

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2101/13-14
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/MP

Panel on Manpower

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 20 May 2014, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon CHAN Kin-por, BBS, JP
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Hon SIN Chung-kai, SBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Hon TANG Ka-piu
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
- Members attending** : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
- Members absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan (Chairman)
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP

Public Officers attending : Item IV

Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, GBS, JP
Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Miss Annie TAM Kam-lan, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Donald TONG Chi-keung, JP
Commissioner for Labour

Mr Nicholas CHAN Chun-tak
Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Policy Support)

Mr Desmond HOU Ka-chun
Principal Economist
Financial Secretary's Office

Mr Raymond HO Kam-biu
Chief Labour Officer (Working Hours Policy)
Labour Department

Item V

Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, GBS, JP
Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Miss Annie TAM Kam-lan, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Stephen LEUNG Kwan-chi
Deputy Commissioner for Census and Statistics

Ms Lydia LAM Sui-ping
Principal Assistant Secretary for
Labour and Welfare (Manpower)

Ms Agnes LO Kit-mui
Assistant Commissioner for
Census and Statistics (General)

Mr Nicholas CHAN Chun-tak
Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Policy Support)

Mr Desmond HOU Ka-chun
Principal Economist
Financial Secretary's Office

Mr Francis YIU Kam-hung
Senior Statistician (Manpower)
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Clerk in attendance : Miss Betty MA
Chief Council Secretary (2) 1

Staff in attendance : Ms Rita LAI
Senior Council Secretary (2) 1

Ms Kiwi NG
Legislative Assistant (2) 1

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[In accordance with Rule 77(5) of the Rules of Procedure, Mr SIN Chung-kai was elected among members to chair the meeting in the absence of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman.]

I. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1324/13-14)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2014 were confirmed.

II. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1514/13-14(01))

2. Members noted that the Administration's response to issues raised in Mr TANG Ka-piu's letter regarding the amount of severance payment ("SP") and long service payment ("LSP") under the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57) ("EO") had been issued since the last meeting.

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III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1524/13-14(01) and (02))

Regular meeting in June 2014

3. Members agreed to discuss Hong Kong's occupational safety and health performance in 2013 at the next regular meeting on 17 June 2014, as proposed by the Administration.

4. Noting that the Minimum Wage Commission ("MWC") was conducting a review of the statutory minimum wage ("SMW") rate, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung suggested and members agreed that the Panel would receive views from deputations on the subject before MWC's submitting its recommendation report on the next SMW rate to the Chief Executive ("CE") in Council by the end of October 2014.

(Post-meeting note: On the advice of the Panel Chairman, the item "Review of the SMW rate" would be discussed at the June meeting which would be advanced to start at 4:00 pm.)

Discussion items at future meetings

5. Members agreed to discuss the Administration's proposed discussion item on review on the effectiveness of the Employment in One-stop at Tin Shui Wai before the end of the 2013-2014 session. Mr TANG Ka-piu suggested that the discussion item should be expanded to cover employment support and services for job seekers in Tung Chung. Pointing out that a new Tung Chung Job Centre would commence operation around end of 2014, Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") suggested that members might wish to consider discussing the matter in the context of the new Tung Chung Job Centre. Members agreed. The Chairman added and that the subject would in the meantime be included in the Panel's "List of outstanding items for discussion".

6. Referring members to the Administration's response to his letter on the amount of SP and LSP under EO, Mr TANG Ka-piu suggested that the subject be followed up by the Panel before the end of the 2013-2014 session. Members agreed.

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IV. Progress of the work of the Standard Working Hours Committee

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1524/13-14(03) and (04))

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, SLW briefed members on the progress of the work of the Standard Working Hours Committee ("SWHC"), details of which were set out in the Administration's paper.

8. Members noted the updated background brief entitled "Standard working hours" prepared by the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat.

Work plan and timetable of SWHC

9. Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Mr POON Siu-ping, Mr KWOK Wai-keung, Dr KWOK Ka-ki and the Chairman expressed concern about the work progress of SWHC. While welcoming SWHC's following up on the policy study on SWH as pledged in CE's election manifesto, Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned how the Administration would further take forward the subject after the two Working Groups of SWHC, viz. Working Hours Consultation Group ("Consultation Group") and the Working Hours Study Group ("Study Group") had submitted their respective reports to SWHC by end of 2014.

10. Pointing out that the tenure of the Labour Advisory Board ("LAB") would expire by end-2014, Mr POON Siu-ping and Mr KWOK Wai-keung were concerned about the impact of the membership change on the deliberation of SWHC on SWH given that LAB members were ex-officio members of SWHC. Given that the tenure of the Fifth LegCo and the term of current Government would expire in September 2016 and June 2017 respectively, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired whether SWHC's work schedule could be compressed so as to expedite the introduction of the relevant legislative proposal for SWH as early as practicable. Specifically, Mr POON and Dr KWOK Ka-ki enquired whether a specific proposal on working hours policy would be put forth by the Administration for public consultation in the first quarter of 2015.

11. The Chairman was concerned that the Administration would be working under a very tight legislative timetable if it was to introduce the relevant bill on legislating for SWH into LegCo by the end of 2014-2015 session. Acknowledging the various complicated and difficult issues to

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be dealt with by SWHC relating to the introduction of a working hours policy, including the policy design and the parameters involved, the Chairman said that consideration could be given to establishing an SWH regime in phases.

12. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed strong disappointment that the Administration had not proactively taken forward the subject on legislating for SWH over the past years. In her view, SWHC should consider holding more frequent meetings to expedite the work progress. Miss CHAN added that to her understanding, representatives of the labour sector sitting on SWHC took a strong view that if the Administration did not commit to take forward the relevant legislation on SWH, they were prepared to withdraw from SWHC. She strongly urged the Administration to provide an interim report on the work progress of SWHC by the end of the 2013-2014 session.

13. Dr LEUNG Ka-lau informed members that he had attended one of the consultation sessions on working hours issues. He was of the view that the public engagement and consultation exercise on working hours issues should be interactive so as to facilitate mutual understanding and thereby minimising the controversies involved. As such, SWHC should provide the stakeholders with an interim report on the preliminary views collected so as to facilitate further discussion on the subject.

14. In response to members' views and concerns, SLW made the following points -

- (a) the Government attached great importance to the working hours issues. SWHC was pressing ahead with its work at full steam and had convened six general committee meetings in the past 13 months. The Consultation Group and Study Group formed under SWHC had respectively further convened five meetings since their formation in July 2013 and were respectively conducting wide public consultation and detailed preparation work for comprehensive working hours surveys;
- (b) SWHC had adopted an evidence-based approach for conducting objective and impartial discussion. Apart from making reference to the Annual Earnings and Hours Survey ("AEHS") annually conducted by the Census and Statistics Department ("C&SD"), SWHC would, upon receipt of the reports from its two Working Groups by the end of 2014,

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further deliberate and formulate its further work, including identification and assessment of different working hours policy options. SWHC would adhere to its work plan closely in an objective, holistic and balanced manner, and carry out informed and in-depth discussions on working hours with a view to building consensus and identifying the way forward; and

- (c) members' request for an interim report on the work progress of SWHC and concerns about whether a specific proposal on working hours policy would be put forth in the first quarter of 2015 would be conveyed to SWHC for consideration. That said, as SWHC would from end-May to end-July 2014 hold a series of consultation forums, it would be appropriate for SWHC to further report its work progress after consolidating the public views received and making reference to the latest statistics on working hours.

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15. The Chairman requested the Administration to revert to the Panel on major views collected during the public consultation on working hours when available.

16. While acknowledging that legislating for SWH was a complicated issue and warranted a detailed study by SWHC should a working hours regime be established in Hong Kong, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung held the view that the Administration had departed from the CE's election manifesto to take forward legislating for SWH upon completion of the policy study on SWH in 2012, given that SWHC was merely tasked to conduct further in-depth studies on the key issues identified in the policy study on SWH. Mr LEUNG was worried that the Government would not pursue with legislating for SWH after the relevant studies as in the case of age discrimination in employment. It was imperative that the Government would let the public know as to whether legislating for SWH would be the policy direction during the public engagement and consultation campaign launched by SWHC so as to facilitate an informed discussion of the community.

17. SLW clarified that the Government had never made any commitment on legislating for age discrimination in employment and subsequently retracted from its commitment. At that time, the Government undertook to study the matter whereby a survey was conducted, with the conclusion that education and publicity were effective ways in tackling age discrimination in employment and it might

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not be necessary to go for legal means against age discrimination. He reiterated that the Consultation Group and the Study Group would strive to submit their reports to SWHC by the end of 2014. Based on the findings of the reports, SWHC would deliberate on and formulate its further work, including identification and assessment of different working hours policy options. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, however, expressed grave concern as to whether the relevant legislation on SWH could be completed within the current term of Government.

Objectives of a working hours policy

18. Mr Michael TIEN considered it imperative to have a clear policy objective of regulating working hours. He recalled that when the subject of SWH was discussed by the Panel in the last session, he had expressed the view that concerns over work-life balance should more appropriately be addressed by specifying the maximum working hours instead of SWH, and that the problem of overtime work without due compensation could be resolved by improving EO. To this end, the components of working hours and the overtime pay rates should be stipulated expressly in the employment contracts. Given that SLW had undertaken to relay his views to SWHC for consideration, Mr TIEN enquired about the relevant deliberation of SWHC.

19. SLW said that SWHC had taken note of Mr Michael TIEN's view. SLW stressed that there were a number of key issues that needed to be discussed in depth, as highlighted in the Report of the Policy Study on SWH ("the SWH Report"), including the policy objective for regulating working hours, the scope of application and exemption arrangements as well as various options of working hours policy including improving the relevant provisions under EO. Apart from a public consultation campaign under way, SWHC would conduct dedicated working hours surveys in the forthcoming few months.

Working hours statistics

20. To facilitate the study on legislating for SWH, Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired whether the Administration had conducted surveys on the compensation arrangements for overtime work in different trades and industries. In his view, the employers should regard overtime work payments as part of the operating cost in running the business.

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21. SLW replied in the affirmative. SLW advised that information on compensated overtime hours had been collected from individual employers via AEHS. To facilitate an objective discussion, the Study Group had commissioned a consultancy firm to collect comprehensive working hours data and views on a working hours policy from at least 10 000 employed persons through face-to-face interviews and at least 1 500 persons engaged in occupations/professions with relatively long working hours or distinctive working hours patterns through self-administered questionnaires.

22. Mr CHUNG Kwok-pun sought elaboration on the methodology on collecting comprehensive working hours statistics and relevant information. He was concerned whether the relevant statistical data would be made available to the public. In response, Chief Labour Officer (Working Hours Policy) of the Labour Department ("LD") ("CLO(WHP)) explained that the dedicated working hours surveys comprised collecting working hours data and views from both employers and employees mainly through face-to-face interviews to complete questionnaires. The respondents would be randomly selected according to a scientific sampling method adopted by C&SD. CLO(WHP) added that the Consultation Group and Study Group would submit their respective reports to SWHC which would then decide on making available to the public the relevant statistical data as appropriate.

23. Mr TANG Ka-piu cast doubt about the accuracy of the working hours statistics compiled by C&SD. Citing a case being handled by him as an example, he informed members that the laundry workers in a private hospital had been required to perform two hours of overtime work without compensation weekly on a regular basis for over one year, but the workers were advised that there was no breach of law. Mr TANG was concerned that in the absence of an SWH regime, the extra working hours of workers were not duly recognised and there was no compensation for the continuous overtime work.

24. SLW responded that subject to compliance with EO, employers and employees were at liberty to agree mutually on individual employment terms including working hours and overtime arrangements. In respect of the case cited by Mr TANG Ka-piu, the Labour Relations Division of LD was assisting the employer and employees concerned to identify a settlement acceptable to both parties. He reiterated that raw data on working hours would be obtained from over 10 000 employed persons in the dedicated working hours surveys, which could help reflect accurately the working hours situation, including whether overtime work was compensated.

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25. Mr TANG Ka-piu, however, pointed out that in most labour disputes cases, employees concerned could not recover the full amount of claims if they were settled through conciliation.

26. Mr KWOK Wai-keung pointed out that working hours statistics of employees in various sectors of Hong Kong were already available in the SWH Report which was released in November 2012. It would be a waste of public resources for SWHC to conduct another round of working hours surveys.

27. In response, SLW advised that the SWH Report had laid a solid and objective basis for further discussions on the working hours issues. However, SWHC considered it necessary to collect more comprehensive statistical data including the details and circumstances of overtime work as well as the relevant terms of employment from employed persons through a dedicated working hours survey.

Promotional and publicity work

28. In respect of SWHC's efforts in launching various education and promotional activities to enhance public understanding on the working hours issues, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about the effectiveness of the initiatives as well as the resources implications.

29. Commissioner for Labour ("C for L") responded that SWHC would from end-May to end-July 2014 conduct 13 large-scale open consultation forums for sectors with relatively long working hours and the general public to collect the views of the community on working hours. To strengthen support for SWHC's work, LD had created 13 Labour Officer grade posts in this regard. The estimated expenditure on the related publicity activities in 2014 was \$1.5 million.

30. Dr KWOK Ka-ki considered that legislating for SWH was an essence in safeguarding the rights and benefits of the low-income grassroots workers in their employment. Noting that SWHC had held six meetings since its formation in April 2013, Dr KWOK expressed concern about the limited information on SWHC's deliberation on the working hours issues. To achieve community consensus on the subject, he considered it a prerequisite to enhance the public's understanding on the crux of the issues concerned.

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31. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung shared the concern about the publicity on the subject of SWH and related issues. He called on the Administration to enhance its promotional efforts in promoting public's understanding of the working hours issues.

32. Mr KWOK Wai-keung expressed disappointment that the Administration had not proactively taken forward the subject of SWH which had been discussed over the years and little progress had been made to address the problem of uncompensated overtime work. To ensure that useful information would be collected from the public engagement and consultation campaign, he called on the Administration to strengthen its efforts in enhancing the public's understanding on various working hours issues, in particular the meaning of SWH and maximum working hours.

33. SLW responded that the Government would continue promoting informed and in-depth discussions of the community on the subject of SWH which was a complex issue. To this end, SWHC had launched various education and promotional activities to enhance public understanding of various working hours issues (such as standard versus maximum working hours, and different objectives of working hours regimes) as well as the possible multifarious implications of working time regulation for employees' wage levels and working hours, employees' health at work, labour market flexibility and overall economic competitiveness. After meeting with major employers' associations and labour organisations in January and February 2014, SWHC had been holding a series of symposia for organisations of various occupations/professions from March to May 2014. As mentioned earlier, SWHC would from end-May to end-July 2014 hold 13 public forums for the sectors with relatively longer working hours mentioned in the SWH Report, other major industries, members of employers' associations and labour organisations, and the general public to collect the views of the community on working hours.

Impact assessment

34. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong had called on the Administration to handle prudently the subject of legislating for SWH having regard to the complexity of the issue and the divergent views of the labour sector and employers. In the light of an ageing workforce and the problem of labour shortage in some specific trades and industries, Mr LEUNG cautioned that SWHC should take into account the possible impact on the labour market structure in its deliberation on legislating for SWH.

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35. SLW responded that the Government was mindful of the complexity of the working time regime which involved a wide range of complex issues with widespread and far-reaching implications for the overall labour market, manpower demand, employment relations, work culture, family life, employees' health at work, business environment, economic development and business competitiveness. To facilitate informed and objective discussions of various working hours issues, SWHC would conduct dedicated working hours surveys and identify a range of relevant factors for analysing the implications of the working hours policy for the community and economy.

V. Manpower Projection to 2022

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1524/13-14(05) and (06))

36. At the invitation of the Chairman, SLW briefed members on the key findings of Manpower Projection to 2022 ("MP2022"), details of which were set out in the Administration's paper. With the aid of powerpoint presentation, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("PSLW") highlighted to members the broad trends of the manpower supply and requirements at the macro level for the projection period from 2012 to 2022 and the potential manpower imbalances at different education levels as well as several policy areas requiring follow-up actions as identified by the Steering Committee on Population Policy ("SCPP").

37. Members noted the background brief entitled "Manpower projection" prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Manpower resource balance ("MRB")

38. Mr CHAN Kin-por was concerned that corresponding to a scenario of 4% real Gross Domestic Product ("GDP") trend growth, the total manpower supply in 2022 was projected to fall short of the total manpower requirements, with MRB of the overall economy reaching a shortfall of 117 900. He enquired whether the Administration had taken into account the potential workforce provided by the entry of Mainland residents on the strength of One-way Permits ("OWPs") up to 150 persons daily, who were mostly aged above 15 with education attainment at the secondary level, when conducting the manpower supply projection ("MSP"). SLW replied in the affirmative and advised that new arrivals under the OWP Scheme had been taken into account in MSP.

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39. Referring to Table 8 in the Administration's paper regarding projected MRB by education level in 2022, Mr CHAN Kin-por noted with concern that there would be a surplus of manpower supply at the postgraduate level amounting to 53 400 persons. He asked whether the Education Bureau ("EDB") was aware of the findings of MP2022 and would consider conducting a review on the resources allocation for postgraduate education. Moreover, the prospective postgraduates should be provided with the information on MRB to facilitate their planning for pursuing further studies at the postgraduate level. Dr LEUNG Ka-lau shared a similar view.

40. Mr POON Siu-ping noted with concern that as revealed from the findings of MP2022, apart from a projected surplus of manpower at the postgraduate level by 2022, there would also be a surplus of 13 000 persons at the sub-degree level. Mr POON called on the Administration to take appropriate measures to address the problem of projected manpower surplus at respective education levels. In view of a projected manpower shortfall at the first degree level, the Administration should consider re-distributing resources for sub-degree, first degree and postgraduate places.

41. PSLW advised that by comparing the findings of MSP with manpower requirement projection ("MRP"), MRB could be analysed by education level, which was the common analysis element of MSP and MRP. The findings of MP2022 had been shared with other policy bureaux, including EDB. On the projected manpower surplus at the first degree and postgraduate levels, PSLW pointed out that the substitutability of workers at these levels should be taken into account, as jobs offered to first degree holders would also be taken up by persons with postgraduate qualifications. The manpower at the broad education level of combining first degree and postgraduate together was projected to be more or less in balance in 2022, with a slight surplus of only 2 600 persons. Mr CHAN Kin-por concurred with the observations and added that it was increasingly popular for people to pursue higher academic qualifications for personal interest in addition to career advancement. Nevertheless, he was of the view that the Administration should provide the undergraduates with such information which would be useful for their career planning.

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42. In the light of the uncertain socio-economic development in the forthcoming years, Mr KWOK Wai-keung considered that the key findings in MP2022 could serve as reference only. With respect to the projected MRB at a shortfall of 177 700 based on an assumption of a 5% real GDP growth per annum, Mr KWOK asked whether government policy bureaux would formulate corresponding measures to address the projected mismatch in manpower requirement and supply. Mr KWOK further said that according to the consultation document on population policy released by SCPP in October 2013, some 86 000 Mainland and overseas talents and professionals had been admitted to Hong Kong under two talent admission schemes, namely the General Employment Policy and Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals. These talents and professionals had competed directly with local graduates in the employment market. He was concerned about the enhanced measures in place in respect of tapping the expertise and experience of the quality personnel from the Mainland and overseas and training up the local employees in the relevant trades and industries.

43. SLW said that the Government conducted MP from time to time to assess the broad trends in the future manpower requirements and supply of the economy at the macro level, as well as the potential manpower imbalances at different education levels. It provided useful reference data for government bureaux and departments as well as other stakeholders in further studies and policy formulation. Relevant bureaux/departments might consider conducting further sector-specific manpower planning/studies, having regard to the future development and characteristics of the manpower supply and demand of the specific sectors concerned, the policy direction and other practical considerations. Examples of sector-specific studies being pursued by bureaux/departments included the manpower development planning conducted by the Construction Industry Council for the construction industry, a strategic review on healthcare manpower planning and professional development being pursued under a Steering Committee chaired by the Food and Health Bureau and the Elderly Service Programme Plan to be formulated by the Elderly Commission under the purview of the Labour and Welfare Bureau.

44. Dr LEUNG Ka-lau was concerned about the reliability of the projected manpower situation bearing in mind that such estimation was subject to a confidence interval of 95% as with any similar statistical exercises. Therefore, appropriate adjustment should be made to the projection findings to rectify the projection errors.

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Identified policy areas for follow-up actions

Supporting measures for females

45. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted that SCPP had identified several policy areas which required follow-up actions, including enhancing child care services targeting the needs of women to assist them to maintain a balance between family and work. Mr WONG was of the view that the Administration should formulate specific measures to enhance the provision of subsidised child care services so as to release the female homemakers to join the labour force. Mr POON Siu-ping echoed a similar view.

46. SLW advised that as highlighted in the 2014 Policy Address, with a view to improving after-school care services provided by the non-governmental organisations for children aged six to 12, the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") would from 2014-2015 allocate additional resources to extend the service hours to 9 pm on weekday evenings, weekends and school holidays in some after-school care centres in each district. SWD would also extend the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project ("NSCCP") by lifting the age limit of service beneficiaries from below six to below nine, and providing additional places for the home-based child care service under the project. Moreover, the Government planned to make use of the \$200 million Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged ("PFD"), dedicated for launching more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroots families, and would seek approval from the Finance Committee for an increase in the commitment for PFD so as to encourage further cross-sectoral collaboration to launch more welfare projects for the disadvantaged.

47. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung was concerned about a lack of affordable nursery places as well as the lack of planning in setting up child care centres in the community. Pointing out that the remuneration for child carers of NSCCP was as low as \$19 per hour, it could hardly attract women to work as child carers. Miss CHAN Yuen-han shared a similar concern. Having regard to the criminal liability for negligence in taking care of children up to sixteen years old under the Offences against the Person Ordinance (Cap. 212), Miss CHAN held the view that extension of the age limit of service beneficiaries under NSCCP from below six to below nine was inadequate. The Administration should enhance its efforts in releasing a sizeable workforce of some 540 000 female

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homemakers in joining the employment market. Apart from child care support, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung further pointed out that the provision of subsidised elderly care services was equally important in releasing the females to join the labour force. The Administration should enhance the subsidised residential care services for the elderly as well.

48. SLW advised that the Government acknowledged the need to provide care support to children at different stages of development, and the elderly with a view to releasing female homemakers to join the labour force. It would revert to the Panel on Welfare Services on the provision of child care services in due course.

Importation of labour

49. With respect to SCPP's view on enhancing the migrant admission schemes and the existing labour importation mechanism to respond to manpower demand in the labour market, Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that the labour sector had expressed grave concern about the expansion of the importation of labour to Hong Kong. To safeguard the employment opportunities for local workers, Mr WONG called on the Administration to follow closely the established mechanism for approving applications for importing labour under the Supplementary Labour Scheme ("SLS"). Echoing a similar concern, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired how the Administration would specifically enhance the labour importation mechanism.

50. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed concern about the LAB's decision made in March 2014 to expedite the process of admitting certain overseas construction workers for 26 trades identified with manpower shortage and the setting up of a dedicated task force to help examine the applications for importing labour for public works, railroad or public housing projects prior to their submission to LAB for vetting and approval. She cautioned that such applications for importation of labour should not bypass the existing mechanism under SLS.

51. In response to members' concerns, SLW said that the Government undertook to enhance the labour importation under the existing SLS with due regard to the principles of not affecting the interest of local workers, displacing local job opportunities or suppressing local wages. SLW further said that the streamlining of procedures under SLS sought to shorten the processing time for considering applications from employers who were genuinely unable to recruit local workers to fill their job vacancies. On the other hand, the Government was actively considering

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enhancing the migrant admission schemes by reaching out to and attracting talents overseas such as university graduates via the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices overseas.

Enhancing quality of manpower and minimising skills mismatch

52. Given that MRB was analysed by academic attainment instead of economic sectors, Mr KWOK Wai-keung considered that such projection findings could hardly help address the projected mismatch in manpower requirements and supply in specific industries. Apart from providing training and retraining to upgrade the skills of workers with low skills and low education attainment to enhance their competitiveness, he considered that the Administration should provide relevant information on the manpower requirements in specific trades and industries so as to facilitate the younger generation in their career planning.

53. SLW advised that the findings of MP2022 were meant to be projections on the broad trends of the manpower situation up to 2022. While MP2022 covered analyses on the projected manpower requirements by economic sector and by occupation group, it was unable to project the manpower supply by sector or occupation and hence the unavailability of sector- or occupation-specific MRB. The reason was that the Administration could not ascertain in which sector/profession a person would take up a job after graduation from school or university. In addition, workers in a particular industry/profession might change jobs and work in another industry/profession over time for more than once. As regards minimising the skills mismatch problem, it was a challenge for the Administration, having regard to the vibrant labour market and the fact that people might take up jobs requiring different knowledge that they had acquired at school or university. Nevertheless, the Administration would step up its efforts in reducing the skills mismatch as far as practicable.

54. Noting that there would be respective projected manpower shortfalls of 55 700 and 94 100 at the lower secondary and below and upper secondary levels in 2022, Dr LEUNG Ka-lau envisaged that the manpower supply of these two groups would further decrease if the quality of manpower was enhanced through vocational education and continuing education. Consideration should be given to streamlining the work process of the jobs undertaken by workers of these two groups so as to reduce manpower requirement and minimise the skills mismatch.

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Employment support services for persons with disabilities

55. In respect of the identified policy area of enhancing employment support services for persons with disabilities in order to build up a more inclusive society, Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned about the progress of the study on the eligibility of people with loss of one limb for Disability Allowance and related issues. He also urged the Administration to consider extending the Public Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities to people with loss of one limb so as to enhance employment support for the latter.

56. SLW responded that an inter-departmental working group had been established to study the proposal to allow people with loss of one limb to apply for Disability Allowance and related issues. It was expected that the study would be completed by the end of 2014.

57. SLW stressed that in the light of the key findings of MP2022 and the policy areas identified by SCPP for follow-up actions, relevant bureaux/departments would conduct further studies and planning and submit concrete proposals to SCPP for consideration.

58. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:28 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
23 July 2014