Kong residents who have recently arrived from the Mainland (new arrivals) and to eliminate discrimination against them. You also asked about the specific work plans and the estimated expenditure in 2008-09. We understand that the Chairman of the Finance Committee ruled that the question be more appropriately dealt with outside the context of the draft Estimates exercise. The Government's reply to your question is set out as follows.

The Government has been providing services for the new arrivals from the Mainland along the following guiding principles :

- (a) facilitating the integration of new arrivals into the local community;
- (b) providing timely services that suit the immediate needs of new arrivals; and
- (c) targeting resources to meet the most pressing demands.

The Government has all along sought to avoid labeling effect in the provision of public services for new arrivals. They enjoy most of the public services available to other Hong Kong residents, including a wide range of medical, social and education services. On the other hand, we are conscious that some new arrivals may encounter difficulties during the

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adaptation period. The Government provides a wide range of timely services upon their arrival in Hong Kong to facilitate their early and smooth integration into the local community. These include comprehensive employment assistance, job matching and tailor-made employment briefing sessions, induction and initiation programmes for the newly-arrived students, and a continuum of preventive, supportive and therapeutic social welfare services. The Government also publishes a practical guide to the public services available for new arrivals.

The Government will explore room for further strengthening immediate support services for new arrivals in the coming financial year along the following lines:

- (a) Education Bureau (EDB) will extend the initiation and induction programmes to cover new arrival students aged under 18;
- (b) Employees Retraining Board (ERB) plans to introduce more tailor-made courses on job search skills to cater for the training needs of different age groups of new arrivals;
- (c) Social Welfare Department (SWD) will consider linking up the hotline operated by SWD and those run by non-government organizations for new arrivals, so as to facilitate the dissemination of information on welfare services as well as enhance the support for the new arrivals;
- (d) Home Affairs Department (HAD) will evaluate the effectiveness of a pilot project which seeks to provide counseling and support services for families which plan to reside permanently in Hong Kong in the near future.

Moreover, the Government will channel more resources to priority districts with more pressing service needs, taking into account the distribution of new arrival population and other social factors. For example:

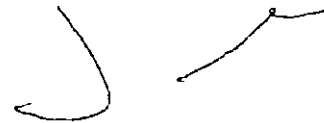
- (a) SWD plans to organize more targeted programmes and activities for new arrivals, including mutual help groups, community education and family life education in these districts;
- (b) Labour Department plans to organize more job fairs in the priority districts to assist new arrivals in seeking employment;
- (c) ERB will provide more training places for part-time generic skills training courses in these districts.

The estimated expenditure for the work plans for EDB and HAD to enhance support services for new arrivals from the Mainland in 2008-09 is

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over \$30 million. This estimate has not included the expenditures to be incurred by other government departments for providing services for new arrivals, since most of these services are made available to not only new arrivals but also local residents, and they do not have readily available breakdown on the specific expenditures for services for new arrivals.

Yours sincerely,



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for Director of Home Affairs

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