

**Speaking Note for the Secretary for Food and Health  
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee  
on 12 April 2013**

<b>Health</b>
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Chairman and Honourable Members,

In 2013-14, the estimated recurrent government expenditure on health is \$48.8 billion, which amounts to 16.7% of the Government's total recurrent expenditure and represents an increase of \$2.64 billion or 5.7% over the revised estimate of 2012-13.

2. New resources available in the next financial year are mainly used to provide:
  - (1) an additional recurrent funding of \$2.47 billion to the Hospital Authority (HA) to meet new and increasing demands and further improve healthcare services, including:
    - attraction and retention of manpower, including recruitment of an additional 200 registered nurses;
    - provision of support to the North Lantau Hospital (NLH) Project Phase 1, the Redevelopment of Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) Phase 2, as well as the construction and opening of a new Pharmacy in the new Ambulatory Block of Tseung Kwan O Hospital (TKOH) and Kwun Tong Jockey Club Health Centre General Out-patient Clinic;
    - provision of around 290 additional general (acute and convalescent) hospital beds;
    - increase in the quota at general out-patient clinics for patients with episodic diseases;

- inclusion of two chemotherapeutic drugs for cancer treatment in the HA Drug Formulary and expansion of the application of two special drugs for patients with Parkinson's disease and cancer;
  - refining waiting list management of specialist out-patient clinics to shorten the waiting time for specialist outpatient dispensing service, diagnostic radiological service and magnetic resonance imaging service, benefitting around 15 000 patients;
  - enhancement of mental health service, including the extension of the Case Management Programme to serve an additional 2 800 patients with severe mental illness and improvement of psychiatric-inpatient services; and
  - enhancement of psychiatric consultant liaison service for early identification and treatment of patients with psychiatric symptoms.
- (2) an additional funding of about \$220 million to the Department of Health (DH) for the following initiatives:

- enhancement of the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme. Starting from 1 January 2013, the annual voucher amount for each eligible elder has been doubled from \$500 to \$1,000;
- provision of essential port health services in association with the establishment of Kai Tak Cruise Terminal as a new boundary control point;
- introduction of new infection control and laboratory diagnostic programmes to fight against rapidly emerged “superbugs”; and
- strengthening the regulation of private healthcare facilities and supporting the development of private hospitals;

3. Here below I would like to highlight four specific topics, namely planning of public and private hospitals, mental health, healthcare reform and Chinese medicine development.

## **Public Hospital Development**

4. We have made continuous efforts to deploy resources for expanding our public healthcare infrastructure, building new hospitals and improving existing hospital facilities. The construction work of the NLH was completed at the end of 2012 and it will come into operation in phases this year. The expansion of TKOH and the redevelopment of CMC Phase 2 will be completed in 2013 and 2014 respectively. We are currently preparing for the redevelopment of Queen Mary Hospital, Kwong Wah Hospital, the United Christian Hospital and Kwai Chung Hospital. The total estimated cost for these projects will amount to \$33 billion. We have also reserved funding for construction and renovation of facilities in a number of public hospitals and clinics, including the construction of Tin Shui Wai Hospital and Centre of Excellence in Paediatrics, as well as the renovation of Kwai Chung Hospital and the reprovisioning of Yaumatei Specialist Clinic.

5. On information technology facilities for healthcare, we will continue to develop the territory-wide Electronic Health Record (eHR) Sharing System as planned. We are about to draft the legislation on the eHR Sharing System with a view to introducing the Bill to the Legislative Council in 2013-14 and launching the eHR Sharing System by the end of 2014. This will enable sharing of patients' records among healthcare service providers in both public and private sectors with the patients' consent.

## **Private Hospital Development**

6. To maintain a dual-track healthcare system which encompasses both public and private elements and has served us well, and ensure that it can develop in a balanced and sustainable manner, apart from investment in public healthcare infrastructure, we will also continue to support private healthcare development. In March, we have successfully granted a site at Wong Chuk Hang through an open tender for the development of a private hospital with 500 beds. The new hospital will not only increase the overall capacity of the healthcare system in Hong Kong, but also provide a new charging and service delivery mode for the public to choose. We will examine the experience gained from this exercise, review the market response and assess the needs of the community in formulating the way forward for the future development of private hospitals.

## **Mental Health**

7. The Government is committed to promoting mental health of the public. Comprehensive mental health services covering prevention, early identification, timely intervention and treatment are provided for persons in need, so as to facilitate their rehabilitation and re-integration into society. We will from time to time review the existing services, and where necessary, render targeted support to persons with mental health problems. The Case Management Programme and redevelopment of Kwai Chung Hospital just mentioned are a few examples. To further strengthen efforts on this front, a Review Committee on Mental Health, which I will chair personally, has been set up. The Committee will look into the existing policy on mental health as well as review the current service provision, with a view to mapping out the future direction for development of mental health services in Hong Kong. Its first meeting will be held next month.

## **Healthcare Reform**

8. Having regard to the outcome of the Public Consultation on Healthcare Reform, we are taking forward a number of reform initiatives. These include reviewing the healthcare manpower strategy, developing detailed proposals for the Health Protection Scheme (HPS) and facilitating the development of healthcare services.

9. As regards the review on healthcare manpower planning, the Steering Committee on Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development will complete its review in the year and make recommendations on how to cope with anticipated demand for healthcare manpower, strengthen professional training and facilitate professional development, with a view to ensuring the healthy and sustainable development of Hong Kong's healthcare system. As for HPS, we are considering the details of the scheme and will put up concrete recommendations in the year. To further enhance the quality and transparency of private hospital services as well as better protect consumer rights, we are conducting a review on the Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Maternity Homes Registration Ordinance so as to provide high quality healthcare services and better protection for the public by strengthening the regulatory control over private hospitals.

## **Chinese Medicine Development**

10. The Government has been adopting an approach based on the concept of “evidence-based medicine” to facilitate the development of the Chinese medicine industry in Hong Kong. Since the enactment of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance in 1999, we have strived to establish and improve the regulatory regime for Chinese medicine to accord a professional status for Chinese Medicine Practitioners and ensure the safety, quality and efficacy of Chinese medicines. With a well-established regulatory regime for Chinese medicine, the Chief Executive has proposed to set up a Chinese Medicine Development Committee to proactively examine the future development needs of the Chinese medicine sector, so that traditional Chinese medicine, which has been widely recognised by the public, can play a more active role in promoting the health of the general public. The Committee was set up in January 2013 and held its first meeting in March 2013. At the meeting, the directions and objectives for the development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong were discussed and it was agreed that further deliberation and study should be focused on four key areas, namely personnel training and professional development, Chinese medicine service, research and development as well as development of Chinese medicine industry. The Chinese Medicine Practice Sub-committee and the Chinese Medicines Industry Sub-committee will also be formulated in due course to focus on the study of the above specific areas of concern.

11. Chairman, my colleagues and I are now happy to answer questions from Members.