

Elderly Commission
Minutes of the 78th Meeting

Conference Room 4, G/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong
2:30 p.m., 28 January 2014 (Tuesday)

Present:

Chairman

Prof CHAN Cheung-ming, Alfred, BBS, JP

Vice-chairman

Dr LAM Ching-choi, BBS, JP

Members

Dr CHAN Hon-wai, Felix, JP

Mrs CHAN LUI Ling-yee, Lilian

Miss CHAN Man-yee, Grace

Dr CHEUNG Moon-wah

Dr CHONG Ming-lin, Alice, MH

Prof FUNG Yuk-kuen, Sylvia, BBS

Mr MA Ching-hang, Patrick, BBS, JP

Mr SHIE Wai-hung, Henry

Dr TUNG Sau-ying

Mr WONG Fan-foung, Jackson, MH

Mrs WONG WONG Yu-sum, Doris

Mr YAU How-boa, Stephen, SBS, BBS, JP, MH

Miss TAM Kam-lan, Annie, JP

Mr YUEN Ming-fai, Richard, JP

Mr LAM Ka-tai

Mr LEE Kwok-wing, Albert, JP

Dr LEUNG Sze-lee, Shirley

Dr Daisy DAI

Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Health)

Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)

Deputy Director of Housing

Assistant Director of Health

Chief Manager (Primary and Community Services), Hospital Authority

In attendance:

Mr CHEN Yee, Donald

Mrs CHAN NG Ting-ting

Miss LI Yuen-wah, Cecilla

Ms CHEUNG Jick-man, Lillian

Ms CHU Wing-yin, Diana

Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Assistant Director of Social Welfare

Chief Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department

Senior Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department

Miss LAM Ching-wa, Nora	Senior Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department
Ms NG Lai-sheung, Ruby	Senior Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department
Ms POON Hau-yuk	Senior Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department
Dr CHAN Ching-nin, Clive	Senior Medical and Health Officer, Department of Health
Miss TSANG Tik-yee, Florence	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Miss WONG Kwan-yee, Jenny	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Miss MOK Tik-shan, Elizabeth	Chief Executive Officer, Labour and Welfare Bureau
Miss HO Wing-wa, Vitinie	Executive Officer, Labour and Welfare Bureau

Agenda item 3

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

Agenda item 4

Ms HO Pui-ling, Doris	Head, Policy and Project Co-ordination Unit, Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office
Ms CHUNG Nga-chi, Eugenia	Senior Administrative Officer (Policy and Project Co-ordination Unit), Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office

Absent with apologies:

Ms CHAN Man-ki, Maggie, MH
 Dr CHENG Kam-chung, JP, MH
 Mr MA Kam-wah, Timothy, JP

Secretary

Mr CHOW Wing-hang	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
-------------------	--

* * * * *

Prof Alfred CHAN Cheung-ming, the Chairman, welcomed Members to the meeting.

2. The Chairman reminded Members to make a declaration when there was a potential conflict of interest between their own interests and the matters to be discussed.

Agenda item 1: Confirmation of the minutes of the 77th meeting

3. As Members had not proposed any amendments to the Chinese (revised) and English versions of the draft minutes issued by the Secretariat on 24 January 2014, the minutes were confirmed.

Agenda item 2: Matters arising

4. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the 77th meeting.

Agenda item 3: Briefing on the relevant initiatives in the 2014 Policy Address

5. Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, Secretary for Labour and Welfare, noted that the 2014 Policy Address had put forth a number of major new initiatives on elderly services. Among others, the Chief Executive had commissioned this Commission to devise an Elderly Services Programme Plan (Programme Plan) within two years, and explore the feasibility of introducing Residential Care Service (RCS) Voucher for the Elderly and submit a report in a year's time. As the Commission might find it viable to introduce a RCS Voucher Scheme, the Government had earmarked \$800 million for issuing 3 000 vouchers in three phases from 2015-16 to 2017-18. In addition, the Government has planned to launch a pilot RCS scheme in Guangdong so that the elderly persons on the Central Waiting List for subsidised residential care places could choose to live in the two residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) operated by Hong Kong non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Guangdong. Besides, in order to increase the provision of subsidised residential care places for the elderly, the Government had invited social welfare organisations to participate in the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (Special Scheme) in September 2013. About 40 organisations had submitted their proposals, involving some 60 projects on the provision of, e.g. elderly service facilities, through in-situ expansion, redevelopment or land donation. Based on a rough estimation, these projects would provide around 17 000 additional service places for the elderly and persons with disabilities. In this connection, the Government would seek approval from the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council in February 2014 for an additional injection of \$10 billion into the Lotteries Fund to ensure the smooth implementation of the Special Scheme. In view of the manpower shortage in the elderly care service sector, additional resources would be allocated to the Youth Career Navigation Scheme in Elderly Services (YCENSES) for increasing the number of training places to 1 000. Further, the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities would be extended in phases from the first quarter of 2015 to cover green minibuses.

6. Mr Donald CHEN Yee, Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare, then briefed Members on the initiatives relating to elderly services under the Policy Address through a powerpoint presentation. Mr CHEN said that following the principle of “respect, love and care for the elderly”, the Government put in place three levels of elderly services, namely active ageing, ageing in place and institutional care; to meet various needs of the elderly. For active ageing, the Government would inject an additional \$50 million into the Elder Academy Development Foundation to sustain the development of the Elder Academy Scheme and explore new areas of development. As regards ageing in place, additional resources would be allocated to increase the number of subsidised places of community care service, enhance the services of elderly centres, and strengthen the support services for elderly persons with dementia and their carers by District Elderly Community Centres. To step up the support for carers of the elderly, the Government would regularise the District-based Scheme on Carer Training from 2014-15 onwards, and the Community Care Fund (CCF) Task Force was exploring a pilot scheme on carer allowance for the elderly. For institutional care, the Government would adopt a multi-pronged approach to increase the number of residential care places and explore new modes of service delivery such as the pilot RCS scheme in Guangdong and the introduction of RCS vouchers for the elderly. The Government would continue to increase the provision of subsidised residential care places under the conventional mode; by building new contract homes, purchasing places under bought place schemes and making better use of space in subvented homes. To allow the elderly residents in nursing homes (NHs) to be taken care of by the same home even when their health condition had deteriorated, additional resources would be provided to extend continuum of care to subsidised NH places. In addition, the Government would increase the annual recurrent funding for NGOs so that they could recruit and retain paramedical staff more effectively, hire paramedical services and strengthen their central administrative manpower and supervisory support. The provision for “Other Charges” (including food costs) for the NGOs would also be increased.

7. Mr Richard YUEN Ming-fai, Permanent Secretary for Food and Health, said that the Government would regularise the Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Scheme this year with a view to easing elderly people’s demand for public out-patient services and enhancing their awareness of the importance of primary care. The annual voucher amount would be doubled from the present level of \$1,000 to \$2,000. The financial ceiling of unspent voucher value for each service user would also be adjusted from \$3,000 to \$4,000. As the Scheme also applied to dental services, the increased amount would enable the elderly to have access to private dental services. Free outreach primary dental care services for the elderly in residential care homes or day care centres would also be regularised, with the scope of service further extended to fillings, extractions and dentures. The CCF Task Force was actively considering expanding the coverage of an existing elderly dental programme to benefit more elderly people with financial difficulties.

8. After the briefing, the Chairman and Members raised the following questions and views:

Elderly services

Overall direction

- (a) It was pleased to note that the 2014 Policy Address set out a clear way forward for the development of elderly services in Hong Kong in the coming five to ten years and proposed the formulation of the Elderly Programme Plan. These reflected that the Government was committed to meet the challenges posed by an ageing population.

Formulating the Elderly Programme Plan

- (b) To tie in with the long-term population policy, the Elderly Programme Plan should cover short, medium and long-term planning for elderly services. Apart from welfare measures, it should also cover other areas such as healthcare, elderly employment, housing, transport, recreation and sports as well as education.
- (c) As a first step, a work plan should be drawn up to ensure that data collection, analysis, and a short-term trial scheme (if any,) could be effectively completed in two years, and evidence-based recommendations could be presented to the Government.
- (d) A name which would facilitate public understanding on the coverage of the Programme Plan should be adopted.
- (e) The general opinion of the elderly service sector was that the Programme Plan should focus on long-term care services and adopt an outcome-oriented approach, i.e. the Government should engage various stakeholders in deliberating the future needs for elderly care services and modes of service delivery (such as public-private partnership in the provision of elderly care services and coordination among formal and informal carers of the elderly).
- (f) To address the need for long-term care services, training on caring skill should be provided not only for professional care staff but also for informal carers (including foreign domestic helpers who were taking care of the elderly). The Programme Plan should explore ways to better coordinate the existing elderly care services and measures, such as the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients and day care services for the elderly, to ensure that more elderly persons would be able

to age in place. The need for introducing case management staff for elderly care should also be examined.

- (g) Views of various stakeholders, such as frontline elderly service providers, elderly groups and family members of the elderly, on the Programme Plan should be sought during the formulation stage. To ensure the smooth implementation of the Programme Plan upon its promulgation, discussions with relevant bureaux and departments were proposed. For example, representatives from the Education Bureau (EDB) should be engaged in the discussions on manpower training for the elderly service sector.
- (h) Given the task had to be completed in two years, resources should be provided for this Commission to engage consultants to help collect data and conduct public consultation, etc.
- (i) Currently, community resources mainly focused on frail elderly. As a majority of the elderly people were healthy and active, more resources should be allocated to help maintain the health and vitality of these elderly people, thereby relieving the pressure on healthcare and long-term care services.

Pilot RCS Scheme in Guangdong

- (j) It was understood that the occupancy rates of the two RCHEs which would collaborate with the Government under the Scheme were not satisfactory. The Government should first look into the difficulties currently faced by these two RCHEs (such as transportation and medical support services) so that specific measures could be identified to provide the necessary facilitation for those elderly persons who choose to live in these RCHEs.
- (k) It was appreciated that the Scheme would provide an additional option for the elderly. However, elderly's willingness to settle in Guangdong to retire would be affected by factors such as RMB appreciation against Hong Kong dollars and transportation and medical support services therein.

Feasibility of introducing RCS vouchers for the elderly

- (l) In 2009, this Commission commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct a consultancy study on residential care services. According to the study, the introduction of RCS vouchers might lead to pre-mature institutionalisation. Therefore,

when exploring the feasibility of RCS vouchers, the Government should ensure that resources would be allocated to those elderly most in need.

- (m) The experience and interim review findings of the Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher for the Elderly should serve as a reference, with particular attention paid to the reasons for elderly people's withdrawal from this Scheme and their unwillingness to join. This would contribute to the planning of the effective implementation of a pilot RCS voucher scheme.
- (n) If the pilot scheme on RCS Voucher operates smoothly and satisfactorily, the Government should consider extending it to eligible elderly persons who had retired in Guangdong to encourage them to age in their home towns in the Mainland.
- (o) The Government should put in place monitoring measures or provide relevant support for private RCHEs to ensure that they would continue to enhance their service quality upon the introduction of RCS vouchers.

Pilot Scheme on Carer Allowance for the Elderly

- (p) It was suggested that CCF might explore the feasibility of the portability of carer allowance for the elderly so as to benefit the carers of those elderly people who had chosen to retire in Guangdong.

Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses

- (q) The Special Scheme could effectively increase the number of places for elderly and rehabilitation services. As regards the implementation of the Special Scheme, the Government should take into account the long-term financial implications and related issues such as related healthcare and frontline manpower requirements and hardware support.

Enhancing the services of elderly centres

- (r) When improving the facilities of elderly centres, space could be reserved in those larger centres to provide outreach medical services and healthcare services such as Chinese medicine, dental, manipulation and acupuncture services.

Manpower resources

- (s) Apart from enhancing its services to support Government's policies on elderly care, the elderly care service sector should also participate in manpower training in the future. Active participation of the sector in YCNSES would provide on-the-job training opportunities for young people and help attract them to join the sector and advance their career. It was hoped that relevant EDB officers on career guidance would assist the sector in selecting and arranging suitable young people for training or help them upgrade to professional grades such as enrolled nurses.

Healthcare

Exploring the feasibility of setting up integrated elderly services centres

- (t) It was pleased to note that the Government was exploring the feasibility of setting up integrated elderly services centres on a pilot basis to provide one-stop, multi-disciplinary healthcare and social services for the elderly at community level.
- (u) The Government should strengthen community medical services and support measures tailored for the elderly with a view to minimising their need for hospitalisation, enabling them to age in place and enhancing their quality of life.

9. Miss Annie TAM Kam-lan, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare, said that a number of initiatives on elderly services announced in the Policy Address had responded to the recommendations made by this Commission. She would like to take the opportunity to thank the Commission, and was looking forward to receiving this Commission's valuable advice on elderly services. Regarding the views and suggestions made by Members, Miss TAM responded as follows:

Elderly services

Overall direction

- (a) The Government would build on the foundation of the existing services and formulate long-term planning for elderly services. The Government would also explore innovative service modes in the meanwhile.

The formulation of the Programme Plan

- (b) The existing elderly care services (long-term care services in particular) and the Special Scheme might serve as the basis for formulating the Programme Plan, and

this Commission could work out a medium to long-term Programme Plan by examining the current demand for and supply of elderly care services and studying the future need of the community for such services. It was stressed that the purpose of the Programme Plan was not to review the existing policies on elderly services.

- (c) The Government would seek FC's approval for creating a two-year time-limited supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C in the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) to head a dedicated team to support this Commission in formulating the Programme Plan and related matters. The new post would also assist this Commission in exploring the feasibility of introducing a RCS voucher scheme for the elderly.
- (d) LWB would provide adequate resources for this Commission to engage consultants in carrying out studies and conducting consultation.
- (e) Apart from RCS and CCS, the Programme Plan may cover measures to promote active ageing.

Pilot RCS Scheme in Guangdong

- (f) The Government was well aware that most elderly persons wished to stay in Hong Kong upon retirement. The main objectives of the Pilot Scheme were to provide an option for those elderly persons who were waiting for subsidised residential care places, as well as to meet the need of some elderly persons who wished to retire in their hometowns on the Mainland. The Government would arrange suitable healthcare support for the elderly persons concerned and provide administrative support to the RCHEs participating in the Scheme as appropriate.

Feasibility of introducing RCS voucher for the elderly

- (g) If this Commission considered it feasible to implement a pilot scheme on RCS voucher for the elderly following its deliberations, the Government would consider inviting those elderly persons currently on the Central Waiting List to participate in the pilot scheme. At its initial stage, the pilot scheme might cover self-financing and private RCHEs, but not subvented RCHEs. The Government would compile a list of RCHEs that the elderly persons might choose from. Only those RCHEs which could meet the required service standard would be included in the list.
- (h) It was hoped that the Commission could make recommendations to the Government in

early 2015 on the introduction of RCS vouchers. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) would provide the necessary manpower and administrative support, in the light of the Commission's recommendations. The first batch of 1 000 vouchers might be introduced in the third quarter of 2015 at the earliest.

Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses

- (i) The support given by various social welfare organisations for the Special Scheme was much appreciated. It was expected that the projects under the Special Scheme would commence in phases in the coming five to ten years. The Government would provide necessary resources, including an injection of \$10 billion into the Lotteries Fund, to demonstrate the Government's commitment to the Special Scheme.
- (j) The additional service places for the elderly to be provided by the Special Scheme would form a solid basis for the future RCS planning for the elderly as well as the development of relevant manpower training programmes.

Healthcare

10. Mr YUEN said that as regards the viability of setting up integrated elderly services centres, the idea was still under examination. The Food and Health Bureau and LWB would continue to explore the issue.

11. In conclusion, the Chairman said that the Commission agreed to undertake the task entrusted by the Government and would conduct studies in respect of the preparation of the Elderly Service Programme Plan and exploring the feasibility of introducing RCS vouchers for the elderly. The Commission also agreed to set up an ad hoc committee under its purview to take charge of the study projects and to commission consultants to carry out researches and consultation work etc. Upon formulation of the project framework by the ad hoc committee, this Commission would consider the need to invite co-opted members to provide necessary specialist advice. Public consultation would also be conducted in due course.

Agenda Item 4: Briefing on Population Policy Consultation

12. Ms Doris HO Pui-ling, Head of the Policy and Project Co-ordination Unit, Chief Secretary for Administration's Office, gave a powerpoint presentation on the consultation document on population policy. Ms HO said that the Steering Committee on Population Policy (Steering Committee) had been reconstituted in December 2012 to include non-official

members for studying afresh and drawing up the population policy. The objective of the population policy was to enhance and nurture talent to cope with the needs of economic development. It also sought to engender a socially inclusive and cohesive society, where all residents and families might enjoy a quality life. At present, the demographic challenges being faced by Hong Kong included a rapidly ageing population, shrinking workforce, increasing dependency ratio and integration of new arrivals. It was estimated that the labour force of Hong Kong would start to shrink in 2018. In view of this, one of the policy directions being considered by the Steering Committee was to draw more economically inactive people such as female homemakers and early retirees into the labour market with a view to reinforcing the local workforce. To encourage female homemakers to work, appropriate support measures such as child care services and incentives for the business sector to provide job-sharing arrangements could be put in place to enable those women to achieve balance of work and family duties. As Hong Kong did not have a statutory retirement age, there were currently some 240 000 retirees aged between 50 and 64. Extending the retirement age of these people could ease the shortage of manpower. However, the possibility that encouraging them to stay in the labour market would hinder the career prospects of the youths should also be considered. Moreover, suitable training and supporting services could also be provided to other population groups, such as new arrivals, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities to facilitate their participation in the labour market.

13. Ms HO said that as regards the quality of local manpower, there were concerns about declining manpower quality, shortage of manpower due to skills mismatch in some industries, and the lack of job diversity for young people, thus hindering their employment opportunities or making them not getting financial rewards in that commensurate with their high educational qualifications. To address the aforesaid concerns, the possible policy directions were to increase job diversity by expanding the economic base of Hong Kong, enhance education and training to ensure that young people were equipped with the right skills, revive the value of vocational training as a viable alternative to traditional academic routes, and promote continuous learning. The talent admission schemes and supplementary labour schemes in place could also become sources of manpower from outside Hong Kong. The possible policy directions in this aspect were to devise the Talent Admission Schemes in the light of economic development strategies, target the scheme at specific groups of talent that could facilitate development in key industries, adopt a more proactive approach to bring home Hong Kong people living or studying abroad or on the Mainland, reduce or eliminate barriers that deterred talent from coming to work in Hong Kong, and consider putting in place a more effective mechanism of labour importation without jeopardising the interests of local workers.

14. Ms HO pointed out that Hong Kong's fertility rate was among the lowest in developed economies because of people's growing tendency to remain single or preference for

late marriage. Many married women were reluctant to have children or have more than one child due to heavy financial burden. Family support policies adopted by other places to foster an environment conducive to childbearing included tax deduction for children, direct subsidies or allowance for child care services, paid parental leave and family-friendly employment practices.

15. Ms HO said that an ageing population would add pressure to the public service system. However, as elderly people of the new generation were healthier, better educated and better-off, they would be able to bring opportunities to our society. For example, they could continue to contribute to the community after retirement, or become customers with high spending power in the consumer market. Possible policy directions in this area were to create an age-friendly environment, develop the silver hair market and explore ways to facilitate the retirement of our elderly people on the Mainland.

16. The Chairman and Members raised the following questions and views:

Nurturing talent

- (a) To address the problem of youth employment, the first step should be reviewing the curriculum to ensure that the knowledge or skills imparted could meet the practical needs of the labour market. Moreover, students should be provided with workplace training and internship opportunities in various enterprises or organisations during the final two years of their secondary education so that they could gain hands-on experience of the working conditions and job requirements, thereby gaining an early understanding of their own abilities and work aptitude.
- (b) Vocational training for the elderly care service industry should be further strengthened to meet the challenges of an ageing community.

Extension of the retirement age

- (c) As far as private enterprises were concerned, labour insurance remained the biggest obstacle to the extension of retirement age because an insurance companies in general would not provide insurance coverage for employees beyond the retirement age. Therefore, in order to facilitate the implementation of the proposed extension of retirement age, measures had to be put in place to encourage insurance companies to provide coverage for the elderly.
- (d) The idea of flexible retirement age was supported, its implications on the employment

opportunities for and career prospects of the young people should be considered.

- (e) Publicity should be stepped up to encourage business organisations to employ retired staff as advisers at a nominal remuneration. This would allow the retirees to continue contributing to the society by passing on their knowledge and experience to the younger colleagues in the organisations. The younger staff, on the other hand, could experience the caring culture of the organisations and develop a stronger sense of belonging.
- (f) It was proposed that the extended retirement age could be determined in accordance with the types of jobs.

Creating an age-friendly environment

- (g) To create an age-friendly environment, the current barrier-free access design adopted in buildings should be upgraded to the universal design to ensure various facilities in buildings were readily accessible to the elderly.
- (h) At present, the living environment in many old private buildings was not conducive to the safe living of the elderly. The Government should provide subsidy to improve the living environment of private buildings so that the elderly could age in place.

Development of the silver hair market

- (i) While promoting the silver hair market, measures had to be put in place to regulate business practices and provide consumer education for the elderly so as to prevent them from falling into traps of commercial fraud.

Encouraging childbirth

- (j) Living environment was a major concern of young couples in deciding whether to have children. Therefore, the provision of affordable housing for young people was a prerequisite to boosting the fertility rate.

Development of workforce

- (k) Children's education was an issue which deterred Hong Kong emigrants from returning to work in Hong Kong. It was proposed that children of those returning emigrants who had previously lived in Hong Kong for ten years or above could be given the

eligibility to enroll for any types of local schools so that these returning emigrants could choose their preferred modes of education for their children. This could attract emigrants with higher education to return to work and their children would become part of Hong Kong's future workforce.

- (l) The elderly care service sector was exploring the feasibility of applying the qualification framework to female homemakers so that their experience could be considered as qualifications for joining the elderly care services. It was hoped that this would help boost women's participation in the labour force.
- (m) Many people were able to go out to work because their elderly parents babysat for them. To encourage more elderly people to follow suit, the Government should consider providing subsidies for the elderly who helped look after their grandchildren. This would in turn release more young people for joining the labour force.

Importation of labour

- (n) Given the shortage of manpower in the elderly care service sector, importation of healthcare personnel (e.g. medical practitioners) should be considered. A grace period of three years could be set and the arrangement should be subject to review at an appropriate time.
- (o) Importation of lower-skilled workers could address the problem of manpower shortage. However, it was more important to develop a qualification framework for the sector concerned so as to provide young people with qualification recognition and promotion prospects, thus attracting them to pursue further career development in the sector.

17. Ms HO responded as follows:

Nurturing talent

- (a) Local tertiary institutions were in fact well aware that the programmes offered (associate degree programmes in particular) should focus on practical subjects and allow enrolled students to enhance their knowledge and skills. Programme refinement was being carried out in consultation with the relevant sectors to ensure that students who completed the programmes would secure better employment opportunities. The Government shared the view that there was a need to enhance young people's understanding of various professions and life planning. In this connection, it was announced in this year's Policy Address that with effect from the

2014/15 school year, each public sector school operating senior secondary education levels would be provided with a recurrent cash grant equivalent to the salary of a graduate teacher to facilitate the school's enhancement of the life planning and career guidance services, e.g. helping students better understand their work aptitude, and holding career talks in collaboration with business corporations.

Extension of the retirement age

- (b) It was brought to the attention of the Secretariat of the Steering Committee on a number of occasions that some enterprises had experienced difficulties in taking out insurance for their senior-age employees. The Secretariat therefore consulted the relevant policy bureau and was advised that the insurance sector did not see many difficulties of underwriting such insurance contracts. Members were welcome to raise specific questions and suggestions about this issue so that the Steering Committee could have a better understanding of the practical difficulties encountered in the employment of senior-age staff and give due consideration to the necessary improvement measures.

Development of workforce

- (c) The Government would explore ways to provide appropriate supporting measures for returning emigrants.
- (d) The provision of child care allowance for grandparents would be controversial as it was the general view of the society that looking after children (particularly those at a tender age) was a family's responsibility which should not be shared by the society.

Importation of labour and talent

- (e) Apart from importing low-skilled labour, the Government had also put in place various talent admission schemes. However, as regards the importation of professionals such as medical practitioners, some professional bodies had expressed reservations about extending their recognition of overseas professional qualifications. The Government wished to listen more to the views of the community through this consultation exercise and explore ways to follow up the issue with the professional bodies concerned.

Agenda item 5: Any other business

Work progress of the Committee on Elder Academy Development Foundation

18. Mr CHOW Wing-hang said that at its meeting held on 22 January 2014, the Committee on the Elder Academy Development Foundation (Foundation Committee) discussed the follow-up in respect of the injection of \$50 million into the Foundation, and endorsed the formation of a Subcommittee on Publicity and Development which would make recommendations on the promotion and development of the Elder Academy (EA) Scheme. The Foundation Committee also tasked the Vetting Sub-committee to draw up new funding guidelines of the EA Scheme. The guidelines were expected to be finalised and implemented by the next round of funding applications in May this year. Furthermore, the Vetting Sub-committee would scrutinise five applications received in the second round of funding applications for 2013-14 at its meeting to be held on 30 January 2014. Three of the applications were submitted by tertiary institutions for the provision of elder academy courses and the other two by the New Territories West Elder Academies Cluster, one for organising a high table dinner for the Elder Academies and the other one for funding its 2013-14 work plans.

Date of next meeting

19. The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for 11 March 2014.
(Post-meeting note: The next meeting was advanced and held on 4 March 2014.)

Time of adjournment

20. The meeting was adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

February 2014