

Motion Debate on
“Urging the Government to promote
a new occupational culture campaign for work-life balance”
at Legislative Council Meeting
on 16 December 2009

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting of 16 December 2009, the motion moved by the Hon Chan Kin-por on “Urging the Government to promote a new occupational culture campaign for work-life balance” was carried. The wording of the passed motion is at the Annex. As requested by the LegCo Secretariat, this report briefs Members on the progress of the Administration’s work in the relevant areas.

Balanced and healthy life

2. We share the Hon Chan Kin-por’s view that a balanced and healthy life is vitally important both to our citizens and to social development in general. This concerns not only striking a balance between the time one spends at work and in other aspects of life, but also the promotion of values and practices supportive of whole-person health. Relevant Government bureaux/departments have been formulating and implementing relevant policies and measures which are geared towards such

direction.

Family-friendly employment practices

3. Encouraging employers to adopt family-friendly employment practices (FFEP) has been one of the Government's major promotional items. Key publicity and promotional activities include –

- (a) promoting FFEP through the network of 18 Human Resources Managers Clubs of different trades and industries and the nine industry-based Tripartite Committees. Regular meetings are also conducted to discuss the implementation of FFEP and relevant good people management practices;
- (b) organising roving exhibitions in different locations to promote public understanding of FFEP, with one exhibition conducted in Tuen Mun Town Plaza in January 2010; and
- (c) promoting FFEP via video and one was produced in January 2010. This video introduces different types and forms of FFEP, as well as the benefits to employers and employees for implementing such practices. It also serves to dispel the common misconceptions about FFEP that are held by the general public. A total of 2 500 sets of video have been produced and will be widely distributed to various organisations, including employer associations and trade unions. In addition, we will arrange video screening in

suitable promotional activities on good people management.

4. Being the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government also actively implements measures to promote the occupational culture of a balanced life between work and family, as well as family-friendly employment practices.

5. Since July 2006, the Government has implemented the Five-day Week initiative to enable employees to have more time for being with their family members, studying and participating in arts, cultural, recreational, sports and other activities. This initiative has been very well received. At present, the number of civil servants working five days a week exceeds 100,000. The Government will continue to encourage bureaux/departments to explore, in consultation with staff, the feasibility of replacing or modifying existing roster arrangements to enable more staff to work according to a “5-day-on, 2-day-off” duty pattern, subject to the same basic principles governing the five-day-week initiative and with the proviso of not affecting public service interface. The bureaux/departments concerned will also monitor the situation and allow staff who are still working more than five days a week to rotate to five-day week posts within the same department where operational circumstances permit. This apart, the Government also provides various leave benefits to civil servants (such as annual leave and study leave), which enable civil servants to cope with their personal matters and family needs in a reasonably flexible manner.

6. Through the “Work · Life · Balance” electronic platform in the e-learning portal “CLC Plus” and through periodic seminars, the Civil

Service Training and Development Institute continues to provide civil servants with relevant information to help them maintain healthy and happy minds, as well as work satisfaction and efficiency.

Promotion of family core values

7. Family is the cornerstone for social harmony. The Government has been actively fostering the culture of cherishing the family, including the family core values of “Love and Care”, “Respect and Responsibility” and “Communication and Harmony”.

8. The Family Council, Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education and other relevant organisations, will continue to make use of various channels and formats to help citizens reflect on the importance of families and remind them to strike a balance between work and family life. For example, the Family Council will launch a territory-wide “Happy Family Campaign” in the coming year to appeal to the public to build families that Hong Kong people treasure. The Family Council will also set up a “Happy Family Info Hub”, providing information such as family support services, family education, family-friendly employment practices and family related activities, with a view to encouraging the public to spend time with their family members in order to build “loving families”. Separately, in 2010-11, the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education will provide sponsorship to community organisations to organise district-based civic education activities on the theme of “Develop a Positive Attitude towards Life, Build Happy Families” under the Community Participation Scheme.

Healthy living

9. Various Government departments have actively joined hands with the 18 District Councils, non-government organisations and professional bodies to promote healthy lifestyle in different aspects in life, and to drive home the messages on mental health. The Government is also consolidating its work in promoting healthy living and facilitating its implementation. Using a context-specific approach to promote health, the Government looks forward to fostering partnerships with employers to create workplaces supportive of healthy lifestyle choices and practices.

10. In parallel, the Government enhances the knowledge of employers and employees on occupational health through a wide range of publicity and promotional activities, covering topics like the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders, proper management of work stress and workplace stretching exercises. The Government also encourages employers and employees to join hands in establishing a healthy work environment, improving work quality and nurturing a harmonious work atmosphere.

Culture, sport and recreation

11. The Government is also committed to promoting the development of arts and culture, sports and recreation, etc. We provide citizens with a variety of arts and culture, sport and recreation programmes and facilities, and encourage all people, old and young alike, to actively participate in these activities for healthier and enriched lives.

Nurturing the youth

12. Regarding education for our younger generation, the Government has always been promoting the target of “life-long learning and whole-person development”. On the one hand, we will continue to strengthen the curriculum reform in Basic Education (Primary 1 to Secondary 3) so that students can achieve the aforesaid targets through diversified learning experiences. On the other hand, the New Senior Secondary curriculum implemented in September 2009 is our attempt to further affirm the importance of whole-person development. Through a broad, balanced and diversified curriculum, students are expected to acquire a broad knowledge base; to be biliterate and trilingual with adequate proficiency; to learn how to learn; and to develop positive values and attitudes as well as generic skills such as communication skills, creativity and critical thinking skills. Students can also cultivate their interests and achieve a balanced development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physical fitness, social skills and aesthetics through their participation in Other Learning Experiences which suit their own aptitudes. These meaningful learning experiences can help to broaden students’ horizons, and enable them to become active, informed and responsible citizens and to lead to healthy lifestyles for whole-person development.

13. One of the objectives of the Commission on Youth (COY) is to promote positive values among young people. In collaboration with the Agency for Volunteer Service and other youth uniformed groups, COY has previously rolled out the “Youth Development through Volunteer Service”

programme with the theme of moral development. Through encouraging young people's participation in volunteer service, the programme aims at helping young people to develop self-discipline, positive life attitudes and stronger will power.

14. To encourage life-long learning of Hong Kong citizens, the Government established the Qualifications Framework and launched the Qualifications Register in 2008. Separately, the Government set up a Continuous Education Fund with the total amount of \$5 billion in 2002, and further injected \$1.2 billion into the Fund in 2009, to provide direct subsidy to people interested in pursuing continuous education.

15. All relevant Government bureaux/departments will continue to publicise healthy living and positive core values of family and other important social dimensions, and to promote a healthy and balanced life for all.

Civil Service Bureau

Education Bureau

Home Affairs Bureau

Labour and Welfare Bureau

Department of Health

Labour Department

February 2010

(Translation)

**Motion on
“Urging the Government to promote
a new occupational culture campaign for work-life balance”
to be moved by Hon CHAN Kin-por
at the Legislative Council meeting
of Wednesday, 16 December 2009**

Wording of the Motion

That, as Hong Kong has developed into a society with a mature economy where the opportunities for upward social mobility continue to reduce, the promotion opportunities for many employees, especially the younger generation, are drastically reduced, coupled with heavy work pressure, they easily develop a sense of failure in work and life, which has a negative impact on the long-term development of the Hong Kong society; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to promote a new occupational culture campaign for work-life balance to alleviate pressure in life brought by various problems at work, educate the public to establish proper values towards life that, in addition to work, there are still many things worth pursuing in a healthy life, and encourage the public to develop a diversified life, including building harmonious families and a public-spirited society, as well as pursuing knowledge, etc; the Government should at the same time make employers understand that the mode of work-life balance may mitigate work pressure on employees and increase their passion for work, thereby achieving the goals of enhancing productivity and work quality, as well as reduce labour disputes, ultimately enabling both the employees and employers to benefit at the same time; the relevant government measures should include:

- (a) to set up a special task force, and adopt new thinking to tailor-make a new occupational culture policy on work-life balance for Hong Kong, and disseminate the message of a diversified and healthy life to various social strata so as to enable the public to understand that achievements in life do not come solely from work, and that building harmonious families and a public-spirited society, etc are also important achievements in life;
- (b) the Government to take the lead in promoting a new occupational culture of work-life balance and set up a special fund to subsidize

companies in various industries and trades according to their needs to actively promote a more flexible work culture and other measures for work-life balance, thereby enabling Hong Kong to become a more vibrant and competitive city;

- (c) to encourage enterprises to implement policies to meet the needs of employees regarding work-life balance, including providing support for the employees and their families, assisting in solving their emotional problems such as those stemming from work pressure and encouraging enterprises to organize public-spirited and spare-time recreational activities for the employees, so as to enable the employees to enjoy a fruitful life, consolidate their morale and increase their passion for work; and
- (d) to encourage enterprises to implement a flexible leave policy, and give them special holidays such as paternity leave, study leave, compassionate leave, etc, when employees encounter major events in life.