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29 September 2009

Clerk to Legislative Council Panel on Public Service
(Attn : Ms Sarah Yuen)
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Yuen,

Recruitment of Civil Service Transport Services Officer II

Thank you for your letter dated 16 June in which Mr Wong Man-kit's views concerning the civil service recruitment exercise of Transport Services Officer II conducted by the Government Logistics Department (GLD) in 2008 is referred to us again. We have examined carefully the points raised by Mr Wong and our reply is as follows -

Background information

According to the entry requirements of Transport Services Officer II, candidates should have either of the followings -

- (1) (a) a Higher Diploma in Transport and Logistics Studies from the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (HKIVE), or equivalent; and (b) the language proficiency at Level 2 or above in Chinese Language and English Language in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) or equivalent; or

- (2) (a) a Certificate in Supervisory Management from the former Hong Kong Polytechnic or technical institute, or equivalent; (b) the language proficiency at Level 2 or above in Chinese Language and English Language in the HKCEE or equivalent; and (c) 5 years' supervisory experience, 3 years of which should be in the supervision and control of transport services.

Fairness principle and civil service recruitment policy applied to all candidates with equivalent qualifications

Paragraph 8 of the civil service recruitment policy (i.e. Paper No. CB(1)964/07-08(03) of the Legislative Council Panel on Public Service) as referred to by Mr Wong states that: "recruitment boards are formed to assess candidates, to recommend suitable ones for appointment, and to prioritise their suitability" during the recruitment process. According to existing civil service recruitment procedures, the recruitment board should, upon conclusion of all interviews, determine the candidates' suitability and recommend suitable ones for appointment and waitlisting. It was not the case, as alleged by Mr Wong, that the department prioritised all the applicants in accordance with their individual qualifications. Nor did the department draw up a priority list before the interview. Paragraphs 7 to 9 of the aforesaid paper concerning the recruitment procedures are extracted at Annex.

The aforesaid arrangement was set out in our reply dated 11 March. It will not, as alleged by Mr Wong, give rise to the situation in which only applicants from the HKIVE are invited to attend interviews while other applicants with equivalent or higher qualifications are excluded. The GLD had not imposed additional shortlisting criteria in this recruitment exercise. Candidates who met the basic entry requirements were all invited to an interview.

Of the 97 candidates invited to attend interviews, 51 possessed professional qualifications in transport awarded by the HKIVE, 19 had qualifications from the HKIVE as well as higher qualifications from other institutes, and 27 had equivalent or higher qualifications from other institutes. After assessing carefully the overall performance of all the candidates who attended the interviews, the selection board recommended a total of 28 candidates, with 9 recommended for appointment and 19 to be put on the waiting list. Among the 28 recommended candidates, 7 possessed qualifications from the HKIVE, 12 had qualifications from the HKIVE as well as higher qualifications from other institutes, and 9 with equivalent or higher qualifications from other institutes. It is apparent that the GLD had not

neglected candidates with qualifications equivalent to or higher than those obtained from the HKIVE.

In view of the natural wastage of staff and operational needs, the GLD has offered appointment to 13 recommended candidates (including four candidates on the waiting list) thus far. Among them, one held a Higher Diploma in Transport and Logistics Studies from the HKIVE, three possessed equivalent qualifications from other institutes, and nine had qualifications from the HKIVE as well as higher qualifications from other institutes. In other words, only one of the appointees had a Higher Diploma in Transport and Logistics Studies from the HKIVE, while the other 12 possessed equivalent qualifications from other institutes, or had qualifications from the HKIVE as well as higher qualifications from other institutes.

Apart from the 13 candidates who have been offered appointment, the GLD expects that those on the waiting list may have a chance of being offered appointment while the list is still valid, contrary to Mr Wong's allegation that those on the waiting list stood no chance at all.

Mr Wong also alleged that some of his acquaintances who possessed one of the qualifications as specified in the recruitment advertisement or higher qualifications were not invited to attend an interview. In support of his allegation, he provided information on four applicants who were not invited to interview. According to the information provided, two of the four applicants held a Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport Management from the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPACE) of the University of Hong Kong, one possessed a Master of Science Degree in Industrial Logistics Systems from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and the other one had a Bachelor of Business Administration Degree from the Open University of Hong Kong.

Based on the information provided by Mr Wong, the GLD has checked the records and found that among those applicants with a Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport Management from the SPACE of the University of Hong Kong, two have surnames with the same English transliterations as the applicants mentioned by Mr Wong. One of them was invited to interview, while the other one was not because his application was received after the application deadline.

As regards the two other cases raised by Mr Wong, one of the applicants possessed a Master of Science Degree in Industrial Logistics Systems from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Upon careful comparison of the degree course with the course in Higher Diploma in Transport and Logistics Studies

offered by the HKIVE, the GLD concluded that the proportion of transport-related subjects in the former is not comparable with the latter, and therefore the former could not be regarded as equivalent to the latter. Hence the applicant did not meet entry requirement (1) as set out in paragraph 2 above. In addition, since he did not possess the relevant qualifications as specified in entry requirement (2), he therefore failed to meet the basic entry requirements of the post. The applicant in the other case did not possess a Higher Diploma in Transport and Logistics Studies from the HKIVE or equivalent. As such, he did not meet entry requirement (1). Besides, although he possessed a Bachelor of Business Administration Degree from the Open University of Hong Kong, he did not meet the working experience requirement for the job of Transport Services Officer II (i.e. 5 years' supervisory experience, 3 years of which should be in the supervision and control of transport services). He therefore also failed to meet entry requirement (2) of the post. In view of forgoing, the two applicants were not invited to attend interview.

Candidates interviewed in batches

Upon the close of the application period on 9 May 2008, the GLD had processed the applications as fast as possible. Nevertheless, owing to the large number of applicants and the need to further assess the academic qualifications and working experience of some of them to make sure they were qualified for the job, candidates were invited by the GLD to attend selection interviews in batches to speed up the recruitment process. Candidates invited to attend the first round of interviews were those who clearly met the basic entry requirements, and there were 76 of them. As for the remaining candidates, since their academic qualifications needed to be further assessed, with some qualifications being referred to outside bodies for professional assessment, and since some of them were required to produce supplementary information, the vetting process was more complicated and took a longer time. After assessment, 21 candidates who satisfied the academic requirements were finally invited to attend the second round of interviews. A total of 97 candidates who met the basic entry requirements were invited to attend the two rounds of interviews.

To ensure fairness and impartiality in selecting the most suitable candidates, the recruitment board of the GLD, upon the conclusion of all interviews, adopted the same standards and selection criteria in reviewing fairly, vigorously and comprehensively all candidates as to whether they were suitable for the post of Transport Services Officer II. Among the 28 recommended candidates, 21 (i.e. 28% of the candidates in this batch) are from the first round of interviews whereas 7 (i.e. 33% of candidates in this batch) are from the

second round. It is apparent that the interview sequence of the candidates has not affected their chances of appointment.

Whether there is discrimination against Non-Civil Service Contract (NCSC) Staff

The GLD indicated that before the selection interview, the recruitment board had carefully studied the candidates' qualification and background, including the information provided in the application forms and the proof of academic qualifications and working experience. In addition, if the candidate was a serving or a former NCSC staff, GLD had, in accordance with the established procedure, asked the departments concerned to provide documents such as the candidate's appraisal report for reference by the recruitment board. During the interview, the recruitment board asked candidates questions and fairly assessed their abilities and experience with the same criteria. Upon completion of the selection process, the recruitment board selected the most suitable candidates on the basis of their overall performance. Among the 13 candidates who were offered appointment, two were serving or former NCSC staff.

In summary, the recruitment board of the GLD did, in accordance with the civil service recruitment and interview guidelines, make assessment in a just and equitable way in selecting the most suitable and capable candidates for the post. Due regard was given to the NCSC staff.

Recruitment board

The recruitment board of the GLD comprised three members, i.e. a Chief Transport Services Officer, a Senior Transport Services Officer, and an acting Transport Services Officer I. The composition of the recruitment board complies with the Government's guidelines as set out in paragraph 8 of the Annex.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, members of the recruitment board assessed all candidates with different academic qualifications or background in a prudent and fair manner. In fact, appointed candidates are of various academic qualifications or background. No candidate was given preferential treatment due to the academic qualifications or background of individual board member.

We trust that this reply has responded to and addressed Mr Wong's concern.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Johann', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

(Johann Wong)
for Secretary for Civil Service

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service
Civil Service Recruitment Policy
Extract of LC Paper No. CB(1)964/07-08(3)

Recruitment Process

7. Recruitment exercises are conducted in an open and fair manner. For in-service recruitment, recruiting bureaux/departments/grades concerned may issue internal circulars to draw the attention of serving civil servants. All civil service vacancies for open recruitment are posted on the CSB website. In addition, recruiting bureaux/departments/grades may publicise their vacancies through their departmental websites and place recruitment advertisements in newspapers and/or journals. Where appropriate (usually for open recruitment to vacancies at directorate ranks), they may also engage the service of recruitment agencies to help identify qualified candidates and encourage these candidates to put their names forward for the vacancies concerned.

8. Recruitment boards are formed to assess candidates, to recommend suitable ones for appointment, and to prioritise their suitability. In general, the chair of a recruitment board (including that for a directorate rank vacancy) is a serving civil servant two ranks higher than the vacancy under recruitment and – if possible – belonging to the same grade as the vacancy under recruitment. Members of a recruitment board (including that for a directorate rank vacancy) consist of one or two civil servants who are at least one rank above the vacancy under recruitment.

9. Where a large number of candidates meet the specified entry requirements, the recruiting bureaux/departments/grades may devise shortlisting criteria to select the more qualified candidates for further processing. The shortlisting criteria have to be objective, specific and directly related to the effective and efficient performance of duties in the rank³. The recruiting bureaux/departments/grades may also make use of written examinations for shortlisting purpose or conduct trade tests (e.g. driving) for skills assessment. Selection interviews are in most cases the final stage of the selection process whereby a recruitment board will assess the suitability of candidates by examining whether they have the requisite abilities, skills, qualifications and experience; and ascertain whether the orientation and aptitude of the candidates meet the requirements of the vacancies concerned.

³ The shortlisting criteria do not apply to disabled candidates. It is the Government policy to place people with a disability in appropriate jobs wherever possible. Thus if a disabled candidate meets the entry requirements, he/she will be invited to attend the selection interview/ written examination without being subject to further shortlisting.