

**Motion on
“Requesting the Government to Provide Support Services
for Men in Hong Kong”
moved by Hon WONG Kwok-hing
at the Legislative Council Meeting of 11 November 2009**

Progress Report

At the Legislative Council meeting of 11 November 2009, the motion moved by Hon WONG Kwok-hing to request the Government to provide support services for men in Hong Kong was passed. The wording of the motion passed is attached at Annex. This report summarises the progress made by the Government in providing support services for men for Members' reference.

Employment Services

2. The Labour Department (LD) has been providing a series of comprehensive employment services to job seekers to assist them in finding suitable jobs. These include 12 Job Centres, Telephone Employment Service Centre, “Interactive Employment Service” website and Recruitment Centre for the Catering Industry. The Job Centres provide various employment programmes and services such as Job Matching Programme, Work Trial Scheme and Employment Programme for the Middle-aged with an aim to providing comprehensive assistance to job seekers who have special needs or difficulties in finding jobs.

3. The policies adopted by the Government to address specifically the unemployment situation of the construction industry have continued to take effect. The unemployment rate of the construction industry has declined seven months in a row, dropping to a single-digit of 7.6%. This has helped improve the employment situation of the construction industry which is dominated by male workers.

Retraining Services for Employees

4. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) is committed to providing a diversified range of training courses covering a wide spectrum of trades and industries. In 2008-09, the ERB introduced some 100 new full-time placement-tied courses and more than 30 half-day or evening non-placement-tied courses relating to over 20 industries. With its highly-diversified development of courses, the ERB is able to provide ample options for both

genders, and no one has ever been denied access to training opportunities on the ground of gender.

Welfare and Counselling Services

5. At present, the 63 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) operated by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) over the territory provide a series of preventive, supportive and remedial services to those in need, including unmarried, married and divorced men. These services include family life education, parent-child activities, enquiry services, volunteering training, outreaching services, various groups and activities, counselling and referral services (such as assessment of compassionate rehousing (CR) applications and arrangements for clinical psychological services), etc. Social workers of IFSCs and ISCs, with their relevant experience and skills, can provide comprehensive assessment to meet the needs of service users of both genders and render appropriate services to them.

6. The welfare services units under SWD and NGOs have always encouraged the needy, irrespective of their sex, age or ethnic origin, to actively seek assistance through various public education and publicity activities. SWD, Caritas Family Crisis Support Centre and CEASE Crisis Centre operated by Tung Wah Group of Hospitals also provide 24-hour hotline services. Anyone with family, emotional or other problems can seek assistance through the hotlines. Social workers responsible for manning the hotlines have all received professional training. They understand the needs of different people, including male clients, and can provide them with immediate counseling by listening to their problems and appreciating the difficulties they have encountered.

The Housing Need of Divorced Men

7. Persons (including divorced men) or families with genuine and pressing housing needs but are incapable of meeting such needs by themselves may seek assistance from the IFSCs operated by SWD or NGOs. The centres will provide assistance appropriate to the needs of these people after considering their circumstances (including resources and support network available to them). The form of assistance may include the provision of short-term financial assistance to meet rental and removal expenses, arrangement for admission to urban singleton hostels or temporary shelters operated by NGOs, referral to SWD for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, or making recommendations to the Housing Department for admission to public rental housing for cases eligible for CR. The 13 urban hostels for single

persons/temporary shelters for street sleepers operated by NGOs provide 601 residential places (of which 492 are places for men) for those seeking temporary/emergency residential service.

Divorced Men's Right of Access to and Joint Custody of their Children

8. As recommended in the "Report on Child Custody and Access" published by the Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong in 2005, the "joint parental responsibility" model should be introduced into Hong Kong's Family Law, with an aim to enabling both parents to maintain active involvement in the lives of their children after divorce. This will modify the existing custody arrangement under which the custody of a child is usually granted exclusively to one of the parents while only the right of access is granted to the other parent. We will make reference to overseas experience and study the recommendations carefully.

Health Services

9. To promote the health of men, the Department of Health launched the Men's Health Programme (MHP) in 2002 to disseminate health information to men through website, roving exhibitions, health pamphlets and brochures so as to enhance their health awareness and encourage them to lead a healthy lifestyle. The MHP website recorded 1.1 million visitors in 2008.

10. Currently, general health check services for men are provided primarily by the Hospital Authority, private medical practitioners and NGOs (for instance, Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (HKFPA)). Two "Well Men Clinics" were set up by the HKFPA and Kwong Wah Hospital in 2001 and 2004 respectively to provide general health check services for men in Hong Kong.

Family-friendly Employment Practices

11. LD has all along been promoting good people management measures, and family-friendly employment practices (FFEPs) is one of its key items. Employers can help employees fulfill their work and family responsibilities and commitments by implementing FFEPs including paternity leave, family leave, flexible work arrangements and provision of other relevant support, etc.

12. Through different channels such as industry-based tripartite committees and Human Resources Managers Clubs in various trades as well as organising seminars, talks, briefings, roving exhibitions, featured articles in newspapers and other promotional activities, LD encourages employers to adopt different forms of FFEPs, including the provision of paternity leave, with a view to assisting employees fulfill their work and family responsibilities

simultaneously. LD will continue to work with partners such as enterprises and NGOs in promoting FFEPs.

School Education

13. Subjects such as gender equality and mutual respect have been covered in major key learning areas and the subject curriculum of primary and secondary schools, such as General Studies of primary schools; Integrated Humanities, Ethics & Religious Studies, History and Liberal Studies of secondary schools; and Moral and Civic Education of primary and secondary schools, etc. In the New Senior Secondary Curriculum introduced in September 2009, such topics have been further strengthened, and are included in the learning contents of such core subjects of Liberal Studies as “gender roles and relationship”, “relationship with the opposite sex”, “improving interpersonal relationship and social skills”.

14. The Education Bureau (EDB), in partnership with different stakeholders such as university lecturers and social workers, has organised from time to time professional training courses, seminars and workshops on the issues of gender equality and awareness to enhance the knowledge, skills and competence of teachers in teaching the related subjects. In addition, teaching and learning resource materials on different topics such as Education Television Programmes on “Equality for the New Generation” and “Equality for Everybody” were also produced by EDB to help teachers in educating the students the importance of human rights, equality and mutual respect.

Conclusion

15. To conclude, the Government will adhere to the overriding principle of gender equality in formulating and implementing various policies and programmes so as to ensure that the policies and programmes concerned do not constitute discrimination against either sex. Various supporting services by respective policy bureaux and departments will continue to be provided according to the needs of the community so as to enable both men and women to have equitable access to, and benefit from, society’s resources and development opportunities.

Labour and Welfare Bureau

(Incorporating information from Education Bureau, Food and Health Bureau and Transport and Housing Bureau)

January 2010

(Translation)

**Motion on
“Requesting the Government to provide support services
for men in Hong Kong”
to be moved by Hon WONG Kwok-hing
at the Legislative Council meeting
of Wednesday, 11 November 2009**

Wording of the Motion

That, with the transformation of Hong Kong’s economic structure and the change in the concept of family, both men and women in Hong Kong are facing the same difficulties in matters such as finance, health, marriage and family role, etc; however, as there is no men’s policy in Hong Kong and due to the influence of traditional concepts, the quality and quantity of the social welfare and social services which are targeted at men’s needs have failed to meet the demand, and as a result, men facing difficulties are often afraid to seek assistance, do not know how to seek assistance or have nowhere to turn to for assistance; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to:

- (a) study the formulation of a men’s policy which is forward-looking, comprehensive and has continuity;
- (b) recognizing men as a social group in need of services, set up a Men’s Commission to specialize in studying, exploring and addressing men’s problems;
- (c) face up to the problem of employment difficulties encountered by men, strengthen efforts to develop job types other than those in the service industry, enhance employees retraining services which are specifically targeted at the employment difficulties faced by men, and encourage and facilitate men to get employment or start their own business;
- (d) support divorced men on all fronts to cope with difficulties arising from mental stress, housing problem and breakdown of relationships with their children, and set up crisis centres for men which have the functions of providing temporary accommodation and counseling services;
- (e) set up men’s specialist clinics modeled on gynaecological clinics, so as to provide treatment and health care services in respect of illnesses

suffered by men only (such as prostatic disease) and provide health checks for men;

- (f) encourage men to consult professionals when they are troubled by family matters, set up a special hotline for men operated by trained personnel who understand men's needs to answer calls for assistance or complaint calls, and promote the provision of courses on counselling for men in the community;
- (g) give focused attention to the problem of suicide among middle-aged men, and enhance support for men who are at high risk of committing suicide and inflicting injuries to themselves;
- (h) improve the implementation of divorced men's right of access to or joint custody of their children;
- (i) enhance support for fathers to meet their needs in parenting their children and balancing work and life pressure, facilitate the provision of support for families on various fronts, and promote the introduction of paid paternity leave and family leave, etc; and
- (j) promote in-depth study of the existing education system, with a view to enhancing its constructive effects on the development of both sexes and bringing about positive social impact.