

DRAFT**LEGCO QUESTION NO. 5**
(Oral Reply)**"Subject to the actual answer
given at the Council Meeting"**

Asked by Hon SIN Chung-kai Date of meeting : 6 July 2005
 Replied by: Secretary for Constitutional Affairs

Question

When running for the election, the Chief Executive put forth the new idea of recruiting people with political aspirations to serve as administrative assistants ("AAs") to bureau secretaries. In this regard, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the details of this idea, including the entry requirements of AAs, their remuneration package, duties and authority, whether they will be politically appointed and have to share similar political beliefs with the bureau secretary they work with, and the requirements of them in respect of confidentiality and prevention of conflict of interests;
- (b) whether AAs may be transferred to the civil service when they leave office in the future; and
- (c) for those who have left the civil service to take up AA posts, whether they can be re-employed as civil servants on the terms of their former ranks?

Reply

Madam President,

The Chief Executive (CE) said during his election campaign that to meet public expectations that constitutional development should be taken forward, he would consider how we could improve the political structure and enhance public participation in political affairs. Apart from reforming the "hardware" of the electoral systems, we also have to nurture the "software" of political talents in order to create an environment conducive to furthering constitutional development. The view of the CE was to develop a political career path for publicly spirited individuals, with a view to grooming talents with wide-ranging experience in politics. The political career path envisaged may cover various stages. Initially, those with political aspirations will be given the opportunity to assume government positions at the middle ranking level, for

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example, as Assistants to Directors of Bureaux. These individuals may be drawn from various sectors, including the political and business sectors as well as the civil service. At a later stage, after working for the Government for a certain period of time to gain some experience, they may stand for Legislative Council (LegCo) election. In so doing, they can benefit from the electioneering experience and broaden their political skills as LegCo Members. Eventually, they may return to the Government to join the political tier of the SAR Government, for example, by filling the positions of Director of Bureaux. In the longer term, these arrangements will help to extend the opportunities for political participation and widen the pool of political talents.

2. The thinking outlined above is preliminary and requires further study. In considering any proposals, the fine traditions of a permanent, professional and politically neutral civil service must be preserved. This will allow civil servants to continue to assist the political tier in formulating and implementing policies and delivering services to the public in an impartial and professional manner.

3. We appreciate that this is a very important issue with significant implications. The CE will elaborate on our ideas in the Policy Address to be delivered in October. We will formulate a comprehensive package of proposals in consultation with senior civil servants and fully consult the views of the civil service, political groups and the community, including the views of LegCo Members, so that any proposals put forth will meet the concerns of the community.

