
Chapter 3

Investing for a Caring Society

Preamble

As an advanced city, Hong Kong should excel not just in economic development and quality living but also in fostering a “caring culture”. While our economy has seen an upturn in recent years, the opportunities to share the fruits of prosperity vary among different sectors of the community. This has given rise to concerns about the widening wealth gap in our society. We will strive to improve the livelihood of people at the grassroots level by enhancing their competitiveness through education and training.

In his Policy Address last year, the Chief Executive put forward the idea of cherishing the family as a core value of social harmony, and proposed setting up a Family Commission to oversee a wide spectrum of policies related to family support. The proposal will be fully implemented this year. Social enterprises constitute another important policy area. Based on tripartite collaboration between the Government, the business sector and the community, we will develop enterprises with social objectives to create more job opportunities. In parallel, we will expand the scope of the Employees Retraining Scheme, launch a one-stop employment service on a pilot basis, and offer a variety of welfare and employment support programmes under the concept of “helping people to help themselves”.

We must not forget the disadvantaged groups who are unable to attain self-reliance. The Government will continue to provide them with care and support.

New Initiatives

We will:

- Organise a summit before the end of the year and put forward an action plan to promote the development of social enterprises.
- Set up a high-level Family Council to better formulate policies and initiatives relating to family support and integrate the work of the Youth Commission, Women's Commission and Elderly Commission on family support matters.
- Implement a set of enhanced public housing arrangements to promote mutual family support and care for the elderly.
- Launch a three-year pilot scheme in the 2008-09 financial year to provide five medical vouchers, each of \$50 value, to the elderly aged 70 or above per year as a subsidy for their use of private primary health care services, and as a token of appreciation for their contribution to the society. The pilot scheme also seeks to promote better use of primary health care services among the elderly, to encourage them to foster a long-term doctor-patient relationship with family doctors and attach greater importance to disease prevention.
- Study the long-term development planning for social welfare through the Social Welfare Advisory Committee.
- Enhance elderly centres' outreaching efforts to singleton and hidden elderly to help them develop social life. Strengthen also the referral, counselling and support services to the elderly in need.

- Provide additional subsidised day care places for frail elderly to support “ageing in the community”. Launch a trial scheme in three districts to provide carer training and develop “elder sitter” services for elders in need.
- Launch a trial scheme to provide integrated support services to elderly hospital dischargees who have difficulty taking care of themselves and to their carers.
- Provide additional subsidised residential care places for frail elderly to meet their growing long-term care needs. Upgrade places in subvented residential care homes for the elderly to provide infirmary care.
- Study the long-term planning for subsidised welfare services for the elderly.
- Strengthen services and support for persons with disabilities and their families/carers through the enhancement of district-based community support services, and increasing places of day training, vocational rehabilitation, pre-school and subvented residential services.
- Extend the Comprehensive Child Development Service in phases.
- Strengthen the provision of day foster care services and promote different forms of child care services to meet the varying needs of families.
- Intensify direct support for victims of domestic violence and vulnerable families, including increasing placement in refuge centres for women, expanding residential services for children, and enhancing the hotline service of the Social Welfare Department.

- Launch a new anti-violence programme for abusers, and continue with the pilot batterer intervention programme.
- Strengthen prevention and tackling of domestic violence through public education and enhanced training for related professionals.
- Launch a pilot Child Fatality Review Mechanism.
- Study 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), and to launch a pilot to try out the “one-stop” model. The aim is to better assist the unemployed and realise the objective of “from welfare to self-reliance”.
- Relax the eligibility criteria of the Employees Retraining Scheme to cover people aged between 15 and 29 and those with education level at sub-degree or below. Meanwhile, a strategic review of the ERB is in progress. The review seeks to enhance the ERB’s services and operation, including the optimal use of the Employees Retraining Levy.
- Create 3 000 three-year positions for young people in 2008-09 in partnership with non-governmental organisations to enhance their work experience and employability.
- Set up a new Task Force on Poverty within the Government to co-ordinate efforts across the Government in poverty alleviation and monitor their overall progress.

- Enhance occupational safety and health through setting up a central investigation mechanism in the Labour Department to encourage workers to report malpractices in workplaces and stepping up the monitoring of the performance of mandatory safety training course providers.
- Conduct a review on the definition of continuous employment under the Employment Ordinance in the light of recent developments in the labour market.
- Enhance current measures and formulate new measures to tackle emerging trends in drug abuse, particularly drug abuse among youths.
- Map 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 to be established by the Secretary for Justice.

On-going Initiatives

We are:

- Continuing our work on the promotion of human rights.
- Continuing to process the Race Discrimination Bill introduced in the Legislative Council in 2006.
- 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.
- Continuing to work in collaboration with the construction industry to monitor and control payment of workers' wages and reduce non-value added multi-layer subcontracting to raise industry standards.
- Further promoting the Wage Protection Movement for cleaning workers and security guards and securing the support of different sectors in the community. A mid-term review will be conducted on the Movement in October 2007 to gauge its progress, and a final review will be carried out to evaluate its overall effectiveness

in October 2008. If the final review finds that the Movement fails to yield satisfactory results, the Administration will introduce a statutory minimum wage for cleaning workers and security guards.

- Implementing the pilot Transport Support Scheme to encourage needy unemployed and low-income employees living in designated remote districts to find jobs and work across districts, with a review of the Scheme to be conducted at the end of the one-year pilot.
- Opening two Youth Employment Resource Centres before end-2007 to provide one-stop advisory and support services on employment and self-employment to young people aged 15-29.
- Implementing the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme to enhance the employability of young people aged 15-24.
- Implementing the Special Incentive Allowance Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers (LDH) to promote the LDH market.
- Taking stronger enforcement action against wage offences.
- Promoting family-friendly employment practices such as flexible work arrangements, family leave benefits and employee support schemes.
- Familiarizing stakeholders with the new medical functions of registered Chinese medicine practitioners in relation to employee benefits under labour laws.
- Taking stronger enforcement action and conducting more publicity to combat illegal employment.

- Setting up a Child Development Fund to encourage children from a disadvantaged background to plan for the future and cultivate positive attitudes with a view to reducing inter-generational poverty.
- Reviewing measures under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme to encourage and help able-bodied CSSA recipients to become self-reliant.
- Encouraging schools to collaborate with non-governmental organisations in providing school-based after-school learning and support services for needy students.
- 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.
- Introducing progressively the use of the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist in different policy areas, and working with the Women's Commission to further promote gender mainstreaming.
- Strengthening district welfare planning and co-ordination.
- Implementing the Family Support Programme to increase connection with vulnerable families which are unmotivated, so that their problems can be tackled early and appropriate services provided.
- Following through the scrutiny of the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill by the Legislative Council to enhance the prevention of domestic violence and to render better protection for victims of domestic violence.

- Enhancing transport services for people with disabilities through improvements to rehabus service, and examining ways of further improving accessibility of transport services.
- Providing transitional residential services to the severely disabled persons, including tetraplegic patients, as well as convalescent and continuing rehabilitation day services to discharged patients with mental, neurological or physical impairment to facilitate their early reintegration into the community.
- Promoting active ageing to encourage elders to lead a fruitful life.
- Converting subvented residential care places into long-term care places for frail elders to meet the growing care needs of elders.
- Enhancing the service capacity of subsidised home-based services for vulnerable elders in the community.
- Training additional Enrolled Nurses for the welfare sector.
- Maintaining supply of public rental housing (PRH) for needy applicants with an average waiting time of around three years.
- Preparing for the first rent review of PRH under the new income-based rent adjustment mechanism, including the collection and compilation of income data of PRH tenants.
- In line with the principle of keeping expenditure within the limits of revenue, continuing the strive to achieve a fiscal balance, avoid deficits and keep the budget commensurate with the growth rate of Gross Domestic Product; making proper use of fiscal surplus, if any,

after taking account of our long-term interest; reviewing our tax base and continuing to implement the asset sale and securitisation programme.

- Exploring ways to leave wealth with people where affordable.
- Studying options for broadening the tax base and to consult the public further on those options which are more practical in due course.