

56th Meeting of the Elderly Commission **Press Summary**

The Elderly Commission (EC) held its 56th meeting today (22 January 2009) with the following items on the agenda: -

(1) Report on First Stage Public Consultation on Healthcare Reform

- The Commission realizes that the community in general sees an imminent need to reform the healthcare system. There is clear public consensus on the proposals to reform healthcare services and to actively pursue them, the Commission agrees with the Government to make the best use of increased funding for healthcare over the next few years to proactively implement the service reforms to improve the standard and quality of healthcare services for the public, especially for the elderly.

[Service reforms include enhancing primary care, promoting public-private partnership, developing electronic health record sharing, and strengthening the existing public healthcare safety net.]

- The Commission considers that there is a need to continue to study the issue of healthcare financing to meet the challenge arising from the ageing population. The Commission agrees that the Government explores possible healthcare financing proposals having regard to the broad principles reflected in the public's views during the first stage consultation on healthcare reform, so as to ensure the sustainability of the healthcare system and the provision of quality services for the public and the elderly in the future.

2. Elder Academy Scheme – Evaluation of the Elder Academies Set up During the First-round Application and the Way Forward of the Scheme

- The Elderly Commission (EC) and the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) launched the Elder Academy Scheme in early 2007. 32 Elder Academies have been set up during the first stage of the Scheme. EC recently conducted a review on the operation of the 32 Elder Academies and the results indicate that they have been operating smoothly. The schools and welfare organizations that have participated in the Scheme all commented positively on it. They considered that the Scheme not only provides a service learning platform for students, but also provides the opportunities for students to learn how to get along and communicate with the elders. Through participating in the courses provided by the Elder Academies, elders can pursue life-long learning and expand their social circles, thereby increasing their confidence and building a positive image for themselves.
- Members considered the successful implementation of the Elder Academy Scheme is a milestone of elder learning in Hong Kong.
- Members were also glad to note that service learning as advocated by the Elder Academy Scheme was recognised by the Education Bureau as generally in line with the objective of “Other Learning Experiences” under the New Senior School curriculum and considered this is conducive to the expansion of the Scheme.
- In view of the support from all sectors and that the Scheme is most welcome by elders, EC will invite a new round of applications for establishing elder academies in primary and secondary schools in the first half of 2009 with a view to setting up more Elder Academies to facilitate elders in all districts to pursue their studies.

- Members considered that the Elder Academies can also serve as a community support network. For instance, students and elders can participate together in extra-curricular activities and volunteer work in their districts to serve the community. Hence, Members agreed to offer \$20,000 as financial assistance to each elder academy which will organise intergenerational activities in the current academic year, so as to provide subsidies for the needy students and elders.

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