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Panel on Manpower

**Information note prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 20 July 2021**

Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme

To help young people seize the opportunities for career development in the Greater Bay Area ("GBA") and to ease the worsening youth unemployment problem, the Chief Executive announced in the 2020 Policy Address that the Government would launch the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme ("the Scheme") to encourage enterprises with operations in both Hong Kong and GBA to recruit and deploy local university graduates to work in GBA. According to the Administration, the Scheme would provide 2 000 places, of which 700 places are designated for innovation and technology posts, to graduates who obtained their bachelor degrees or above in 2019 to 2021. A total of \$376 million was allocated from the Anti-Epidemic Fund to launch the Scheme, covering allowance payments to participating enterprises and relevant expenses for publicity and administrative purposes. The Scheme was launched on 8 January 2021 and has started inviting participation of enterprises.

2. The Panel on Manpower ("the Panel") has not discussed specifically the Scheme, but concerns about the subject were raised at the policy briefing cum meeting of the Panel held on 7 January 2021 and the special meeting of the Finance Committee held on 16 April 2021. Some members expressed concern about the attractiveness of the Scheme to the enterprises in GBA as they would need to offer participants from Hong Kong a monthly salary of not less than \$18,000, which was higher than that of the posts for fresh graduates in GBA. The Administration advised that participating enterprises should engage the target graduates in Hong Kong under Hong Kong law, offer them a monthly salary of not less than \$18,000 and station them in the Mainland cities of GBA to work and receive on-the-job training. To encourage enterprises to participate in the Scheme and to subsidize their extra expenses for employing and training the graduates, participating enterprises would be given a monthly allowance of \$10,000 for each graduate engaged for up to 18 months.

3. Some members suggested that consideration be given to expanding the scope of target participants to graduates who obtained their bachelor degrees or above from 2016 and to young people who were not degree holders, as well as increasing the quota if the response to the Scheme was positive. Members also enquired whether the Administration would set performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the Scheme. The Administration advised that the Scheme targeted fresh university graduates as they would face greater difficulties in entering the labour market due to their limited or non-existent work experience. According to the Administration, it was premature to determine whether to launch another round of the Scheme, but members were assured that it would closely monitor the implementation of the Scheme, including the number of job vacancies offered by the enterprises, the number of applications for allowance submitted by the enterprises, opinions of job seekers and enterprises on the Scheme, with a view to reviewing the effectiveness of the Scheme. That said, it would not rule out the possibility of increasing the quota under the Scheme if the response to the Scheme was positive.

4. According to the Administration's reply to a question raised by a Member at the Council meeting of 12 May 2021, the Scheme had received nearly 2 400 job vacancies from 321 enterprises as of 30 April 2021. For the majority of these vacancies, the recruitment process was underway. The relevant question raised by the Member and the Administration's reply is in the **Appendix**.

5. The Administration will brief the Panel on the implementation of the Scheme at the meeting on 20 July 2021.

Press Releases

LCQ7: Assisting the development of young people in the Greater Bay Area

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (May 12):

Question:

The Chief Executive stated in the 2020 Policy Address that she hoped that young people could set their sights on the country, seizing the opportunities to study, work and live in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), so as to broaden the scope for realising their dreams. In recent years, the Government has introduced, through the Youth Development Fund and various other channels, a number of schemes to assist the young people of Hong Kong in studying, taking up employment and starting businesses in the Mainland cities of GBA. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on the aforesaid schemes implemented by the Government in the past five years: (i) title, (ii) the responsible bureau/government department, (iii) commencement date and implementation period, (iv) the Mainland cities of GBA involved, (v) amount of subsidy, and (vi) the number of Hong Kong young people who received the subsidy (set out in the following table);

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)
Studying schemes					
1.					
2.					
.....					
Employment schemes					
1.					
2.					
.....					
Entrepreneurship schemes					
1.					
2.					
.....					

(2) whether it has established a mechanism to review the implementation progress and effectiveness of the schemes mentioned in (1); if so, of the details of the mechanism and the results of the review; if not, whether it will establish such mechanism; and

(3) whether it will, in the light of the effectiveness of such schemes, study the need to adjust the scale of the schemes, cease their implementation, or revise their contents and service targets?

Reply:

President,

Upon consulting the Education Bureau (EDB), the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), our consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan is as follows:

To encourage Hong Kong's young people to grasp the development opportunities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area), the HKSAR Government has launched different schemes to facilitate them to study, work and start new businesses in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area.

In terms of study schemes, at present, local youth who aspire to study at Mainland universities may participate in the "Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions" (Admission Scheme) implemented by the Ministry of Education since the 2012/13 academic year. Mainland institutions participating in the Admission Scheme admit Hong Kong students based on their results in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, hence obviating the need for them to take the Joint Entrance Examination for Mainland Institutions. A total of 127 Mainland institutions will be participating in the Admission Scheme in the 2021/22 academic year, including 18 institutions from four Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area (i.e. Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhaoqing and Dongguan). The EDB assists the Ministry of Education in implementing the Admission Scheme in Hong Kong to provide local secondary school graduates with multiple study pathways and opportunities to connect with the country's development.

In addition, the EDB supports local secondary school graduates who intend to pursue further studies on the Mainland through the "Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme" (MUSSS) introduced in the 2014/15

academic year. The MUSSS comprises two components: a "means-tested subsidy" (whereby eligible students who have passed a means test will receive either a full-rate subsidy or a half-rate subsidy, depending on their needs) and a "non-means-tested subsidy". For the 2020/21 academic year, the full-rate and half-rate "means-tested subsidy" are HK\$16,800 and HK\$8,400 per annum respectively; the "non-means-tested subsidy" offers a flat rate subsidy of HK\$5,600 per annum. The amount of subsidy granted under the MUSSS in relation to Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area (including Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai) and the number of students receiving the subsidy in the past five academic years are provided below:

Academic year	Amount of subsidy* (HK\$ million)	Number of students receiving the subsidy
2016/17	17.5	1 395
2017/18	21.8	1 859
2018/19	24.4	1 841
2019/20	23.4	1 779
2020/21#	26.3	2 003

* Figures are rounded up

As at April 29, 2021

As for effectiveness, the number of Mainland institutions participating in the Admission Scheme as well as the number of applicants have been increasing every year. The MUSSS has also recorded a steady increase in the number of applicants and beneficiaries. The EDB will continue to implement initiatives to facilitate local young people in pursuing studies in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area.

In terms of employment schemes, the Labour Department (LD) launched the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme (Youth Employment Scheme) in January 2021 to encourage more young people to work and develop their careers in the Greater Bay Area Mainland cities. The Youth Employment Scheme encourages enterprises with operations in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area to recruit and deploy university graduates in Hong Kong to work in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. 2 000 places are provided under the Scheme of which 700 are designated for innovation and technology posts. Participating enterprises shall employ the graduates at a monthly salary of no less than HK\$18,000. To compensate enterprises for the additional expenses on employing and training the graduates,

participating enterprises will be given a monthly allowance of HK\$10,000 for each graduate engaged for up to 18 months.

As at April 30, the Youth Employment Scheme has received nearly 2 400 job vacancies from 321 enterprises. For the majority of these vacancies, the recruitment process was underway. The LD and the Innovation and Technology Bureau have been closely monitoring the implementation of the Youth Employment Scheme and will review its effectiveness upon conclusion.

In terms of entrepreneurship schemes, the HAB has introduced, under the Youth Development Fund, the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Entrepreneurship Scheme) and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Experiential Scheme), which cover the nine Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. Both schemes were launched with a view to encouraging Hong Kong young people to make optimal use of the innovative and entrepreneurial bases in the Greater Bay Area and helping them develop their businesses in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. The application results were announced in February 2021.

About \$130 million has been granted under the Entrepreneurship Scheme, the funded NGOs are now in the process of recruiting youth start-ups. Capital subsidy will be provided to about 230 youth start-ups (involving more than 800 Hong Kong young entrepreneurs) and entrepreneurial support and incubation services will be rendered to about 4 000 young people under the Entrepreneurship Scheme. As for the Experiential Scheme, about \$5 million has been granted, the funded NGOs are now progressively rolling out relevant online activities such as online briefings, seminars, and training courses. Subject to the development of the pandemic, the NGOs will kick-start the physical cross-border experiential projects (with a duration between 6 to 28 days) when it is safe and practicable to do so. Around 700 young people are expected to benefit from the projects.

It is stipulated in the respective application guidelines for the Entrepreneurship Scheme and the Experiential Scheme that a funded NGO is required to submit relevant activity report(s), progress report(s), financial report(s), an auditor's report, and so forth to the Youth Development Commission (YDC) to report the progress, financial situation and outcomes of its funded project. Moreover, members of the YDC will conduct visits and meetings to understand the effectiveness of

the entrepreneurial support and incubation services provided by the funded NGOs and the operation of the short-term experiential projects, as well as to communicate with the start-ups and make suggestions for improvement. In particular, in respect of the start-up capital component under the Entrepreneurship Scheme, it is stipulated in the application guidelines that a funded NGO must formulate suitable phased indicators (for example, "having successfully built product prototypes", "having completed product development", "having successfully launched products in the market", "having opened physical shops", etc.) having regard to the nature of its project, and help selected start-ups develop their businesses by guiding them to achieve these indicators. The funded NGO should disburse the start-up capital in phases to the selected start-ups only after they have met the agreed indicators. The HAB will continue to work closely with the YDC to monitor the operation and effectiveness of the two schemes, and formulate the way forward.

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