
Chapter 3

Investing for a Caring Society

Preamble

Hong Kong's economy has seen an upturn in recent years. But the opportunities to share the fruits of prosperity vary among different sectors. This has given rise to concerns about the widening wealth gap, which has been made worse as the grassroots are hard hit by inflation. We will try our best to alleviate the difficulties faced by our local population and continue to enhance the competitiveness of the grassroots through education and retraining. We will also safeguard the well-being of workers at the grassroots level and seek to forestall the phenomenon of excessively low wage through a statutory minimum wage. As regards the disadvantaged, they need support from the Government. In particular, as Hong Kong is moving towards an ageing society, we have to provide better support to the elderly in need. The family is the mainstay of society. The Government attaches great importance to tackling the problem of domestic violence. We will strengthen the direct services and support for victims of domestic violence and families in need. The Government will also enhance child care support at the community level. We will continue to develop professional services for persons with disabilities to cater for their needs at different stages of their lives.

New Initiatives

We will:

- Further strengthen the direct services and support for victims of domestic violence and families in need, including intensifying manpower support in the Family and Child Protective Service Units and Clinical Psychology Units, further developing the batterer intervention programme, enhancing support for various refuge and crisis centres, and continuing to strengthen public education.
- Provide additional places for rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities.
- Enhance medical social services for persons with mental health problems and chronic illness.
- Provide additional subsidised residential care places for frail elders through the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme, in addition to those to be provided in new contract homes to meet growing demand.
- Provide additional subsidised day care places and enhance the service capacity of subsidised home-based services for frail elders to support “ageing in the community”.
- Enhance the care for infirm and demented elders in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly.
- Extend the District-based Trial Scheme on Carer Training to cover all District Elderly Community Centres in the territory so as to further strengthen the support to carers of elders.

- Complete the review on Old Age Allowance and implement the recommendations as soon as possible.
- Prepare for legislative amendments to enhance the enforcement of Labour Tribunal awards.
- Introduce a bill on statutory minimum wage into the Legislative Council in the 2008-09 legislative session.
- Improve the statutory compensation for persons with occupational deafness under the Occupational Deafness (Compensation) Ordinance.
- Promote the occupational safety and health performance of renovation and maintenance works through launching a publicity and promotional campaign to heighten safety awareness of people engaged in such works and stepping up enforcement to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.
- Review the existing consumer protection legislation in the light of the recommendations by the Consumer Council with a view to better protecting consumer rights and combating misleading and undesirable sales practices, and consult the public on the way forward in the first half of 2009.

- Spearhead a pilot scheme in setting up district cyber centres to enable children from low income families and other needy local residents to gain access to the rich pool of information and knowledge in the cyber space. This aims to facilitate the upward mobility of the underprivileged groups through enhancing their literacy in information technology, and enhance social integration at the localities. We will encourage a tripartite partnership amongst the Government, community organisations and private sector in establishing and managing the centres, and to enable enterprises to fulfil their social responsibilities by showing care to the disadvantaged.
- Install as far as practicable lifts/escalators connecting common areas in hillside public housing estates and lifts in low-rise public housing blocks without lifts to facilitate access of residents.
- Establish an assessment system on the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems.
- Co-ordinate cross-bureaux efforts in the post-quake reconstruction support work in Sichuan and follow through the first stage of HKSAR's work plan, following Legislative Council's approval in July 2008 to inject \$2 billion into the Trust Fund in Support of Reconstruction in the Sichuan Earthquake Stricken Areas.
- Review the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance to examine whether the Ordinance can afford adequate protection to personal data having regard to developments, including advancement in technology, in the last decade, and consult the public on our review findings.

- Consider how the relevant parties could be consulted on the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission on stalking.

On-going Initiatives

We are:

- Continuing our work on the promotion of human rights.
- Implementing the Race Discrimination Ordinance, establishing four support service centres for ethnic minorities and implementing other measures to promote racial equality.
- Working closely with the Ping Wo Fund Advisory Committee on the use of the Ping Wo Fund to finance public education to prevent gambling-related problems, to provide counselling and support services to pathological gamblers, and to conduct research on studies on gambling-related issues.
- Together with stakeholders, encouraging further development of social enterprises to help enhance the employability of the able-bodied unemployed. Reinforcing the district-based approach in alleviating poverty through implementing the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme and other district co-ordination work.
- Working closely with the Family Council to promote family core values and family education, to study and address problems from a family perspective, and to create a pro-family environment and foster work-life balance.

- Identifying appropriate land uses for Area 112 and Area 115 of Tin Shui Wai to promote the economic and social development of the area, and to bring more employment opportunities to its residents.
- Implementing the relaxation measures under the Transport Support Scheme to encourage needy unemployed and low-income employees living in designated remote districts to find jobs and stay in employment.
- Undertaking a review of the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme to enhance the effectiveness of training and employment support rendered to young people aged 15 to 24.
- Continuing with the review on the definition of continuous employment under the Employment Ordinance having regard to recent developments in the labour market, and consulting stakeholders in the process.
- Continuing enforcement action against wage offences.
- Further promoting family-friendly employment practices to employers with a view to encouraging wider adoption of such practices in the workplace.
- Continuing with intelligence-based and proactive strategy in combating illegal employment.
- Co-ordinating efforts across the Government in poverty alleviation through the Task Force on Poverty and monitoring overall progress.

- Studying how best to put in place a “one-stop” employment service through streamlining, integrating and enhancing existing employment and training/retraining services of the Labour Department, Social Welfare Department and Employees Retraining Board (ERB). ERB’s new Training cum Employment Resource Centre has commenced full operation in early October 2008 to try out a “one-stop” model. The aim is to better assist the unemployed and realise the objective of “from welfare to self-reliance”.
- Implementing the Child Development Fund pioneer projects to try out a new model to encourage children from a disadvantaged background to plan for the future and cultivate positive attitudes with a view to reducing inter-generational poverty.
- Encouraging and helping able-bodied Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients to become self-reliant.
- Providing support to the Women’s Commission in promoting the interests and well-being of women through the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women, including the Capacity Building Mileage Programme, and public education.
- Continuing to apply the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist or the concept in different policy areas progressively, and working with the Women’s Commission to further promote gender mainstreaming.
- Studying long-term social welfare planning.
- Implementing the anti-violence programme for abusers, and continuing with the batterer intervention programme following completion of the pilot.

- Continuing to prevent and tackle domestic violence through public education and enhanced training for related professionals.
- Implementing the pilot project on Child Fatality Review.
- Monitoring the implementation of the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Ordinance 2008 and introducing further amendments to the Ordinance on the types of cohabitants.
- Enhancing transport services for persons with disabilities through improvements to rebus service, and examining ways of further improving accessibility of transport services.
- Continuing to provide services and support for persons with disabilities and their families/carers through the enhancement of district-based community support services.
- Promoting active ageing to encourage elders to lead a fruitful life.
- Upgrading subvented residential care places to provide long-term care for frail elders to meet the growing care needs of elders.
- Continuing with outreaching efforts of elderly centres to singleton and hidden elders to help them develop social life, and strengthening the referral, counselling and support services to elders in need.
- Providing integrated support services to both elderly hospital discharges who have difficulty taking care of themselves and their carers through the Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients.

- Helping needy elders who live in dilapidated homes to improve their home conditions through the Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly.
- Training additional Enrolled Nurses for the welfare sector.
- Studying the long-term planning for subsidised residential care services for the elderly through a consultancy study led by the Elderly Commission.
- Promoting flexible child care services to meet the varying needs of families.
- Completing the strategic review on the future directions of the ERB to enhance our training and retraining services and implementing in phases the final proposals. The eligibility criteria of the Employees Retraining Scheme were relaxed in December 2007 to cover young people aged between 15 and 29 and people with education level at sub-degree or below.
- Encouraging schools to collaborate with non-governmental organisations in providing school-based after-school learning and support services for needy students.
- Maintaining supply of public rental housing (PRH) for needy applicants with an average waiting time of around three years.
- Preparing for the conduct of the first rent review of PRH under the new rent adjustment mechanism in 2010.
- Implementing a set of enhanced public housing arrangements to promote mutual family support and care for the elderly.

- Facilitating the implementation of an elderly housing project by the Hong Kong Housing Society on Tanner Road, North Point.
- Exploring ways to leave wealth with people where affordable.
- Implementing a series of initial measures that can be put in place in the short to medium term and formulating long-term, holistic and sustainable policies and measures to tackle the youth drug abuse problem, following the steer of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse led by the Secretary for Justice.
- Mapping out how mediation can be more effectively and extensively applied in both commercial disputes and at the community level, with the assistance of a Working Group on Mediation chaired by the Secretary for Justice.