

5 February 2010

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
Government Policy on Youth Development**

Background

This paper provides information in response to the Panel's request at an earlier meeting for the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) to submit a paper explaining the Government's policy on youth development.

Policy on Youth Development

2. Youth is an important stage in life for learning and development. Young people are our valuable assets. However, during their growth, young people from different backgrounds are faced with all kinds of problems. They need our care, respect and encouragement to enable them to develop into responsible citizens. Youth development is a major policy responsibility of HAB. Our objectives are to promote positive values among young people, enhance their understanding of Chinese culture and heritage, strengthen their sense of belonging to the country and Hong Kong, encourage their participation in the community, broaden their international perspective and promote leadership training among them.

3. In his 2009-2010 Policy Address, the Chief Executive stated that family played a pivotal role in the healthy development of young people, and the Government would help our young people cultivate a positive approach to life and strengthen their body and mind to prepare for the challenges ahead, through collaboration with various partners.

4. Besides HAB, a number of policy bureaux and departments also undertake youth nurturing and support services. The Education Bureau (EDB) is responsible for the formulation and implementation of education policies and legislation in order to provide young people with quality school education so that they will receive good education and develop their potential to prepare them for the challenges in life.

5. The Social Welfare Department operates integrated children and youth services centres, school social work services and outreaching social work services through subvented non-governmental organisations with a view to providing young people with a variety of preventive, developmental and supportive welfare services to help them to become a responsible person.

6. The Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) has in place various programmes to prevent young people from falling prey to the undesirable elements of society. For example, the Junior Police Call which seeks to enhance communication between the Police and young people, foster Police-youth partnership in the fight against crime, develop young people's sense of responsibilities towards the society and instil positive values in them. HKPF also implements the Police School Liaison Programme which provides a platform for liaison between the Police, teachers, school social workers, school management and the community for more effective prevention of youth crime. Police School Liaison Officers will conduct group or individual interviews with problem students identified by schools for early intervention to help them understand the importance of respect for law and order and to make them aware of the possible consequences of committing crime. Furthermore, the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau (SB), in collaboration with relevant government departments such as EDB and HKPF, has been putting in great efforts to enhance anti-drug education and publicity to appeal to young people to stay away from drugs.

Commission on Youth

7. The Commission on Youth (COY) is tasked to advise the Government on matters pertaining to youth development. Its members are drawn from diverse sectors, comprising young people, academics, people engaged in youth work and people from youth organisations. It consolidates community efforts to assist in formulating and implementing youth development programmes and activities to nurture young people as future leaders with vision, creativity, leadership and commitment.

8. COY understands that it is of paramount importance for young people to develop positive values. It has been organising various activities to encourage young people to reflect on and develop positive values and attitude towards life. For example, in collaboration with the Agency for Volunteer

Service and other youth uniformed groups, COY has rolled out youth volunteer programmes with the theme of “moral development”. Through encouraging young people’s participation in volunteer service, the programmes aim at helping young people develop positive values towards life and self-discipline and strengthen their will power and ability to distinguish right from wrong. In January 2010, COY also organised the “2009 East Asian Games – Hong Kong Athletes Sharing with Youths” session, inviting winning Hong Kong athletes in the East Asian Games to share the stories of hard work and sweat behind their medals, so that young people may learn from the athletes their perseverance and unyielding spirit, then set their own goals and equip themselves for future challenges.

9. COY attaches great importance to communication with young people and research on youth development. On 6 March 2010, it will hold the Youth Summit 2010 with the theme of “Building the Future—Challenges and Opportunities for the Youth”. Topics of discussion will include “Challenges Arising from Demographic Changes”, “Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development”, “Healthy Life, Healthy Mind” and “Versatility and Collaboration in Culture and Technology”. The Summit provides a forum for young people to express their views as well as to identify ways to equip themselves and to develop positive values and attitude towards life in order to rise to challenges and harness opportunities in a rapidly changing society. COY has invited young people from the Mainland and Macau to join the Youth Summit for exchanges with local young people. Representatives from relevant policy bureaux and government departments will also be invited to attend the Youth Summit to listen to the voices of the youth directly. In addition to the Summit, COY has been conducting surveys and studies on various youth topics, such as Benchmark Study on Civic Engagement and Social Networks of Youth in Hong Kong. COY has set up the Working Group on Youth Studies and Development Policy to further deliberate on the conduct of surveys and studies on youth issues as appropriate.

10. To broaden the international outlook of young people, COY organises the International Youth Exchange Programme every year. Under the Programme, young people will go overseas, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Japan and Singapore, to gain wider international exposure and exchange ideas with their counterparts in these countries, which will foster independent thinking and bring valuable life experiences. To promote young

people's understanding of Chinese culture and tradition and to enhance their knowledge about the motherland, COY provides annual sponsorship to youth organisations for young people in Hong Kong to visit the Mainland to learn for themselves the development of the Mainland and to interact with the people there.

11. Apart from the activities organised by COY, HAB also promotes youth development in collaboration with youth uniformed groups¹. These uniformed groups are engaged in youth development work for years, with contributions widely recognised by the community. HAB provides annual subvention for them to provide non-formal education services to support youth development. Youth uniformed groups provide young people with diversified, progressive and systematic training and development schemes mainly in the areas of technical skills, life skills, physical strengths, leadership and team-building, civic awareness and community services, etc. Their mentorship structure also helps provide young people with the necessary networking and support to face the challenges during their growth.

12. Furthermore, summer youth programmes will be organized in the 18 districts each year. Through engaging young people in meaningful activities during the summer, these programmes aim to provide them opportunities to cultivate personal growth, develop potential and healthy interests, learn social skills and enhance their understanding of and care for the community.

Youth Square

13. The Youth Square (Y²), formerly known as the Centre for Youth Development, is constructed with funding approved by the Legislative Council. The Y² is a key investment of the Government to promote youth development and will provide venues to serve as a focal point for territory-wide youth development activities. It provides facilities and venues for youth development and training activities for the enhancement of young people. It also provides offices and multi-purpose facilities for youth organisations committed to youth development. The Y² comprises a main block and a hostel block, and its major facilities include an auditorium, an exhibition

¹ They comprise the Scout Association of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Girl Guides Association, Hong Kong Red Cross, Hong Kong St. John Ambulance, Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps, Hong Kong Sea Cadet Corps, Hong Kong Adventure Corps, Boys' Brigade Hong Kong, Girls' Brigade Hong Kong, Hong Kong Road Safety Association and Civil Aid Service Cadet Corps.

platform, a multi-purpose hall, offices/multi-purpose function rooms, a youth hostel, catering and retail outlets, etc.

14. Following the completion of the trial operation of the various venues in the Y² last year, short lease venues, including Y-Theatre, Y-Platform, Y-Studio and multi-purpose rooms, have been available for lease since last August. Leasing arrangements for long lease venues such as multi-function areas/offices and retail outlets have also begun. Tenants are gradually moving in after fitting-out works. Y-Loft, the youth hostel in the Y², started operation in December 2009.

15. HAB has been promoting the Y² to young people and youth organisations through various activities, such as open day, youth concert, job fair, design competition, etc. A variety of youth activities have already been held at the Y² by organisations such as COY, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Council for Sustainable Development, Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong Arts Festival Society and Hong Kong Dance Federation. These activities include public performance of interactive drama, History of Hong Kong Comic Exhibition and Animation Screening, “Creative October” a cappella Fantasia, exhibition on uniformed groups, wall painting design competition, film shows and exhibitions, etc. As at the end of last year, a total of 55 000 people visited the Y². To further enliven the Y² with youthful dynamism, we are also locating available suitable areas at the Y² for the display of works of local young artists and students.

16. We will seek to further enhance the operation of the Y² and to strengthen our liaison with various youth groups and organisations so that the Y² will achieve its objective as a focal point for youth activities. In this connection, we will conduct questionnaire surveys to gauge the views of young people and youth organisations on the Y², such as its venues and ancillary facilities, standard of service and arrangements of activities.

Way Forward

17. The healthy and balanced development of young people hinges on the active involvement of the Government, non-governmental organisations, families, schools, voluntary agencies, youth organisations, the community and young people themselves in the work of youth development. With the rapid

advance of information technology, means of communication and expression of opinions among the young people are becoming diversified, with more and more web platforms, such as social websites, are used for voicing their views. HAB will continue to take an active interest in youth affairs and better promote youth development by listening to the views of young people through different channels and in collaborating with various stakeholders.

Home Affairs Bureau
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