

**Motion on “Facing up to the needs of person with disabilities”
at the Legislative Council Meeting of 27 November 2013
Progress Report**

Purpose

At the Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting of 27 November 2013, the above motion moved by Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung as amended by Hon IP Kin-yuen, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG was passed. The wording of the motion passed is at Annex.

2. This report informs Members of the follow-up actions taken by the Administration in regard to the motion.

Promoting the employment for persons with disabilities

3. The policy objective of the Government in assisting persons with disabilities in attaining employment is to ensure that they have equal access to participation in productive and gainful employment in the open market. The Government will set an example and work with the commercial sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to further enhance the employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and unleash their potential, with a view to fostering an inclusive culture and building a caring society.

Introducing an employment quota for persons with disabilities

4. The Administration has reservation over the suggestion of establishing a mandatory employment quota system for persons with disabilities. With reference to international experience, an employment quota system has not been proven successful overseas in helping persons with disabilities to secure employment, and some countries have abolished their quota system. The international trend in promoting employment of persons with disabilities has moved away from employment quota system to anti-discrimination legislation, provision of incentives for employers and enhanced support measures for persons with disabilities. Indeed, under a mandatory employment quota system, persons with disabilities would be perceived as a liability, making them difficult to be accepted by their peers at work. This is not conducive to their integration into the community. We consider that persons with disabilities should be assisted to find appropriate jobs on the basis of their

abilities. In this regard, apart from providing vocational training, the Administration will strengthen employment support for persons with disabilities and continue to adopt positive encouragement measures to enhance the job opportunities of persons with disabilities.

Encouraging employers to hire persons with disabilities

5. The Labour Department (LD) has implemented since 2005 the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) which encourages employers to hire persons with disabilities through the provision of incentive. Under WOPS, employers who are hiring persons with disabilities and providing them with appropriate training/assistance, appointing mentors and complying with other requirements under the WOPS are eligible for the allowance. With effect from 1 June 2013, LD has enhanced WOPS. An employer who employs persons with disabilities having employment difficulties is entitled to a maximum allowance of \$5,500 per month during the first two months of employment. After the first two months, the employer is entitled to a maximum allowance of \$4,000 per month, and for a maximum payment period up to six months.

6. To encourage employers to employ persons with disabilities, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has since June 2013 launched the “Support Programme for Employees with Disabilities” which provides employers of persons with disabilities with a subsidy up to \$20,000 in respect of each employee with disabilities for procurement of assistive devices and workplace modifications.

7. SWD has increased the job attachment allowance and wage subsidy for job trial under the “On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities” and the “Sunnyway – On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities” since July 2013. The job attachment allowance has been increased from \$1,250 to \$2,000 per month for a maximum period of three months. The wage subsidy for job trial has been raised from the cap of \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month, with the subsidy period extended from three months to six months.

“Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme”

8. In conjunction with the above-mentioned positive encouragement measures, the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB), in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC), the

Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities, are taking forward the “Talent-Wise Employment Charter and Inclusive Organisations Recognition Scheme” (the Charter Scheme) to mobilise the Government, business sector, as well as the public and subvented bodies to implement a host of measures (including employing persons with disabilities; procuring the products or services provided by them; providing on-the-job training opportunities for them; creating an inclusive workplace and providing a barrier-free working environment and assistive devices; setting aside shops or stalls, etc.) to promote the employment of persons with disabilities. LWB has been promoting the Charter Scheme through various networks and a series of publicity programmes to encourage employers in the territory to participate in the Charter Scheme. As at early-February 2014, more than 120 organisations including private organisations, major chambers of commerce, public and subvented bodies, NGOs as well as government departments have joined the Charter Scheme. The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and the Airport Authority Hong Kong, which were mentioned in the motion, are also among the participants.

9. To encourage organisations participating in the Charter Scheme to continuously implement relevant measures and introduce further measures to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, and to promote the Charter Scheme among all sectors, an Inclusive Organisation Logo will be awarded to all Employer Organisations which have implemented one or more measure(s) to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, and to Supporting Organisations which have helped promote the Charter Scheme through their networks. Other awards will also be set up under the Charter Scheme. The participating organisations are required to submit a progress report in mid-2014 to take stock of the results of the measures implemented and set out the work plan for the coming year.

Creating employment opportunities for persons with disabilities

10. Apart from encouraging employers of various sectors to give more opportunities to persons with disabilities, we have spared no effort to create job opportunities for them. The Government, through payment of grants as seed money under the “Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise” Project (3E’s Project), supports NGOs to set up small enterprises/businesses to create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, and provide them with genuine employment in a carefully planned and sympathetic work environment. In each funded enterprise, the number of employees with

disabilities should not be less than 50% of the total number of employees. As at December 2013, the 3E's Project, first launched in 2001, has already granted over \$65 million for setting up a total of 84 small businesses, creating over 630 employment opportunities tailor-made for persons with disabilities. In 2012, the Administration injected \$100 million into the 3E's Project and extended the funding period for each project from a maximum of two years to three years with a view to continuously improving the employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Statutory minimum wage

11. Furthermore, the Administration is mindful of the impact of statutory minimum wage on the employment situation of persons with disabilities. The objective of introducing a statutory minimum wage is to stipulate a wage floor to prevent employers from paying employees with excessively low wages. The proposal for the Administration to provide a minimum wage subsidy involves significant policy considerations and has far-reaching implications on public finance.

Building a barrier-free society

12. It has all along been the policy objective of the Government to provide a barrier-free living environment for persons with disabilities with a view to enabling them to access, on an equal basis with others, to premises and services, thereby facilitating them to live independently, participate in full in various social activities and integrate into the community.

“Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 2008”

13. To ensure that appropriate barrier-free access and facilities are provided in private buildings to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, all new private buildings or alterations and additions to existing private buildings have to comply with the requirements as set out in the Building (Planning) Regulation 72 (B(P)R 72) and the “Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 2008” (Design Manual). In addition, according to the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), it is unlawful to discriminate against persons with disabilities in relation to the provision of means of access to any premises that the public is entitled to enter or use. The DDO applies to existing and new buildings. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), the statutory body to enforce

DDO, will follow up on complaints regarding provision of reasonable barrier-free access for persons with disabilities.

14. In response to the advancement in building technology and social development, the Administration conducts review on the Design Manual regularly. The Buildings Department (BD) is setting up a Technical Committee to collect and listen to, from the technical perspective, views of the building sector and relevant organisations in respect of the applications of the Design Manual, relevant building designs, construction and technological development, and relevant legislation and international standards. As in previous reviews, the Administration will conduct a new round of review on the Design Manual at an appropriate juncture, having regard to the progress and results of the technical assessment by BD and the advice of the Technical Committee. LWB will then take the lead to follow up with BD on the review of the Design Manual, including consultation with the LegCo, persons with disabilities, the building sector and other stakeholders.

Assistance for eligible private building owners to improve accessibility of their buildings

15. To further enhance barrier-free access in private buildings, there are currently a number of assistance schemes for eligible owners of private buildings to enhance the barrier-free access in their buildings. The Integrated Building Maintenance Assistance Scheme jointly rolled out by the Hong Kong Housing Society and Urban Renewal Authority has explicitly included the provision, improvement and maintenance of barrier-free access in the scope of assistance for works in common areas. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Building Safety Improvement Loan Scheme and the Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Elderly Owners, both funded by the Government, will also accept loan or grant applications for works relating to maintenance and improvement of barrier-free access and facilities.

Accessibility of government premises, facilities and services

16. To speed up the improvement of accessibility of government premises, public housing and connecting road facilities in Hong Kong, the Administration has taken forward a comprehensive retrofitting programme at full steam to upgrade the barrier-free facilities for about 3 500 existing government premises and facilities, as well as about 237 properties and facilities of the Housing Authority (HA). HA will carry out a total of 365 works items, among which 167 are in domestic

blocks and external areas; 44 in public transport interchanges; 31 in commercial centres; 93 in carparks; 6 in factory buildings and 24 in other venues) at a total cost of \$1.3 billion. Retrofitting works for around 90% of these venues were completed as scheduled by end-June 2012, while the remaining works are scheduled for completion by end-June 2014.

17. In addition to enhancing the hardware of barrier-free facilities, on the software side, the Administration strives to strengthen the daily management and raise the awareness of venue staff on accessibility issues. In this regard, individual bureaux and departments have appointed an Access Co-ordinator to co-ordinate accessibility issues within the bureau or department. Each venue and facility has also appointed an Access Officer to handle the accessibility issues for the venue.

“Universal Accessibility” programme

18. The Highways Department (HyD) has been installing barrier-free access facilities at public walkways (i.e. footbridges, elevated walkways and subways) for years having regard to the recommendations of EOC. In addition, the Chief Executive announced on 21 August 2012 a new policy on “Universal Accessibility” which aims at further enhancing the barrier-free facilities at existing public walkways.

19. The “Original Programme” for retrofitting barrier-free access facilities is to provide lifts or standard ramps to existing public walkways which are neither equipped with standard barrier-free access facilities nor proper at-grade crossing facilities available within about 100m. HyD is taking forward retrofitting works for about 160 technically feasible items under the “Original Programme” as scheduled. These items are anticipated to be completed progressively from 2014 to 2018.

20. After the launch of the new policy, the Administration received overwhelming response from the public during the consultation period between August and October 2012 and lift installations at about 250 public walkways were proposed.

21. The Administration consulted the District Councils in the first half of 2013 on the new policy and invited them to prioritise the new items in their districts proposed by the public. Each DC has selected 3 public walkways for priority implementation. Upon completion of consultation, the Administration commenced technical feasibility study and investigation work for the priority items in end-June 2013 in

accordance with the DCs' advice. The related work is expected to be completed within one year. After completion of the study and investigation, the Administration will report to DCs the study findings and preliminary retrofitting proposals for individual items. Once a priority item is confirmed to be technically feasible and supported by the district, the Administration will commence its design and construction works as soon as possible. It is anticipated that the priority items would be completed in about 4 years.

Installing electronic route display panels and next stop /station announcement systems on various public transport modes

22. As far as franchised buses are concerned, all buses are now equipped with text and/or voice next stop announcement systems. Bus route information is also provided inside bus compartments, at bus stops as well as by websites and smart phone applications of the bus companies. Some applications also provide alight reminder service. Franchised bus operators are also keen on introducing other new facilities to disseminate more information to passengers, such as on-board electronic route display panels. Subject to test results, such facilities will be put into more extensive use. Franchised bus operators will continue to replace old buses by low-floor buses. Currently, 70% of all buses in Hong Kong are low-floor buses. It is projected that all buses of the major franchised bus operators will be low-floor buses where route environment permits by 2016.

23. As far as railways are concerned, MTRCL will continue to take forward the enhancement works for the barrier-free transport facilities at railway stations and along railway lines, with a view to facilitating wheelchair users and those in need to use their service. Pre-recorded next station announcement systems are now available at all railway lines to provide information about the next station and interchange arrangements for the convenience of the visually impaired. Moreover, major railway lines are equipped with flashing system maps or digital screens and multi-media panels for announcement of next station to meet the needs of the hearing impaired.

Installing MTR platform screen doors and screen door warning lights for the safety of visually impaired persons, the deaf and persons with hearing impairment

24. At present, there are altogether 84 MTR stations (including the Island Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Kwun Tong Line, Tung Chung Line,

Tseung Kwan O Line, Disneyland Resort Line, Airport Express Line, East Rail Line (EAL), West Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line (MOL)). Other than the 22 stations along the EAL and the MOL, all of the remaining 62 stations are installed with platform screen doors (PSDs) or automatic platform gates (APGs). They are also equipped with warning lights which will be on when the PSDs or APGs open.

25. MTRCL has started retrofitting APGs along the EAL and the MOL for completion in 2017 and 2020 respectively. This is considered to be the earliest practical schedule. For the EAL, its signalling system has to be replaced to ensure that the train doors are aligned with APGs when the trains stop. To avoid wastage and reduce the inconvenience caused to passengers, the replacement work will be carried out in tandem with that for the signalling system and trains of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL). In addition, platform structure of the EAL has to be strengthened before retrofitting APGs. Meanwhile, MTRCL will introduce new rolling stocks that can reduce the platform gap and are equipped with train motoring and braking systems suitable for use with APGs. Such works will be carried out in phases to minimise the impact on passengers and train service. On the other hand, the MOL will operate with 8-car trains instead of the original 4-car trains for alignment with the train service of the SCL. As such, retrofitting of APGs will also be carried out in tandem with the projects of the SCL.

Enhancing Rehabilitation Services

26. The Administration is committed to enhancing rehabilitation services, including residential care, community support, day training and vocational rehabilitation services with a view to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities and their carers.

Provision of additional places for rehabilitation services

27. We are mindful of the keen demand of persons with disabilities for rehabilitation services and will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to actively identify suitable sites to provide more service places. During the current term of the Government, we will provide 6 200 additional places of rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. These include 2 016 day training and vocational rehabilitation service places, 2 713 residential care service places and 1 471 pre-school rehabilitation places. The Government will also provide more rehabilitation service facilities through the Special Scheme

on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses, with a view to relieving the service demand and shortening the waiting time.

Enhancing residential care services

28. SWD launched the four-year Pilot Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities (BPS) in October 2010 to encourage private residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) to upgrade their service standards, increase the supply of subsidised residential care places and provide more residential service options for persons with disabilities. Having regard to the stakeholders' support for BPS, the Government has decided to regularise the scheme, with the cap of subsidised places in each home raised from 55% to 70%, so as to encourage more quality RCHDs to join the BPS, thereby benefitting more persons with disabilities.

Strengthening community support for persons with disabilities

29. SWD provides one-stop community support services for persons with disabilities, their family members/ carers through 16 District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities. We will strengthen the manpower of the District Support Centres and introduce a case management service approach with a view to providing service users with more comprehensive and convenient support.

30. To further relieve family members / carers of their pressure in taking care of persons with disabilities, we will enhance the short-term day care and residential care services for persons with disabilities, in particular those aged 6 to 14, so that their family members / carers may take a planned short break or attend to their personal business. This also helps to temporarily relieve the families or carers from their caring duties and alleviate their stress.

31. To promote the spirit of self-help and mutual help among persons with disabilities and their families, SWD has since 2001 been providing funding support to Self-help Organisations (SHOs) of persons with disabilities/ chronic illness through the "Financial Support Scheme for Self-help Organisations of People with Disabilities/ Chronic Illness". Under the Scheme, programmes/ activities are organised to foster full integration of persons with disabilities into the community. We will increase the allocation to the Scheme to better support the operation and development of SHOs of persons with disabilities/ chronic illness.

32. The Administration will continue to timely review the operation and demand of the community support services, and further strengthen these services to provide adequate support to persons with disabilities and their carers, thereby facilitating their integration into the community.

Strengthening support for persons with severe disabilities

33. We understand that persons with severe disabilities require a higher level of care and support. We are also mindful of the immense pressure faced by their family members and carers. SWD has launched the “Pilot Scheme on Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities” (Pilot Scheme) to provide a package of home-based personal care services for persons with severe disabilities who are living in the community and on the waiting list for subvented residential care services. The Pilot Scheme is well-received and meets the needs of users. SWD will regularise the service in March 2014 upon the expiry of the three-year Pilot Scheme, and at the same time extend it to persons with severe disabilities in all districts, irrespective of whether they are on the waiting list for residential care services.

34. Apart from providing Special Care Subsidy to persons with severe disabilities requiring constant attendance and from low-income family, the Community Care Fund (CCF) also provide subsidy to persons with severe physical disabilities requiring constant attendance for renting necessary respiratory support medical equipment and purchasing medical consumables related to respiratory support medical equipment. In August 2013, CCF has relaxed the monthly household income limit of the above initiatives from 100% to 150% of the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income in order to benefit more persons with severe disabilities and their families. We will incorporate two CCF items into Government's regular subvention programme to subsidise persons with severe physical disabilities living in the community for renting medical equipment and acquiring medical consumables. To facilitate their continued community living and integration into society, one-stop integrated support service will be provided by case managers who will co-ordinate and arrange appropriate services for them according to their needs.

35. With regard to the suggestion of providing a carer allowance for persons with severe disabilities, CCF Task Force is exploring the feasibility of implementing a pilot scheme on carer allowance for the elderly. We will keep in view the development of the pilot scheme and

consider if corresponding measure is also applicable to persons with severe disabilities.

Sign Language

Promoting sign language

36. To promote the use of sign language and social inclusion, RAC under LWB formed a Working Group on Promoting Sign Language (the Working Group) to advise the Government on ways to promote sign language. The Working Group comprises members of RAC, persons with hearing impairment, sign language interpreters and representatives from NGOs of the rehabilitation sector and the education sector. Representatives of relevant government bureaux and departments also attend meetings for discussion as and when required.

37. Having regard to the views collected and subsequent discussions with relevant government departments and organisations, the Working Group has formulated the strategic direction in the promotion of sign language and worked out a programme plan covering four major areas, namely sign language training, daily life application, community promotion and education. Relevant promotion activities include sign language courses for government officers, short television series on sign language, establishment of on-line sign language database, development of sign language communication self-learning platform and organisation of various community inclusive activities, etc. The Working Group is implementing the work plan in full steam.

Strengthening sign language interpretation service

38. We will also provide additional funding to strengthen the manpower of the Multi-service Centres for the Hearing Impaired Persons and the Social and Recreational Centres for the Disabled which are offering sign language interpretation service, with a view to enhancing sign language interpretation services for persons with hearing impairment.

Needs of persons with hearing impairment for social information

39. The Government is mindful of the needs of persons with hearing impairment for social information. In this connection, the two free television licensees have stepped up incrementally their subtitling

service according to their licensing conditions. As for sign language interpretation, having regard to the technical difficulties for mandatory implementation of such services by the licensees, the television stations are initially encouraged to provide such service on a voluntary basis, taking into account the operation mode of individual programmes. The Communications Authority will continue to listen to relevant public views with a view to further enhancing the licensees' services in order to facilitate the viewing of television programmes by people with special needs.

Promoting sign language in secondary and primary schools

40. All along, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been encouraging teachers to adopt the most appropriate mode to communicate with and to teach students having regard to the abilities and needs of children with hearing impairment. For students with hearing impairment attending ordinary schools, with the use of amplification devices, their hearing abilities are enhanced, enabling them to communicate with people orally. Teachers will use oral language, visual strategies, contextual cues, body language, written text and gestures, etc. in daily teaching or communication with students with hearing impairment to enhance students' comprehension and learning effectiveness. As for students attending special schools (including schools for children with hearing impairment), teachers will communicate with and to teach them by using both oral and sign languages, and total communication, etc.

41. Should the learning and communication problems of students with hearing impairment in ordinary schools persist after school-based support, EDB will refer the students for "Enhanced Support Service for Hearing Impairment Students Attending Ordinary Schools" (ESS) subject to the consent of the parents. Under the ESS commissioned by EDB, experienced resource teachers (RTs) from the school for children with hearing impairment will provide after-school support to students with hearing impairment. RTs will also pay school visits to provide support for the students and to share different teaching strategies with teachers in ordinary schools so as to enhance the learning effectiveness of students with hearing impairment and to facilitate their integration into ordinary schools. RTs would use sign language to assist the learning of students, if deemed necessary. They would also share with the home school teachers on how to use sign language to assist teaching.

Disability Allowance

42. The Administration set up the Disability Allowance (DA) in 1973, aiming to assist severely disabled persons in meeting special needs arising from their disability. The recipients of DA must be severely disabled and as a result need substantial help from others to cope with daily life.

43. In early 2013, LWB set up an inter-departmental working group to explore the issue of “allowing people with loss of one limb to apply for DA”. The Working Group understands that the community generally wishes to have the review completed as soon as practicable. Given that the issue is rather complex, which involves, among others, the criteria for assessing the disability levels as well as the projection of the number of beneficiaries and relevant financial implication, the review is expected to complete by the end of 2014.

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

44. As regards the suggestion of allowing persons with disabilities to apply for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA) on their own, we consider that families constitute the core units of a community, hence members of the same family should render assistance and support to each other. Based on this principle, CSSA applicants, including persons with disabilities, living with their families are required to submit applications on a household basis. Nevertheless, under special circumstances, the Director of Social Welfare may allow needy persons with disabilities to apply for CSSA on their own according to the merits of individual cases.

Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities

45. We will extend Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (the Scheme) to children with severe disabilities aged below 12 receiving CSSA or DA in the second quarter this year. The extension aims at building a caring and inclusive society by encouraging these children to participate more in community activities. We will also extend the Scheme to green minibuses by phases starting from the first quarter of 2015.

Education

Review of the integrated education policy

46. The Whole School Approach (WSA) to integrated education (IE) currently implemented in Hong Kong is in line with the global trend in the development of IE. EDB has kept monitoring schools on the deployment of resources and the implementation of measures through different channels including conducting regular school visits and listening to views of the sector and stakeholders. Schools are required to assess the progress of the students with special educational needs (SEN) regularly and submit year-end self-evaluation reports to EDB each year. To enhance home-school communication and co-operation, schools are required to elucidate their IE policies, additional resources and support measures on IE in their Annual School Reports, and to establish a regular communication mechanism with parents so as to facilitate parents' understanding of the special educational needs of their children, and participate in the planning and evaluation of intervention programmes and effectiveness, etc.

47. In 2005, EDB set up the Task Force on Integrated Education in Mainstream Schools (IE Task Force), which comprises representatives from the education sector, tertiary institutions, other government departments, NGOs and parent groups. Through regular meetings of the IE Task Force, EDB discusses with stakeholders the development of IE and possible improvement measures. EDB also, from time to time, meets with various school councils, NGOs and parent groups to strengthen communication and co-operation among stakeholders.

48. To help schools cater for the students with SEN, EDB has been providing ordinary primary and secondary schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. EDB has also introduced various enhanced measures, where necessary and possible, having taken into account the opinions of different stakeholders (please see details below). EDB is committed in taking forward IE. While noting the challenges faced in implementing IE, EDB will continue to work collaboratively with schools with a view to rendering more appropriate support for students with SEN.

Subsidies for schools

49. In respect of resources, to facilitate schools to support students with SEN, EDB has provided public sector primary and secondary

schools with additional resources on top of the regular subvention for ordinary schools, including the Learning Support Grant (LSG), Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, and additional teachers/ teaching assistants under different programmes, etc. Based on school-based needs, schools may deploy the manpower flexibly and pool together various school resources (such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant, etc.) to employ additional teachers and teaching assistants or to hire support services for enhancing the effectiveness of support for students with SEN. Schools may also apply for Top-up Fund for building ramps, converting toilets and procuring tailor-made desks and chairs for students with physical disability, installing FM system for students with hearing impairment or purchasing Braille and CCTV magnifier for students with visual impairment.

50. The current funding mode provides schools with flexibility in using their resources. Through daily contacts with the students, teachers could continually observe students' overall performance. Additional manpower could be recruited or services be procured to provide appropriate support to meet students' needs. The Government will, from time to time, take into consideration schools' development in the implementation of IE and to provide additional resources to assist teachers to take care of students with SEN. To further enhance the support for students with SEN in ordinary schools, EDB has raised the ceiling of the LSG for public sector primary and secondary schools from \$1 million to \$1.5 million starting from 2013/14 school year, and will increase the rates of the LSG by 30% in the 2014/15 school year. In subsequent school years, the grant rates and the ceiling of the LSG for each school year will be adjusted annually according to the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index.

Manpower establishment and training in schools

51. EDB has always encouraged schools to adopt a WSA in implementing IE and set up student support teams to coordinate various support measures to cater for student diversity. In the 2008/09 school year, EDB created a deputy headship post in primary schools, the duties of which include, among others, to lead and coordinate efforts in supporting students with SEN. In fact, EDB has advised primary and secondary schools to assign their vice-principals to lead and coordinate the task for effective engagement of the teaching force in implementing IE. Schools may consider deploying their manpower as appropriate so that senior teachers will be designated to assist the principals and vice-principals in coordinating and implementing the WSA to IE.

52. As mentioned in paragraphs above, schools may pool and flexibly deploy various school resources, including Capacity Enhancement Grant etc., to support the students with SEN and share the workload of teachers through employing additional teachers/ teaching assistants, or hire support services, etc. For schools with particularly difficult hardcore cases of students with severe SEN, EDB will consider providing them with a time-limited additional grant where appropriate for employing temporary teaching assistants to cater for individual students requiring imminent intensive support.

53. Over the past decade, EDB has incessantly sought to strengthen the manpower of secondary and primary schools including provision of additional teachers to cater for academically low achievers in secondary schools. In the 2012/13 school year, eligible public sector ordinary secondary schools are provided with a maximum of 7 additional graduate teachers under this measure. The additional teachers provided had not only helped enhance the quality of education, but also enabled teachers to render enhanced support for students with SEN. In fact, the teacher/student ratio has improved from 1:20.4 to 1:14.4 and from 1:18.2 to 1:14.5 in primary schools and secondary schools respectively in the 2012/13 school year as compared with the 2002/03 school year.

Teacher Training

54. To enhance teachers' professional capacity in catering for students with SEN, EDB has launched training courses pitched at basic, advance and thematic level (BAT Course) for serving teachers since the 2007/08 school year. Training targets are set for schools so that they can arrange their teachers to attend various courses in a systematic manner. We hope that through continuous professional development of teachers, each school will have a critical mass of teachers having received relevant training in special education to guide their counterparts to implement the WSA to IE. In the 2012/13 school year, a new round of the BAT Course was offered. As at November 2013, more than 42% of public sector primary school teachers and about 18% of public sector secondary school teachers have completed 30 hours or more of structured training in special education. In terms of school number, as at November 2013, more than 99% of public sector primary schools and 87% of public sector secondary schools have 10% or more teachers having completed special education training, and about 84% of primary schools have 30% or more teachers having completed training in special education. Having reviewed the delivery mode and contents of the

existing training courses in consultation with teacher education institutions, EDB will further strengthen the practicum of the advanced and thematic courses for the 2014/15 to 2016/17 school years with a view to further enhancing teachers' capability in applying the knowledge they acquire.

55. Besides, EDB has incorporated topics on catering for student diversity and spearheading IE implementation in the Preparation for Principalship Course for Aspiring Principals and induction programme for newly-appointed principals. Seminars and sharing sessions/workshops are also organised throughout the year for different school personnel including school heads, school management teams, teachers and teaching assistants to keep them abreast of the latest development in special education.

56. EDB has all along been encouraging local teacher education institutions to include a module on support for students with SEN in their pre-service teacher training courses. At present, different teacher education institutions have incorporated the module on special education or catering for student diversity in the pre-service teacher training programmes to strengthen the knowledge of the prospective teachers in this respect.

57. EDB will keep monitoring schools' training progress and review the training targets as and when required.

Professional support

58. On professional support, the professional staff of EDB pay regular visits to schools to advise them, where appropriate, on school policies, IE support measures, teaching strategies, resource deployment and home-school co-operation etc. In addition, the educational psychologists, speech therapists and audiologists of EDB offer professional support to schools, including assessment and consultation services. EDB also provides Resource Teachers (RTs) for the school for children with visual impairment (VI) to support students with VI enrolled in ordinary schools. As for students with hearing impairment (HI), should the learning and communication problems of students with hearing impairment in ordinary schools persist after receiving school-based support, EDB will refer the students for ESS. Experienced RTs from the schools for children with hearing impairment will provide after-school support for students with hearing impairment. RTs will also provide on-site remedial support for the students and to share different teaching

strategies with teachers in ordinary schools through case conferences, workshops, seminars and class observations so as to enhance the learning effectiveness of the students with hearing impairment and to facilitate their integration into ordinary schools.

59. Furthermore, EDB is extending the School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS) progressively. In the 2013/14 school year, about 580 public sector primary and secondary schools are receiving the comprehensive support service. EDB anticipates that all public sector primary and secondary schools would be covered under SBEPS by the 2016/17 school year.

Assessment arrangements

60. To ensure students with SEN have equal opportunities in assessment and can display the subject knowledge they have acquired and skills commanded, EDB has been advising schools to provide appropriate special examination arrangements (SEA) for them. EDB published the information leaflet on WSA – Assessment Principles and Strategies in 2004 and the Guidelines on Special Examination Arrangements for Students with SEN in Internal Assessment in 2009, which set out the general principles and strategies in special internal assessment arrangements. The information has been uploaded onto EDB website. In addition, EDB officers organise talks/workshops for schools on a regular basis to assist schools in further fine-tuning their school-based special examination policies and measures. EDB will conduct 4 workshops with different themes in March and May of 2014 to enable schools to have a better understanding about the basic principles and different strategies in arranging SEA.

61. As regards public examinations, EDB has worked in close collaboration with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), including nominating representatives to attend meetings of the Committee on Special Needs Candidates under HKEAA to have ongoing discussion on the effectiveness of SEA and introduction of the improvement measures, as well as research into some fairer and practicable SEA. EDB will encourage schools to make corresponding arrangements in accordance with the development.

62. Apart from participating in the Committee on Special Needs Candidates, educational psychologists of EDB also assist in the Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities of HKEAA under the Committee. The Task

Group is responsible for formulating policies on SEA for candidates with specific learning disability and contemplating the applications. In September and November last year, educational psychologists of EDB elucidated to parents and schools in three seminars organised by HKEAA on the principles and arrangements of SEA to facilitate stakeholders to make appropriate decisions and arrangements for the candidates with SEN.

Continued education arrangements

63. The Government is committed to providing young people (including students with SEN) with flexible and diversified study pathways with multiple entry and exit points. Students can make diversified choices for meeting individual abilities, interests and aspirations including degree programmes and sub-degree programmes, Yi Jin Diploma programme, vocational education programmes and other programmes. Following the implementation of New Senior Secondary Academic Structure, diversified programmes enable students with different abilities to maximise their potentials and identify their goals at an early stage through Other Learning Experiences, including job-related experiences.

64. As regards admission to universities, a sub-system under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System has been created to assist students with SEN to apply for courses offered by the post-secondary institutions. Post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong offer equal opportunities to all eligible applicants and the admission decisions are based on holistic assessment of the merit of the applicants. The post-secondary institutions also provide special arrangement and support services for their students with SEN. The Vocational Training Council (VTC) also has a special admission process for these students. If an applicant with SEN meets the entrance requirements of the programmes and satisfies the interview assessment that the student has the ability to complete the programme, an offer will be provided.

65. Moreover, VTC has established a new Youth College in the 2012/13 academic year to provide dedicated support for ethnic minority students and students with SEN to enable them to have appropriate professional education and training opportunities. The Financial Secretary has proposed in the 2013-14 Budget to allocate \$12 million to VTC each year to enhance the support for students with SEN.

66. The Financial Secretary has also proposed in the 2013-14 Budget to make two separate injections of \$20 million each, bringing the total to \$40 million, into the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund and the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund. The above proposal has been approved by the Finance Committee of the LegCo in July 2013. It is expected that about 100 students with SEN pursuing full-time locally-accredited post-secondary programmes in Hong Kong will be awarded the scholarships every year.

Overall culture and public education

67. EDB fully appreciates the importance of public education in promoting IE and has been taking forward various public education activities. We will continue to organise different activities through various media and means to enhance public understanding of IE and promote the concept of inclusion and effective measures. Major public education activities implemented by EDB in the recent years are set out as follows:

- In the 2008/09 school year, EDB, the Department of Health (DH) and the Subsidized Primary School Council jointly organised an activity “An Inclusive School – It All Begins with Our Hearts” to promote an inclusive school culture;
- In the 2008/09 school year, a series of 10 episodes of TV programme “Parenting” was jointly produced by EDB, DH and Radio Television Hong Kong;
- EDB participated in the Learning and Teaching Expo organised by the HKEdCity in June 2011 and November 2012 and introduced to teachers and the education sector the support strategies adopted by ordinary schools in implementation IE, the characteristics of learning and teaching in special schools, and the services, teaching materials and ancillary equipment for supporting students with SEN;
- EDB organised the Visual Arts Contest on Inclusion in mid-2012, with a view to promoting an inclusive school culture and enhancing public and schools’ awareness of and support for IE through the contest and a series of related activities, including exhibitions of the submissions;

- To further promote an inclusive culture, the “Home-school Cooperation in Building an Inclusive School Culture” Award Scheme has been launched in primary and secondary schools in the 2013/14 school year;
- The “Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education” and the “Parent Guide on Whole School Approach to Integrated Education” were published for schools and parents respectively, which introduce the principles and successful practices of IE. The Guides were uploaded to EDB website for public’s reference;
- An online Special Education Newsletter 「融情」 has been published by EDB regularly to expound to parents and the public the information of special education and the experiences in promoting IE.

68. For the 2013/14 school year, to further promote an inclusive school culture, EDB has launched the “Home-school Cooperation in Building an Inclusive School Culture” Award Scheme in primary and secondary schools. A launching ceremony was held on 30 November 2013 to kick off the Scheme and promote this meaningful activity among schools and parents. Besides, a TV announcement to promote IE will be launched by early 2014 to further enhance public awareness of IE. EDB will continue to systemically promote an inclusive school environment through various forms and means.

Need for legislation

69. In accordance with DDO and the Code of Practice on Education, it is unlawful for educational establishments to discriminate against a person with a disability. As such, all educational establishments are obliged to provide equal educational opportunity for eligible students, including those with SEN. In other words, the existing legal framework in Hong Kong can basically serve as an effective safeguard for the rights of students with SEN.

70. There has been proposal for introducing legislation to protect students with SEN. Since different countries or places have different needs and context, we consider that it is more appropriate, at this stage, to explore how support measures for implementing IE can be strengthened so that better support is provided for students. From an educational perspective, it will be more effective for schools to adopt a WSA to

implement IE to improve their culture, policy and measures, which in turn enhances the effectiveness of support for students with SEN.

Improvement of special school premises

71. Like ordinary schools, special schools were built at different times and the building work was conducted according to the standard prevailed at that time. EDB updates the standard for building schools (including special schools) having regard to the needs of the education developments. EDB has all along been proactive in reviewing the needs of all special schools and exploring feasible ways to improve the school premises, including undertaking conversion or extension work, in situ re-development or reprovisioning. Between 1999 and 2007, the school premises of 43 special schools were improved through the School Improvement Programme. Since the year 2000, EDB has proactively arranged for redevelopment/reprovisioning of 12 special schools, and has plans to reprovision 4 other special schools, which constitutes about 25% of the 60 special schools. At present, conversion or extension work for some tens of special schools is being arranged by phases to meet the needs arising from the implementation of the new senior secondary academic structure and the improvement measures on extension of years of study for students of special schools arranging for.

72. It is noteworthy that due to limited land resources in Hong Kong and competitive demands for land use and community facilities of the community, the Administration needs to be prudent in handling the related matter so as to balance the needs from different sectors.

Provision of appropriate school facilities

73. EDB agrees that the provision of appropriate facilities in schools is crucial in facilitating students with SEN in enjoying their school life. Schools constructed after 1997 are in compliance with the prevailing requirements promulgated by BD on barrier free access to facilitate access to school buildings and facilities by persons with disabilities. As for schools built before 1997, subject to technical feasibility, EDB has installed in their premises barrier free facilities such as lifts, accessible toilets, ramps, etc. for use of persons in need through the second and subsequent phases of the School Improvement Programme.

74. When major alteration or improvement works are carried out in schools, EDB will install in their premises the barrier free facilities in

need as far as possible and in accordance with the latest requirements on barrier free access as promulgated by BD and other established criteria, and consider factors such as technical feasibility, urgency for such facilities, availability of alternative measures to solve the inaccessibility problem, and availability of funding.

75. Furthermore, under EDB's established mechanism for upgrading school infrastructure, schools may carry out repair and improvement works on their school facilities according to their needs in the context of the annual major repair/alteration programme, including the provision of barrier free facilities such as lifts, accessible toilets, ramps, etc. Schools can also apply for the Top-up Fund from EDB to procure special furniture and equipment and carry out minor conversion work (Top-up Fund is applicable for procurement or conversion work below \$100,000, such as construction of ramps / conversion of toilet / procurement of tailor-made desks and chairs for students with physical disabilities) for SEN. EDB would, through the above channels, continue to install or improve the facilities to facilitate access to buildings and for use by persons with disabilities as far as possible.

76. At the post-secondary level, under the principle of institutional autonomy, post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong can determine how to deploy their resources to assist students with SEN. We understand that all eight UGC-funded institutions would provide barrier free access and facilities for students with physical disabilities (e.g. lifts, ramps, toilets for the physically disabled, etc.). Some self-financing institutions also provide barrier free access and facilities to support the students with physical disabilities.

77. Moreover, many post-secondary institutions will provide special arrangements and support services for students with SEN based on their needs, including the provision of suitable residential and learning facilities in the campus, procurement and provision of appropriate apparatus (e.g. closed circuit television, automatic page-turning machine, braille display) etc. To further support students with SEN, the Finance Secretary announced in the 2013-14 Budget that an annual amount of \$12 million will be allocated to VTC for procuring the equipment and learning aids for students with SEN, providing them with psychological and student counseling services, and enhancing the support for teaching and learning.

Provision of additional resources for schools to enhance their manpower in supporting students with SEN

78. EDB provides regular teachers and various non-teaching specialist staff for different categories of special schools according to the Code of Aid for Special Schools. For regular teachers, they are provided mainly based on the number of classes. Other regular teachers will also be provided depending on the target students and needs of different categories of special schools. For instance, Resource Teachers for Autistic Children are provided in accordance with the number of students with autism spectrum disorder in the schools for children with mild intellectual disability and schools for children with moderate intellectual disability. For non-teaching specialist staff, speech therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses and social workers are provided for special schools, having regard to the disability type of their target students and the number of classes/students.

79. As for ordinary schools, EDB has been providing additional resources, professional support and teacher training on top of the regular subvention to help ordinary secondary and primary schools cater for their students with SEN. With the increase in the number of students with SEN and the enhancement of support services, the estimated expenditure for provision of additional resources and support services on IE has also increased. As mentioned in paragraph 49 above, schools may pool together and deploy flexibly all subsidies in accordance with their own needs, such as employing additional teachers and teaching assistants or hiring outside services, to render comprehensive and diversified support for the students with SEN and relieve teachers' workload. For schools with hardcore cases, EDB will consider providing them with a time-limited additional grant for employing temporary teaching assistants to cater for individual students requiring imminent intensive support. When students with severe emotional and adjustment difficulties do not show significant improvement despite school-based remedial support provided, EDB would, upon obtaining parental consent, refer them to the Adjustment Unit run by EDB or short-term adjustment programmes run by schools for social development for pull-out remedial support as necessary.

80. Since the 2003/04 school year, EDB has launched the School Partnership Scheme to develop school support network by inviting ordinary schools with proficient experience in IE to serve as Resource Schools on Whole School Approach (RS-WSA) to share with other ordinary schools their knowledge and experience in supporting students

with SEN. RS-WSA work in close collaboration with a certain number of ordinary schools in the form of partnership and share with them their experiences in and strategies for catering for the students' diverse needs through case conferences, on-site support, school network meetings and district-based sharing sessions, etc.

Provision of additional resources on procurement of equipment for students with disabilities

81. As mentioned in paragraph 76 above, EDB has been providing schools with additional resources on top of the regular subvention for ordinary schools, including LSG, Top-up Fund, etc. in order to help ordinary schools support their students with SEN. Top-up Fund provides ordinary schools with resources to purchasing special equipment and carrying out minor conversion work for students with disabilities, including procurement of tailor-made desks and chairs for students with physical disabilities, and purchase of suitable assistive tools for students with VI. Besides, schools for children with mild intellectual disability may also apply for Top-up Fund for purchasing suitable assistive tools for students with intellectual disability cum VI if necessary.

82. Every year, EDB provides Composite Furniture and Equipment Grant and/or the Operating Expenses Block Grant / Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant, etc. for the special schools. Schools may deploy the resources flexibly to procure, repair and maintain furniture, equipment and facilities according to the condition of the students. For schools for children with mild intellectual disability which enroll students with mild intellectual disability cum VI, if they so require after flexible deployment of school resources, they can apply to EDB for the Top-up Fund to procure special furniture and equipment and conduct minor conversion work to support the learning needs of the students.

83. In the 2012/13 school year, EDB provided a one-off grant for the special schools to procure assistive technology. Schools can also deploy such grant to recruit technical staff or hire services to develop or enhance assistive technology, so as to assist students in their learning. Depending on the number of classes, each special school is eligible for a grant between \$100,000 to \$235,000.

84. For those students with hearing impairment who were referred to EDB for support services, after being assessed to be in need of hearing aids by audiologists and upon parental consent, they would be provided with free hearing aid fitting, its related repair and maintenance and

regular hearing aid replacement services, etc. until they graduate from secondary education. At the same time, schools can also apply for the Top-up Fund to procure FM systems for students with hearing impairment in need.

85. On the other hand, for those children with profound hearing impairment who are suitable to use cochlear implant, the Hospital Authority would arrange cochlear implantation for them. Eligible persons (i.e. Hong Kong residents) will only need to pay at standard charges. Starting from April 2013, children with hearing impairment in need could obtain financial assistance from the Samaritan Fund for the replacement of external speech processors and accessories of cochlear implant.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Education Bureau
Transport and Housing Bureau
Civil Service Bureau
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
Social Welfare Bureau
Buildings Department
Transport Department
Highways Department

February 2014

(Translation)

**Motion on
“Facing up to the needs of persons with disabilities”
moved by Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
at the Council meeting of 27 November 2013**

**Motion as amended by Hon IP Kin-yuen, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG**

That, as the resources and support currently provided by the Government to persons with disabilities are very insufficient, this Council urges the Government to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on various policy levels, and face up to the needs of persons with disabilities especially in areas such as healthcare, education, welfare, employment and transportation, etc., so as to create a truly inclusive society; the relevant measures should include:

Healthcare —

- (1) to review the definition of disabilities under the various policies on persons with disabilities, and reform the definition under the Disability Allowance by deleting the outdated provisions linked to ‘a 100% loss of earning capacity’ and replacing them by international disability standards and assessment methods;
- (2) to comprehensively review and raise the amounts of the Disability Allowance to enable persons with disabilities to adequately meet medical and healthcare expenses, etc.;

Education —

- (3) to comprehensively review the integrated education policy, including the subsidy systems, manpower establishment and training, assessment systems, continuous education arrangements, overall culture and public education, and consider legislating for protecting students with disabilities and those with special learning needs;
- (4) to allow the expeditious relocation, redevelopment, alteration or improvement of the premises of certain special schools which are excessively dilapidated, cramped and substandard;

- (5) to allocate additional resources for assisting primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions which provide integrated education in upgrading their hardware facilities, including improving the designs of classrooms and public space, and procuring assistive devices such as font magnifiers, etc., so as to build up truly barrier-free campuses;
- (6) to allow schools which admit a relatively large number of students with disabilities and special learning needs to employ more permanent teachers as well as professional support and counselling personnel, so as to strengthen the support for such students;
- (7) to enhance the subsidies and support services for students with disabilities to purchase, repair and maintain assistive devices;
- (8) to step up the promotion of sign language, implement sign language programmes in primary and secondary schools and provide sign language interpretation in television news reports, so as to facilitate the deaf-mute to integrate into society;

Welfare –

- (9) to increase the places in residential care homes for persons with disabilities and provide carer subsidies to carers of persons with severe disabilities, so as to protect the livelihood of persons with disabilities in residential care homes or in the community;

Employment –

- (10) to establish a quota system for employing persons with disabilities and provide minimum wage subsidies; the Government and subvented organizations should take the lead in employing more persons with disabilities, with 2% as the target rate, and disclose by various departments and organizations their status on employment of persons with disabilities; other larger-scale public organizations such as the MTR Corporation Limited and the Airport Authority, etc. should also take the lead in employing more persons with disabilities;

Transportation –

- (11) to extend the scope of the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (i.e. ‘concessionary

fare of \$2 per trip') to cover persons with disabilities under the age of 12, and make it applicable to green minibuses across the territory; and

- (12) to improve the existing barrier-free access and install electronic route display panels and next stop announcement systems on various means of public transport; and

Healthcare —

- (13) to allow persons with loss of one limb to also receive Disability Allowance;
- (14) to introduce a special disability allowance at a rate higher than that of the existing higher disability allowance, so as to target persons with severe disabilities who require intensive care to help them meet the related expenditure;

Welfare —

- (15) to allow persons with disabilities to apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance on an individual basis; and

Transportation —

- (16) to expeditiously install MTR platform screen doors and screen door warning lights, so as to protect the safety of visually impaired persons, the deaf and persons with hearing impairment.