

**Motion on
“Formulating a comprehensive youth policy”
at the Legislative Council meeting commencing
on Wednesday, 3 February 2010**

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council meeting on 3 February 2010, the motion on “Formulating a comprehensive youth policy” moved by Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che, as amended by Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, Hon IP Wai-ming, Hon KAM Nai-wai and Hon CHAN Hak-kan was carried. The wording of the passed motion is at the Annex.

2. This paper briefs Members on the work progress of the above motion.

Youth Policy

3. The Administration attaches great importance to the development of youth and many of its policy areas are closely related to youth development. We believe that bureaux and departments can provide effective training and support services for the youth in need by working in collaboration and formulating different policies and initiatives with clear policy objectives.

4. The youth work of the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) focuses on youth development, including promoting positive values among young people, enhancing their understanding of Chinese culture and heritage, encouraging their participation in volunteer and community work, broadening their international perspective and strengthening leadership training for them. The Commission on Youth (COY) is the key partner of the HAB in promoting youth development. The representatives of the Education Bureau (EDB), Security Bureau (SB) and Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) are the official members of the COY. Bureaux may consult COY’s members on youth work within their policy areas.

5. In addition to the HAB, the Education Bureau (EDB) is responsible for formulating education policies and legislation to provide Hong Kong’s young people with quality education. The Social Welfare

Department (SWD) subvents non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide a wide range of preventive, developmental and remedial welfare services for young people to help them develop a positive outlook on life and nurture them as mature, responsible and contributing members of the community. The Police and the Narcotics Division have organised various programmes to combat youth crimes and drug abuse, and to strengthen understanding and communication between the Police and the young people to develop the latter's sense of responsibility towards the society and instil positive values in them.

6. The Bureaux and departments concerned will continue to maintain close communication in order to co-ordinate issues in respect of youth development and provide services for young people with different needs.

Collecting views on the internet

7. The Government attaches great importance to the communication with young people. In the process of policy formulation, the Government has always listened to and received views from people of all social strata through different channels, including popular social media websites, blogs and online discussion forums of young people. In view of the extensive use of internet by young people nowadays for communication and expressing views, we will make better use of these channels to communication with them so as to receive their views and understand their expectations of the society and the Government.

8. Currently, 6 political appointees have opened a Facebook account to continuously engage the public. The CE and 4 political appointees also have blogs. To enable the public to easily access these sites and to combat impersonation, the Government published in March 2010 a directory of official e-engagement sites on GovHK, listing the political appointees who have blogs or Facebook accounts for public engagement, with hyperlinks to the relevant sites. The directory will be constantly updated and expanded as necessary.

9. Different B/Ds, as well as individual government officials, have conducted a wide variety of e-engagement activities on different policy initiatives from time to time, e.g. online surveys, writing blogs, collecting feedback through Facebook, participating in live web chats, hosting dedicated websites and discussion forums to consult the public on

specific issues, exchanging emails with the public and webcasting. We are studying overseas practices on public engagement using social media tools, and we will draw reference from these practices as applicable.

10. Apart from receiving public opinion from the Internet more actively, we will continue to collect the views of young people through existing channels including discussion forums and seminars. For important issues like the policy address or the budget, we will make every endeavour to engage young people in consultations held to solicit views, such as arranging consultation sessions tailored made for them.

Provide a platform for the youth to participate in social affairs

11. The Government agrees to increase young people's opportunities to participate in social affairs so as to enable them to actively participate in social development. In collaboration with the COY, the Administration will continue to promote communication with young people on a regular basis by engaging them through channels such as the Youth Summit or the Youth Exchange programme, thus offering young people an opportunity to air their views on matters of their concern and providing a channel for direct dialogue with government officials.

12. One example is the "Youth Summit 2010" jointly held by the HAB and the COY in March this year. More than 600 young people attended the summit to discuss and express their views on matters of their concern. Representatives of the relevant bureaux also attended the summit to listen to views of young people and have exchanges with them. Members of the public could also watch the live broadcast of the summit on the internet and put questions to the guests present.

Appoint youth to advisory bodies

13. Each appointment to Advisory and Statutory Bodies (ASB) is made on the basis of the merit of the individual concerned, including a candidate's ability, expertise, experience, integrity and commitment to public service, with due regard to the functions and nature of the board or committee concerned as well as relevant statutory requirements of the statutory bodies concerned to ensure that the composition of ASBs should broadly reflect the interests and views of the community. In appointing

chairpersons to ASBs, the Administration will make suitable consideration under the principle of appointment by merit if young persons suitable for the chairmanship are identified as appropriate.

14. We are inviting more young people to provide their personal data for inclusion in a databank for reference of the Administration in appointing suitable candidates of advisory bodies.

Moral education and national education

Whole-person development

15. The Education Bureau (EDB) is committed to the whole-person development of students. In the Education Reform launched in 2000, nurturing students' all-round development according to their own attributes in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics is set as one of the aims of education for the 21st century. In the subsequent Curriculum Reform, it was also proposed that schools should develop students' positive values and attitudes through different learning experiences, such as those provided by the Key Learning Areas/subjects and life-wide learning activities.

16. The EDB provides primary and secondary schools with a comprehensive curriculum for the promotion of whole-person development for students. Subjects at primary and secondary levels are complementary with each other to provide a holistic curriculum which covers knowledge, skills and attitudes. The school curriculum not only enriches students' understanding of positive values under different life domains, such as personal, family, school, social and national domains; it also develops students' values judgment competencies in different life situations, progressively for building up of good psychological qualities and positive attitudes towards life. The holistic curriculum also ensures that comprehensive and authentic learning experiences are provided to nurture students' virtues and positive values in all learning stages.

17. The EDB also provides various support measures, such as education packages, resources websites, and professional development programmes, to enhance the knowledge and skills of primary and

secondary school teachers in promoting students' virtues and positive values through their life experiences.

18. The EDB also attaches great importance to the nurturing of students' leadership and cultural skills. In the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum, "Other Learning Experiences (OLE)" is one of the three components that complement the core and elective subjects (including Applied Learning courses) for the whole-person development of students. Building on the foundation of the five Essential Learning Experiences in the basic education (Primary 1- Secondary 3), schools will offer students a range of OLE opportunities encouraging them to participate in the five areas of OLE, namely Moral and Civic Education, Community Service, Career-related Experiences, Aesthetic Development and Physical Development, with a view to facilitating their balanced and all-round development.

19. According to local needs, schools will offer students a variety of Community Service choices and opportunities to help students nurturing respect for others, self-management and a caring mind. Students do not only serve the people in need throughout the process of serving, but also build up their self-confidence, empathy and leadership with these valuable experiences to pave the way for future leaders.

20. Aesthetic Development of OLE aims to provide all senior secondary students with rich and meaningful arts learning experiences. Students can learn the arts in a more relaxing way through appreciating, creating, performing and reflecting, so as to foster their life-long interest in the arts and cultivating positive values and attitudes. Diversified forms of arts-related learning activities, such as music, visual arts, drama, dance and media arts, would be arranged to foster students' fine taste and cultivate their temperament as well as build up students' respect for different values and culture.

21. In order to assist schools to harness community resources so as to implement OLE and Life-wide Learning more effectively, the EDB sets up the "Other Learning Experiences" (OLE) Activity Databank, providing updated information on learning opportunities and relevant links and websites for teachers' reference. In partnering with community organisations, schools arrange a variety of quality activities, e.g. Student

Environmental Protection Ambassador Scheme, a wide range of leadership training programmes, as well as art and cultural activities, with a view to enhancing students' leadership and cultural skills for the whole-person development.

22. In the promotion of national education, the EDB starts at the stage of basic education to foster students' national awareness and national identity in terms of three dimensions, namely cognitive, affective, and action/behavioural. National Education elements are included and strengthened in the school curriculum at different key stages so as to enable students to acquire the knowledge and understanding of the development of the country from past to present. Provision of Mainland exchange programmes further enables participating students to integrate authentic learning experiences with curriculum aims and contents. All these are helpful to the cultivation of passion to the country and a sense of national belonging in students and hence deepen national education. Besides, through participation in Mainland exchange programmes, such as visits to the World Expo at Shanghai or the Sichuan Earthquake areas, students' horizons can be broadened. In addition, the life stories of the Mainland students can help establish positive values and life attitude among local students to cope with adversity.

23. The HAB also collaborates with the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education to promote civic education to the general public including the youth through various channels, including promotion of civic awareness and civic responsibilities, enhancing the sense of belonging and promotion of the Basic Law in the local community. We will subsidy civic education activities organised by community organisations for promoting core civic values at the district level, launching territory-wide publicity projects and producing announcements in the public interest, organising competition and producing publications/education materials to promote civic and national education messages.

Student Financial Assistance

24. It is the Government's student financial assistance policy that no student is denied access to education due to lack of means. In respect of the post-secondary students, the Government operates means-tested

student finance schemes (i.e. the "Tertiary Student Finance Scheme - Publicly-funded Programmes" (TSFS) which is applicable to full-time students pursuing publicly-funded post-secondary programmes; and the "Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students" (FASP) which is applicable to students pursuing full-time locally-accredited self-financing post-secondary programmes) and the non-means-tested loan schemes, to provide grants and/or loans to assist eligible students to pursue their studies.

Interest Rate of Means-tested Loans

25. Means-tested loans for post-secondary students did not bear interest before 1987/88 academic year. However, pursuant to the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee in 1986 that means-tested loans for post-secondary students should be interest-bearing to ensure effective use of public money, the Government had studied the impacts on students under different interest rates and repayment periods. The interest rate of 2.5% was then adopted and implemented from the 1987/88 academic year onwards. In fact, means-tested loans do not bear interest during the study period. The effective interest rate depends on the length of study and the repayment period. Assuming a loan borrower pursues studies for three years and obtains the same amount of loan every year, the effective interest rate is only 1.4% if the amount is to be repaid in five years, which is at a reasonable level. In general, the first quarterly repayment is due for settlement 6 months after completion or cessation of studies. As interest rate is relatively low, the interest only accounts for a small portion of the quarterly instalment. Pursuant to the recommendation made in the Director of Audit's Report No. 53, we would collect information about the income of the loan borrowers concerned to evaluate their affordability to repay under the current interest rate.

Interest Rate of Non-means-tested Loans

26. The non-means-tested loan schemes provide an alternative source of finance to those students who do not wish to or fail to go through the means test of TSFS or FASP to assist them to pursue their studies. Since applicants for non-means-tested loans do not need to go through any means test and the loans are unsecured, to ensure proper use of public money, the schemes operate on a no-gain-no-loss and full cost recovery basis. The interest rate is set at the Government's no-gain-no-loss interest rate plus a 1.5% risk-adjusted factor (to cover the Government's risk in disbursing unsecured loans). Interest is accrued upon drawdown

of the loan.

27. Under the current mechanism, the Government will review the no-gain-no-loss interest rate at the end of each month according to changes in the average of the best lending rates of the note-issuing banks in the month, and will adjust the rate with effect from the first day of the following month. Since April 2006, the interest rate for the non-means-tested loans has been adjusted downwards 11 times. The current interest rate is 3.599%, which is far lower than that of unsecured loans in the market. Loan borrowers are required to repay their loans in 40 equal quarterly instalments within 10 years after graduation or cessation of their studies, or after six years from the first disbursement of the loan. Similarly, the first quarterly instalment will normally be due for settlement 6 months after completion or cessation of studies.

Deferment of Loan Repayment

28. The Government appreciates that individual loan borrowers may have difficulties repaying their loans. The Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) has an effective mechanism in place to assist them. If a loan borrower is unable to repay his/her loan owing to financial hardship, pursuit of further studies or serious illness, he/she may apply to SFAA for assistance. SFAA will consider applications case by case, and defer loan repayment, temporarily reduce the quarterly repayment amount, or extend the repayment period where appropriate. In the 2008/09 academic year, SFAA approved around 6 000 applications for deferment of loan repayment under the various loan schemes. The approval rate was about 80%. We encourage loan borrowers with difficulties in repayment to approach SFAA for assistance. To alleviate the financial burden of graduates (including post-secondary students and persons pursuing continued education) in repaying their loans, the Financial Secretary announced in May 2009 the implementation of a one-off relief measure on deferment of loan repayment for two years. Loan borrowers who apply for deferment of loan repayment from 1 August 2009 to 31 July 2011 and whose requests are subsequently approved by SFAA will be eligible for deferment of loan repayment from the quarterly instalment following the date of application, without being charged any interest during the approved deferment period, and for extension of the repayment period, both for a maximum of two years.

Review of Non-means-tested Loan Schemes

29. The Chief Executive announced in the 2009-10 Policy Agenda on

14 October 2009 that the Government would conduct a review on the operation of the non-means-tested loan schemes, with a view to ensuring that while these schemes would continue to provide adequate financial support to the students concerned, effective measures are in place to reduce the loan default rate so as to ensure proper use of public resources. The first phase of the review has just started on 15 March 2010 to collect public views. The review will cover the scope, eligibility criteria, application procedures, interest rate, repayment arrangements, as well as measures to address the default situation. We welcome views and comments from the public and stakeholders, and will carefully consider the views received in drawing up recommendations for improving the operation of the schemes for further consultation with the public under the second phase.

Youth vocational training and youth employment

Youth vocational training

30. The Vocational Training Council (VTC) administers the “Apprenticeship Scheme” in accordance with the Apprenticeship Ordinance, which enables apprentices to receive systematic on-the-job training in various industries. The training includes day-to-day practical work and relevant education courses. Currently, the “Apprenticeship Scheme” covers around 120 trades in a range of sectors including automobile, electrical machinery, construction and jewellery for apprentices to choose from. In addition, the “Modern Apprenticeship” provided by VTC offers apprentices another training pathway for the service industries. Industries covered by the programme include beauty care, hairdressing, tourism, retail and customer service, etc.

31. The Administration will continue to implement the “Apprenticeship Scheme”, “Modern Apprenticeship” and other programmes that meet the needs of employers and apprentices so as to offer youths with different paths of on-the-job training, and enhance various apprenticeship programmes according to the situation. In 2010-11, VTC will continue to provide about 3 300 training places under its apprenticeship programmes.

32. In addition, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) provides service to all local people aged 15 or above with education attainment at sub-degree or below, the wide target clientele covers the young people. ERB provides a wide array of full-time placement-tied courses as well as part-time courses that cater for the needs of different target groups. It

will also continue to organise dedicated courses for specific target groups, such as the “Youth Training Programme” (YTP) which aims at non-engaged youths aged between 15 and 20. YTP seeks to provide trainees with training on vocational and foundation skills, and help them develop a positive attitude of life and build up their confidence. Trainees who have completed the course are provided with follow-up placement service for six to nine months. ERB will continue to closely monitor changes in the market and adjust the allocation of training places flexibly to address training needs.

Youth Pre-employment Training Programme (YPTP) and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YWETS)

33. The Labour Department (LD) administers the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme (YPTP) and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme (YWETS) to provide comprehensive pre-employment and on-the-job training to young people aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree level or below to increase their employability and help them enter into the labour market for sustainable employment opportunities.

34. YPTP has trained over 90 000 young people. Apart from those pursuing further studies on completion of the programme, around 70 per cent of the trainees have secured employment. YWETS assisted 62 200 young people to secure employment. Among them, over 40 000 were placed as trainees in various industries.

35. In September 2009, YPTP and YWETS were enhanced and integrated into a “through-train” programme – YPTP • YWETS – to provide seamless and comprehensive youth training and employment support. It has no ceiling on enrolment and will flexibly admit all eligible young people. For the Programme Year of 2009/10, which commenced on 14 August 2009, over 11 800 applications were received up to end February 2010.

36. Through cross-sectoral collaboration, YPTP and YWETS actively organise special training-cum-employment projects to meet the employment needs of young people. Projects include the “VTC Graduate Trainee Scheme” in collaboration with the Vocational Training Council and the collaborative projects with the Community Inclusion and Investment Fund for enhancing the employability of youth through making use of social capital.

37. To step up our efforts to help young people with special employment difficulties, the Financial Secretary announced in the 2010-11 Budget Speech that LD will launch a targeted employment programme under which non-government organisations will provide training and internship for 12 months to young people, aged between 15 and 24 with low educational qualifications, who need special assistance because of emotional and behavioural problems or learning difficulties. The programme will provide 500 places.

Youth Employment Start

38. On the other hand, LD has set up two Youth Employment Start (Y.E.S.) in December 2007 and March 2008 respectively to provide one-stop advisory and support services on employment and self-employment to youths aged 15 to 29. The objective of Y.E.S. is to offer personalised services and full support, including employment support and career development, to young people of different background and development needs.

39. The target users of Y.E.S. include graduates of the YPTP and YWETS, school leavers, young job-seekers, young people seeking alternative employment, self-employed youths and youths contemplating to start their own business. In year 2009, the two centres have provided services to 71 680 young people.

40. Y.E.S. has put in place a wide range of services, such as career assessment and guidance, professional counseling, training and development programmes and self-employment support, etc., to enhance the employability of young people, facilitate their job search or pursuance of self-employment, and help them secure a firm footing for sustainable development in the labour market.

41. Young persons aged between 18 and 29 who run their own businesses and have applied for the business registration in a personal capacity can apply to Y.E.S. as business members. Apart from attending experience sharing sessions and making use of the professional consultation services rendered by Y.E.S., they could also use the office facilities free of charge. They include well-equipped business workstations, meeting room and design corner with professional design software/ hardware.

42. In 2010, Y.E.S. has introduced a package of new career initiatives for secondary school students who are preparing for entry into the world

of work. These initiatives include, among others, career talks and industry visits in relation to “Six Economic Areas”, work preparatory seminars on career interests and interviewing techniques, as well as an experiential training programme designed by Y.E.S. with a view to helping young people understand work and cultivate among themselves positive work ethics and attitudes.

Assist young people who intend to work on the Mainland

43. The Mainland Offices of the HKSAR Government will complement the policy of the relevant HKSAR Government bureaux and departments in rendering practical assistance to Hong Kong residents (including youths) who wish to carry on business or take up employment in the Mainland. The assistance to be provided varies according to the actual circumstances of the cases concerned, and may include assistance in liaising with relevant Mainland authorities, answering queries and providing information on the applicable Mainland laws, regulations and policies.

Subsidise youth home ownership

44. It was a significant decision of the Administration to cease the production of the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS), and as such the HOS would not be hastily relaunched. At present, there are more than 300,000 HOS flats. Over 60,000 flats are tradable in the open market, and over 250,000 are flats with premium not yet paid and tradable in the HOS Secondary Market. These HOS flats may appeal to the public as 70% of them are located in the urban and extended urban areas, and are priced around \$2 million. Facilitating the turnover of these flats will increase the supply of small and medium sized flats. The Housing Department is actively exploring possible means to revitalise the HOS Secondary Market. Proposals will be submitted to the Hong Kong Housing Authority for discussion in mid-May.

45. As regards the suggestion to relaunch the Home Starter Loan Scheme, we consider that a decision on purchasing a property should be a matter of personal choice and affordability. There are various types of mortgage plan in the market to meet the needs of different purchasers.

Home Affairs Bureau
Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Education Bureau
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Security Bureau
Transport and Housing Bureau
May 2010

**Motion on
“Formulating a comprehensive youth policy”
moved by Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
at the Legislative Council meeting commencing
on Wednesday, 3 February 2010**

Motion as amended by Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, Hon IP Wai-ming, Hon KAM Nai-wai and Hon CHAN Hak-kan

That, as the recent spate of social incidents have aroused public concern about the ‘post-eighties’ generation, and in the face of persistently high unemployment rate among the youth, shrinking opportunities for social mobility and the increasingly serious inter-generational poverty problem, coupled with the unclear objectives of the youth services provided by various government bureaux, in particular the lack of opportunity for the youth to participate in social development, this Council urges the Government to immediately consult the youth through various channels to formulate a comprehensive and forward-looking youth policy, and coordinate the work of the relevant bureaux and executive departments, so as to consolidate the existing youth services to meet their needs; in addition, the Government should provide a platform for the youth to participate in social affairs, respect and listen to the views and needs of the youth, so as to enable them to actively participate in social development and establish their goals in life, and promote youth empowerment so that their aspirations and dynamics can be transformed positively and properly into a driving force for social development, and formulate integrated policies on vocational training and employment, so as to consolidate various existing measures which assist the youth in seeking jobs, and update the apprenticeship system to tie in with the transformation of economic structure, so as to provide the youth with another avenue to vocational training apart from mainstream education, and provide for a self-nominating process to enable youth representatives to recommend themselves for joining advisory committees and statutory bodies, and in formulating youth policy, it must encompass different areas such as subsidizing university education, and enhancing social services and leisure and cultural measures, so as to enable the youth to utilize their creativity and vitality, develop an international outlook,

establish proper values, strive for social justice and equality, and stay away from gambling, drugs and compensated dating, etc.; and in response to the above aspirations, this Council urges the Government to consider implementing concrete measures, including:

- (a) various principal government officials and bureaux to take the initiative to collect views on the Internet and maintain regular exchanges with the youth on the Internet, so as to understand their views on the Government's administration;
- (b) to designate a Youth Participation Week each year to organize youth activities or forums etc., so as to increase their opportunities to participate in social affairs;
- (c) government advisory bodies should include more youth representatives;
- (d) to strengthen moral education and education on national identity, and assist the youth in achieving comprehensive development in various aspects such as values, attitudes towards life, psychological qualities, leadership and cultural skills, etc.;
- (e) to alleviate post-secondary students' loan repayment burden by lowering the annual interest rate for student loans, and to make changes to the effect that the interest under the loan schemes will be calculated after a student has secured employment;
- (f) to make good use of the Hong Kong offices on the Mainland to actively collect information of the Mainland on employment situation and legislation and regulations, etc., and to launch a Mainland internship programme for the youth, so as to assist young people who intend to work on the Mainland in seeking jobs or setting up businesses there; and
- (g) to alleviate the difficulties encountered by the youth in buying their own homes through re-launching the Home Starter Loan Scheme and resuming the provision of a suitable quantity of Home Ownership Scheme flats.