

**Speaking Note for Secretary for Labour and Welfare
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
for Examination of the 2010-11 Draft Estimates
to be held on 25 March 2010**

Welfare and Women

Chairman and Honourable Members,

In 2010-11, government recurrent spending on social welfare and women's interests will reach \$39.7 billion, which accounts for 17.3% of the total recurrent government expenditure in 2010-11, second only to education. In comparison with the revised estimate for 2009-10, after discounting the additional one-off payments/allowances for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and Social Security Allowance (SSA) recipients in the year, there is an increase of \$1.7 billion (4.6%) in current spending on social welfare. This year's Budget outlines a number of important initiatives to strengthen support particularly for the elderly and persons with disabilities (PWDs). They represent strategic directions in building a "caring society". Now, let me highlight how our Bureau will make use of our resources.

Supporting the Elderly

2. In 2010-11, the Government's estimated expenditure on elderly services, excluding that on public housing and public health services, amounts to \$4.01 billion, representing an increase of 5.6% compared with the revised estimate of last year.

3. We will allocate additional resources to implement a series of measures in support of the elderly, including:

- \$160 million to provide a total of 1 087 additional subsidised residential places for the elderly, including 818 nursing home (NH) places. Of this sum, additional recurrent funding of \$93 million is for providing about 740 additional subsidised NH places by increasing the ratio of NH places in existing contract residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and purchasing vacant NH places from self-financing NHs and RCHEs; \$22 million is for providing 260 additional subsidised long-term

care places offering a continuum of care by utilising available space in existing subvented RCHEs; \$13 million is for providing 90 subsidised NH or care and attention places in a newly built contract RCHE; and \$22.5 million to enhance the support for subvented RCHEs providing places with a continuum of care;

- additional funding of \$5 million to launch a three-year pilot scheme to provide RCHEs with visiting pharmacist services, with a view to further strengthening their capability in drug management and enhancing their quality of care.
- additional recurrent funding of \$8.8 million to provide a total of 115 additional subsidised day care places for the elderly;
- funding of about \$55 million earmarked under the Lotteries Fund (LF) to implement a three-year pilot scheme, so as to provide tailor-made home care services for elders on the waiting list for NH places and are living at home; and
- additional funding of \$4 million to extend the District-based Scheme on Carer Training to Neighbourhood Elderly Centres, with a view to strengthening the support to carers of elders.

4. These initiatives will help address the growing demand for subsidised residential and community care services, and further enhance the quality of elderly care services.

Rehabilitation Services for Persons with Disabilities

5. For rehabilitation services, additional allocation will be provided to enhance various rehabilitation services, medical social service and rehabus service.

Increasing the number of places for rehabilitation services

6. We will provide additional recurrent funding of about \$60 million in 2010-11 to increase the number of places for various rehabilitation services. Altogether, 268 additional residential care services places for PWDs will be provided. Coupled with the allocation already earmarked, we expect to provide a total of 939 subsidised residential care places in the coming two years. This increase represents around 14% of some 6 700 PWDs currently on the waiting list for subsidised residential care places. Compared with the 517 subsidised places increased over the past three years, it shows beyond

doubt that Government is committed to providing residential care places for the PWDs. It is noteworthy that of the new places to be provided, about half of them (460 places) are provided for persons with severe disabilities facing relatively longer waiting time.

7. On the other hand, we will provide 154 additional places for pre-school services. Coupled with the allocation already earmarked, we expect to provide a total of 316 places for pre-school services in 2010-11, providing suitable training and support to the needy children and their families.

8. To strengthen the provision of training for PWDs, we will provide 160 additional places for day training and 100 additional places for vocational rehabilitation services. Coupled with the allocation already earmarked, we expect to provide a total of 290 places for day training and 420 places for vocational rehabilitation services in 2010-11.

Strengthening support for ageing service users in subvented residential care homes for persons with intellectual disability

9. In view of the ageing trend of the service users in residential care homes for persons with intellectual disability, in 2010-11, the Government will allocate about \$40 million for providing additional health care staff for the Hostel for Severely Mentally Handicapped Persons and Hostel for Moderately Mentally Handicapped Persons with a view to strengthening physiotherapy and nursing care for ageing users of these residential care homes, thereby helping them to maintain physical health and basic self-care abilities. This is in line with our service development direction in providing continuum of care for users of residential care services.

Strengthening the community support services for persons with severe disabilities

10. The Government is mindful of the special caring needs of persons with severe physical and/or mental disabilities and the immense pressure faced by their family carers in caring for them at home. To strengthen the support for this most vulnerable group, \$163 million is earmarked under the LF to implement a three-year pilot scheme for providing persons with severe disabilities who are living in the community and are on the waiting lists for subvented residential care services with home-based care services. We will try out the new package of home-based support services in Tuen Mun and Kwun Tong districts with the largest number of persons with severe

disabilities waiting for these residential services. Home-based persons care service, nursing care service, therapy and rehabilitation training will be provided by specialised care workers, therapist and nurse. We expect to serve 540 persons with severe disabilities within three years.

Introducing statutory licensing scheme and a pilot Bought Place Scheme for residential care homes for persons with disabilities

11. To regulate the operation of residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) and ensure their service quality, we aim to introduce the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Bill into the Legislative Council in the second half of the 2009-10 legislative session to implement a licensing scheme for RCHDs. In tandem with the legislative proposal, we will formulate suitable complementary measures to help operators meet the licensing requirements. In this regard, \$64 million is earmarked under the LF to introduce a four-year pilot Bought Place Scheme with a view to encouraging private operators of RCHDs to upgrade service standard of these homes, helping the market develop more service options for PWDs, and increasing the overall supply of residential care places. Under the pilot scheme, the Government will purchase around 100 places in the first year, building up to a total of 250 - 300 places from the second year onwards.

Rehabus service

12. To enhance the Rehabus service, the Government will provide additional funding of about \$8 million in 2010-11 to increase the Rehabus fleet to 119 by acquiring 4 new buses and replacing 6 old ones. The average vehicle age of the fleet will be 4.7 years. We will also allocate \$38.8 million to subsidise the recurrent expenditure of the Rehabus service in 2010-11. This allocation represents around 80% of its operating cost.

Enhancing social rehabilitation services and medical social services for persons with mental health problems

13. The Government is mindful of the needs of persons with mental health problems and their families/carers, and keeps under regular review the operation and provision of community support services in response to changing need. In March 2009, Social Welfare Department (SWD) set up the first “Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness” in Tin Shui Wai to provide one-stop, integrated and accessible community mental health support services to discharged mental patients, persons with suspected mental health problems, their families/carers and residents living in the district. In

2010-11, the Government will make an additional allocation of about \$70 million to expand this integrated service model across the territory, as well as to strengthen the manpower of these centres to provide comprehensive and accessible services to persons in need, and to complement the Hospital Authority (HA)'s "Case Management Programme" to provide timely support for patients with severe mental illness living in the community.

14. To dovetail with HA's new initiative in providing support for newly discharged psychiatric patients, an additional funding of about \$6 million will be allocated to provide 14 additional psychiatric medical social workers to enhance the psychiatric medical social services for psychiatric patients and their family carers.

Public education activities to promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

15. UNCRPD has entered into force for the People's Republic of China, including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, since 31 August 2008. To promote the spirit and core values enshrined in the Convention, the Government will continue to substantially increase the allocation for the relevant public education activities from around \$2 million annually to \$12.5 million in 2010-11. Promotion of the Convention is an ongoing initiative. We will continue to reinforce the promotion of UNCRPD and work closely with the rehabilitation sector and the community at large to build an equal and barrier-free society.

Women's Interests

16. The Government has been working closely with the Women's Commission to promote women's well-being and interests through a three-pronged strategy, viz. the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education. Last year, we assisted the Commission to successfully organise a large-scale conference entitled "Beyond Limits – Women in the 21st Century". In 2010-11, we have earmarked \$23.8 million to promote women's interests and support the Commission's work, including the implementation of the Capacity Building Mileage Programme to encourage women to pursue life-long learning and self-development, as well as the preparation of the third report on the

implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Hong Kong.

Combating Domestic Violence

17. The Government is committed to combating domestic violence. Over the past few years, we have devoted additional resources to strengthen the support and specialised services for victims of domestic violence and families in need. With effect from 2010-11, SWD will provide a subvention of about \$5 million each year to a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to implement a new Victim Support Programme. Under the Programme, victims of domestic violence will be provided with emotional support and relevant information such as community resources, accommodation, and judiciary proceedings, etc. Company will be provided to victims undergoing the judicial process if necessary. In addition, the SWD will also continue its effort on publicity and public education to enhance public awareness of domestic violence problem, and strengthen the training for frontline professionals.

Promoting tripartite partnerships to help the disadvantaged

18. The Government set up a \$200 million Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged (the Fund) in 2005 to promote the development of tripartite partnerships among the business community, the welfare sector and the Government in helping the disadvantaged. Allocation from the Fund is disbursed on a matching basis to welfare NGOs which are able to secure sponsorship in cash or in kind from a business corporation for social welfare projects. As at end-January 2010, over \$103 million has been approved under the Fund for more than 90 NGOs, in collaboration with over 480 business organisations, to implement a variety of welfare projects, benefiting more than 650 000 disadvantaged people. In view of the positive response, we will inject \$200 million into the Fund to encourage further cross-sector collaboration to launch more welfare projects to help the disadvantaged.

Social Security

19. The social security system in Hong Kong is made up of the CSSA Scheme and the SSA Scheme, with the latter covering Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance. Excluding one-off additional payments, the estimated total expenditure of these two schemes in 2010-11 is \$27.5 billion, which is around 4% higher than the revised estimate last year, representing

about 12% of the total recurrent government expenditure, and about 69% of the total recurrent expenditure on social welfare.

Providing one-off assistance for social security recipients

20. Some people are still affected by the impact of the financial tsunami and have to face the emerging inflationary pressure. To alleviate their burden, and to encourage consumer spending in order to consolidate the recovery, the Financial Secretary has proposed a series of one-off measures, including allocating about \$1.9 billion to provide an additional month of the standard rate payment to CSSA recipients and one additional month of allowance to Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance recipients. We expect this measure to benefit 1.11 million CSSA and SSA recipients, and we hope to be able to effect the payments in mid-2010.

21. Chairman, this concludes my opening remarks. My colleagues and I shall be happy to respond to questions from Members.

– End –