

57th Meeting of the Elderly Commission
Press Summary

The Elderly Commission (EC) held its 57th meeting today (6 March 2009) with the following items on the agenda:

(1) Briefing on Budget 2009-10

- The Commission welcomed the new initiatives on supporting elders proposed in the Financial Secretary's 2009-10 Budget, including:
 - an additional \$5 million to launch a new round of the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project (NAAP) in each district;
 - allocate \$10 million to establish an Elder Academy Development Foundation;
 - Government will co-ordinate the setting up of a dedicated portal for the elderly;
 - an additional \$17 million to provide a total of about 150 subsidised residential care places in two newly built contract residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs); and an additional \$38 million for providing 500 subsidised residential care places through the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme; and
 - an additional \$37 million to enhance the support for RCHEs taking

care of infirm and demented elders.

- The Commission was glad to note that the Government would continue to encourage self-help and mutual help among elders at the community level through launching a new round of the Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project (NAAP) in the financial year 2009-10.
- The Commission was also glad to note that to further promote the Elder Academy Scheme, the Government and various sectors will work together to co-sponsor and establish an Elder Academy Development Foundation to provide seed money to secondary and primary schools as well as tertiary institutions to develop Elder Academies, and ensure the sustainable development of this scheme.
- The Commission welcomed Government's plan to co-ordinate the cooperation of the Hong Kong Housing Society and Cyber Senior in the setting up of a dedicated portal for the elderly to provide one-stop information service on elderly services and the silver hair market.
- The Commission considered that the new initiatives on increasing subsidised residential care places and to enhance the support for RCHEs taking care of infirm and demented elders would be useful in responding to elders' demand for subsidised residential care places and further enhancing the care for needy elders.
- The Commission also welcomed the allocation of \$872 million additional

recurrent provision by the Government to the Hospital Authority for meeting new and increased demands; \$170 million to the Food and Health Bureau for implementing various healthcare service reform initiatives, which include, among others, the enhancement of primary care services for chronic disease patients, purchase of healthcare services from the private sector for targeted groups of patients and the enhancement of family medicine training; and \$181 million for the development of a patient-oriented territory-wide electronic health record sharing system connecting public and private service providers as an essential infrastructure for healthcare reform.

(2) **Pilot Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project (PNAAP) – Prevention of Elderly Suicide**

- The NAAP was launched in early 2008. With elders playing a leading role, the project seeks to establish neighbourhood support networks and enable elders to become a new driving force in the community. Through cross-sectoral collaboration, the project mobilises different organisations and individuals who are interested in serving the community to promote the message of active ageing and caring for elders.
- Whilst the NAAP began to flourish and taking into account the views and experience from various sectors, the Commission agreed to further strengthen the NAAP by launching the two-year “Pilot Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project – Prevention of Elderly Suicide” in 2009-10. Through launching a total of 33 new district projects, new neighbourhood support networks would be established in all districts to strengthen work on elderly suicide prevention

at the community level and encourage elders to care for themselves.

- Parties that would participate in the “PNAAP – Prevention of Elderly Suicide” include welfare organizations across the territory, Community Mental Health Intervention Project Teams, the Personal Emergency Link Service, medical social workers, as well as the Elderly Suicide Prevention Programme and the Community Psychiatric Service of the Hospital Authority. District projects would also be launched under the “PNAAP – Prevention of Elderly Suicide”. Apart from organising activities that promote the concepts of active ageing and neighbourhood support, the district projects would also set up elder caring groups with volunteers. Under supervision from social workers and other professionals, the elder caring groups would provide support to elders-in-need.

- In 2009-10, a total of 75 district projects would be carried out across the territory under PNAAP, including -
 - 13 district projects of Pilot Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project;
 - 29 district projects of Pilot Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project – Caring for Elders;
 - 33 district projects of Pilot Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project – Prevention of Elderly Suicide.

(3) Dedicated Portal for the Elderly

- As the Internet becomes more accessible, the needs of the elderly with regard

to information technology must not be overlooked. Currently, online information for elders in Hong Kong is provided by different websites, and elders are not able to access this information in a quick and convenient manner. The Commission welcomed the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer's plan to co-ordinate the setting up of a dedicated portal for the elderly through the provision of seed money.

- The Commission agreed that through this new portal and various computer courses offered by the Elder Academies, the elderly will enhance their computer knowledge and their ability to use digital services, expanding their circles of life through the Internet.

(4) Elder Academy Scheme

- Members were 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.
- To further promote the Elder Academy Scheme, LWB and EC will invite a new round of applications for setting up Elder Academies in secondary and primary schools during the period from 6 March 2009 to 20 April 2009.
- At present, there are 78 Elder Academies set up in primary and secondary schools. They will provide nearly 10 000 learning places for elders in this

academic year. Elder Academies are run jointly by schools or school-sponsoring bodies and social welfare organisations, and are characterised by cross-sectoral collaboration and intergenerational harmony. We have also gained the support of seven tertiary institutions which will hold Elder Academy courses, and are expected to offer about 1 000 learning places for elders in the 2008-09 academic year.

Related Background Information

Elderly Services

- The Commission has been working with the Government on the long-term planning of elderly residential care services, and has embarked on a consultancy study to explore how to target subsidised residential care services at elders most in need. The study will also look into ways to promote further development of quality self-financing / private residential care services and encourage shared responsibilities among individuals, their families and the society in meeting the long-term care needs of the elderly. The study is expected to complete in early 2009.
- RCHEs usually need to deploy more staff and seek inputs from health care professionals in taking care of infirm and demented elders. The additional allocation for “Infirmity Care Supplement” and “Dementia Supplement” will enable RCHEs taking care of infirm and demented elders to employ additional staff, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses (registered or

enrolled nurses), health workers and care workers, etc. to enhance the care for these elders.

Operation Building Bright

- As a specific measure for “Preserving Jobs”, the Financial Secretary announced in the 2009-10 Budget that the Government, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) and the Urban Renewal Authority (URA), will launch a \$1-billion “Operation Building Bright” (the Operation) for two years to provide subsidies and one-stop technical assistance to assist owners of about 1,000 old buildings to carry out repair works, including old buildings without owners’ corporations (OCs). The Operation aims to achieve the dual objectives of creating more job opportunities for the construction sector in the near future and improving building safety and the cityscape.
- A grant amounting to 80% of the cost of repair of the common areas, subject to a ceiling of \$16,000, will be provided for the owner of each unit of a target building without asset or income means tests, and elderly owner-occupiers aged 60 or above can receive a grant to cover the full cost of repair of common areas, subject to a ceiling of \$40,000.
- The Government will shortly present the proposal to the Panel on Development of the Legislative Council (LegCo) for discussion. Upon gaining support from the Panel on Development, the Government will apply for funding from the Finance Committee of the LegCo. We estimate that the

Operation could be launched in May this year at the earliest, and jobs can be created from the middle of this year.

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