

(Translation)

Motion on
“Alleviating poverty and helping the disadvantaged
with care and concern”
moved by Hon TAM Yiu-chung
at the Legislative Council meeting commencing
on Wednesday, 3 February 2010

Motion as amended by Hon WONG Kwok-hing, Hon WONG Sing-chi and
Hon LEE Wing-tat

That, given that at the Question and Answer Session of the Legislative Council on 14 January this year, the Chief Executive Donald TSANG Yam-kuen said that improving people's livelihood was the Government's priority task, and that alleviating the difficulties of low-income earners and promoting the economic development of Hong Kong to create more employment opportunities was most important in its policy implementation; as such, this Council urges the Government to take measures to alleviate poverty, help the disadvantaged and relieve the burden of the people, so as to build a more harmonious society, including:

- (a) to offer subsidies to needy school children for their participation in extra-curricular activities, and introduce an 'extra-curricular activities grant for needy school children';
- (b) to provide subsidies on Internet access charges for poor school children to relieve the burden of academic expenses;
- (c) for the purposes of encouraging more schools to participate in the voluntary school drug testing scheme in the future and equipping the schools early with the necessary manpower, to allocate additional resources to facilitate the provision of 'two school social workers for each school' and employment of more teaching assistants in all secondary schools in Hong Kong;
- (d) to provide more career counselling and support for young people, enhance training and attract them to join those industries with competitive edge, including creative, information technology and environmental protection industries, so as to improve their employment situation;
- (e) to introduce a long-term territory-wide transport subsidy scheme and simplify the application procedure concerned, so as to reduce the transport costs for low-income earners working across districts;
- (f) to abolish the absence limit in respect of application for Old Age Allowance, and allow the elderly to receive Disability Allowance and Old Age Allowance concurrently;

- (g) to continue to increase the number of subsidized residential care homes for the elderly, provide more residential and care home support for them, such as setting a reasonable carer-to-resident manpower ratio for residential care homes, and enhance community care services at the same time;
- (h) to improve medical services for the elderly by increasing the value of elderly healthcare vouchers to \$1,000 per elderly person per year and lowering the eligible age to 65;
- (i) to introduce 'recreation and sports vouchers for the elderly', and provide them with free access to facilities under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department such as exhibition halls and public swimming pools, so as to enrich their cultural life;
- (j) to set up a 'subsidy system for carers of persons with disabilities', and provide a monthly allowance of \$1,000 to the family of each person with disabilities;
- (k) to introduce additional 'chronically ill dependant allowance' and 'allowance for private medical insurance contributions', and to raise the ceiling of tax deduction in respect of elderly residential care expenses and various types of salary tax allowances in respect of dependent family members;
- (l) to introduce a 'training scheme for fishermen during the fish moratorium' to provide training courses for the affected fishermen, and to grant them an appropriate amount of subsidy to cover part of their living expenses during the moratorium period;
- (m) to relieve the burden of post-secondary students to repay loans by improving the financial assistance scheme for post-secondary students, replacing the means-tested loans with interest-free loans and lowering the annual interest rate for non-means-tested loans to 2.5%;
- (n) to enhance the land supply policy to stabilize property prices, resume the construction of HOS flats on an appropriate scale and extend the home loan interest deduction period, so as to relieve the pressure of housing expenses on the people;
- (o) to introduce rates relief measures to reduce the levying rates or to waive the payment;
- (p) to freeze various government fees and charges affecting people's livelihood for a year;
- (q) to strictly control increase in charges by public utilities;

- (r) to allocate a funding of \$3.3 million to maintain the operation of the small library in Yat Tung Estate, with a view to providing support for some 40 000 residents in this exceptionally remote and impoverished public housing estate, in particular support to children and young people in their learning and studies, so as to solve the problem of inter-generational poverty;
- (s) government departments to step up efforts to employ more permanent staff, make every effort to minimize the provision of manpower through employment agencies, and enhance the monitoring of employment terms and remuneration packages offered by the employment agencies, so as to reduce in their best endeavours any exploitation by the intermediaries; and
- (t) on condition that there is a sufficient supply of private residential housing, to re-launch the Home Starter Loan Scheme and increase the amount for home loan interest deduction, so as to help sandwich class people who are 'snails without a shell' (in particular working young couples) to acquire their homes;
- (u) to increase the number of subsidized places for the elderly and extend the opening hours of day care centres for the elderly;
- (v) in considering the provision of 'chronically ill dependant allowance' and 'allowance for private medical insurance contributions', the Government to concurrently study the impact of developing a private medical insurance system on the overall healthcare system, the regulation of private medical insurance systems in overseas countries, as well as the feasibility of implementing a central medical insurance system in Hong Kong in the long run;
- (w) to expeditiously implement a 'universal retirement protection scheme' whereby all citizens aged 60 or above are eligible for receiving an 'old age pension', so as to ensure that the elderly will be able to maintain a reasonable standard of living; and
- (x) targeting at the existing bus services, to implement sectional fares and interchange concessions.