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By Mail and By Email
(3 pages in total)

Clerk to Panel on Economic Development
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Mr. Daniel SIN)

14 January 2014

Dear Mr. SIN,

Panel on Economic Development
Follow-up Item of Special Meeting on 16 December 2013

Proposed Establishment of Maritime and Aviation Training Fund
(Agenda Item I)

The Administration was requested at the captioned meeting to provide a written response on how the manpower demand and supply issue in different sectors will be dealt with from the economic and population policies perspectives, and on whether Hong Kong ship owners/operators will be required or encouraged to give priority in employing local seafarers on board. Our reply is set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

The Chief Executive (CE) set up the Economic Development Commission (EDC) early last year with a view to drawing up an overall economic development strategy and industry policy for Hong Kong. Four working groups have been established under the EDC, one of which being the Working Group on Transportation (which covers maritime and aviation). In the discussion paper (CB(1)501/13-14(01)) we submitted to the Panel at the captioned meeting, we proposed to establish a

Maritime and Aviation Training Fund (MATF) in pursuit of CE's policy objectives on economic and maritime development. In the process of formulating various incentive and sponsorship schemes under the MATF, we had widely consulted the trades, relevant trade unions, universities and the Vocational Training Council, etc. This is to ensure the scope and beneficiaries of the proposed incentive and sponsorship schemes are able to address the most acute manpower issues and concerns of the trades, support the economic development of Hong Kong and meet the manpower requirements of the maritime and aviation sectors. When the MATF starts to operate, the Government will continue to work with the trades to review the manpower and employment situation so as to ensure that the objective of the Fund in cultivating a pool of talents for the two sectors is being achieved.

On population policy, the Steering Committee on Population Policy (SCPP) chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration released in October 2013 a consultation document on population policy and launched a four-month public engagement exercise to collect public views widely. The SCPP considers there may be five ways to deal with the challenges. One of them is to enhance the quality of the labour force by improving education and training and minimising skills mismatch. In the respect of quality of population, the consultation document highlights issues such as enhancing manpower projection studies, improving the quality of tertiary education, promoting vocational education and continuing education. In the respect of quantity of population, the document proposes to unleash the potential of the existing population, attract more talents from overseas and the Mainland, and to consider a more effective importation of labour system without jeopardising the interests of local workers. The public engagement exercise will run until 23 February 2014. The SCPP will take into account the views received in formulating detailed policy measures in the next stage.

As mentioned above, we will engage the trades to review the usage of the MATF from time to time to ensure it meets the overall needs of our society and supports Hong Kong's long-term economic development. As far as we know, local seafarers in general do not have particular difficulty in seeking employment. That said, the Government will liaise closely with the maritime sector and encourage Hong Kong ship owners/shipping companies to employ local seafarers in furtherance of the long-term development of Hong Kong's maritime industry.

On the training of local seafarers, the Sea-going Training Incentive Scheme launched in 2004 has so far recruited 270 sea cadets; and in last year, about 10

companies had offered 80 to 100 sea cadet places. Under the Scheme, 141 sea cadets have already fulfilled the required sea-going experience and attained professional qualification as deck officers/marine engineers, and they have continued with their maritime careers in various marine-based or shore-based positions. Regarding the three scholarship schemes that are run in collaboration with three local universities, to date, about 150 students have been awarded with scholarships. Among them, 98 had joined the maritime industry upon graduation, while some of the rest are still in their studies.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mary TSANG', written in a cursive style.

(Mary TSANG)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c. Director of Marine (Attn: Mr. S.F. WONG; Fax: 2854 9416)