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## Chapter 4

# Optimising Our Demographic Structure And Attracting Talent

## Preamble

Hong Kong is facing the challenge of an ageing population. The proportion of elderly population in Hong Kong will rise rapidly over the next two decades, at a rate much faster than most other advanced economies. This will have a far-reaching impact on the economy, healthcare, welfare, retirement protection, education and public finance. We need to prepare for this challenge.

We need to continue enhancing the quality and competitiveness of our population in order to meet the challenges of a knowledge-based economy. To this end, we will continue to devote substantial resources to education and vigorously develop retraining services.

To meet the rising expectation of the public on healthcare services, the Government is progressively increasing the resources devoted to healthcare to respond to the changing demographic structure, increasing healthcare needs and rising health expenditure so as to enhance healthcare services and implement service reforms initiatives before the healthcare financing arrangements are finalised.

In 2009, to fight against the human swine influenza (Influenza A (H1N1)), which is posing a global threat, we have stepped up our efforts in the prevention, containment and mitigation of the disease. We are also prepared for the imminent winter peak of influenza. As we deal with a public health crisis, we also have to continue to develop measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of the healthcare system. For this purpose, the Government aims to put forward more concrete proposals on various healthcare reform issues, including healthcare financing, in 2010 and launch the second stage public consultation to deepen the discussion and galvanise consensus.

## New Initiatives

*We will:*

- Allocate additional resources and establish a dedicated team to implement the initial recommendations of the Working Group on Primary Care in the next few years, including –
  - (a) developing protocols for managing individual chronic diseases to facilitate the provision of more comprehensive care to chronic disease patients, and promoting these protocols to the patients through healthcare professionals in the public and private sectors;
  - (b) preparing a Primary Care Directory to facilitate the establishment of networks among healthcare professionals providing primary care so as to promote comprehensive primary care services and the family doctor concept, and to advocate continuous training and education of healthcare personnel; and
  - (c) launching pilot projects in various districts to set up community health centres and networks under different service models to provide more comprehensive primary care services to patients through collaboration of the public sector, private sector and non-government organisations.
- From 2009 onwards, introduce a subsidy scheme for elderly aged 65 and above to receive seasonal influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations to enhance primary health care and disease prevention.

- In anticipation of the winter peak of seasonal influenza in 2009-10, provide vaccination against human swine influenza for high risk groups.
- Openly invite expression of interest from the market by end of 2009 to develop private hospitals at four reserved sites (at Wong Chuk Hang, Tseung Kwan O, Tai Po and Lantau).
- Conduct the second-stage public consultation in 2010 on various healthcare reform issues, including the overall development strategy on primary care, legal framework for protecting the privacy of personal data in electronic health records, and concrete proposals on healthcare financing.
- Strengthen the community platform for the provision of mental health services. The Hospital Authority (HA) will enhance collaboration with the social welfare sector in providing intensive community support for persons with mental illness. To this end, we will –
  - (a) launch a case management programme to provide intensive community support to persons with severe mental illness; and
  - (b) enhance the assessment and treatment services for people with common mental disorders and the support to primary care professionals in providing integrated mental health care.

- Complete the review on the regulation of pharmaceutical products in Hong Kong before the end of 2009 to strengthen the regulatory control on the supply of drugs and to raise the standard of the pharmaceutical sector with a view to ensuring patients' safety and safeguarding public health. Legislative amendments will be proposed if necessary.
- Review the Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) to provide a legal framework to facilitate the development of self-financing post-secondary education institutions with potential and capabilities.
- Explore the possibility of allowing Mainland students to pursue studies in non-local courses at degree level or above.
- Explore allowing the admission of Mainland senior secondary students to short-term programmes offered by local degree-awarding institutions.
- Explore the possibility for Mainland students to pursue studies at our non public-sector senior secondary schools.
- Take forward recommendations made by the Working Group on Textbooks and E-learning Resources Development which include a series of measures to address the public's concern on continuing textbook price increase and measures to enhance and accelerate the development of the online depository of curriculum-based learning and teaching resources and the development of e-learning with a view to enhancing students' effectiveness in learning.

- Kick start the review on the implementation of Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) for continuous improvement to the quality of pre-primary education.
- Conduct a review on the operation of the non-means-tested loan schemes, with a view to ensuring that reasonable financial support is provided to students pursuing post-secondary and continuing and professional education, effective measures are in place to reduce loan default rate, as well as proper use of public resources.

## On-going Initiatives

*We are:*

- Continuing to encourage and promote public policy research in higher education institutions as a means to improve our policy-making capabilities, in particular the quality of policy research.
- Continuing to devote substantial resources in education to enhance the quality of our young generation, promote social mobility, and meet the needs and challenges of a changing economy.
- Continuing to enhance the quality of pre-primary education by progressively increasing the level of direct fee subsidy for eligible parents and providing financial support for teachers' professional upgrading through the PEVS.
- Planning with four remaining primary schools to turn into whole-day schooling.
- Preparing for the implementation of the fine-tuning of medium of instruction for secondary schools in the 2010-11 school year, starting from Secondary 1.
- Continuing to provide a broad range of school-based professional support services for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools to help them take forward education reform initiatives.

- Continuing to transform senior secondary and higher education through professional capacity building and supporting institutional preparation to implement the new senior secondary academic structure from 2009.
- Implementing the Qualifications Framework by phases through the formation of industry training advisory committees to develop competency-based qualifications for individual industries, and developing a quality assurance mechanism to underpin the Qualifications Framework.
- Continuing to enhance the learning and teaching of English in primary schools by introducing measures to attract talent to the teaching profession; enhancing the professionalism of serving teachers; and providing additional resources for primary schools to develop school-based enhancement measures and to enrich their English language environment in schools.
- Strengthening support to teachers through the provision of professional development opportunities for the smooth implementation of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment.
- Promoting overseas exchange programmes to nurture students' global perspective and encouraging their participation in international events and activities.
- Implementing small class teaching in public sector primary schools in the 2009-10 school year, starting from Primary 1.



- Increasing the respective ratios of graduate teacher posts in public sector primary and secondary schools to 50% and 85% with effect from the 2009-10 school year.
- Continuing to implement measures to develop Hong Kong as a regional education hub to attract and retain non-local students. These include increasing the non-local student quota for publicly-funded programmes, awarding government scholarships to outstanding students from the \$1 billion HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund, and relaxing employment and immigration restrictions for non-local students.
- Continuing to organise Mainland study trips and exchange programmes for teachers and students of both primary and secondary schools as well as to give support to teachers in the teaching of national education in the school curricula.
- Participating in the work of the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training to keep under review and make recommendations on the system and provision of legal education and training in Hong Kong, including the provision of vocational training of prospective legal practitioners.
- Continuing the promotion of various talent admission schemes and reviewing their application procedures from time to time with a view to streamlining the arrangements for the employment of talents and professionals.

- In accordance with the direction of the healthcare reform, before the healthcare financing arrangements are finalised for implementation, making use of the increased government funding for healthcare to strengthen existing healthcare services and to start implementing various service reforms, including the on-going initiatives set out below –
  - (a) Strengthening healthcare support for chronic diseases to facilitate early detection, prevention and treatment; educate patients and their carers; encourage need- and risk-based proactive care for secondary prevention; and provide early prevention and intervention of complications to reduce the need for hospitalisation. Continuing to prepare and implement a series of pilot projects to provide support to chronic disease patients;
  - (b) Continuing the three-year pilot scheme launched in early 2009 to provide five health care vouchers per year of \$50 each to elderly aged 70 or above as partial subsidy for their use of private primary care services in their neighbourhood community;
  - (c) Building a hospital in Tin Shui Wai to strengthen medical services in the district;

- (d) Preparing for the establishment of multi-partite medical centres of excellence in paediatrics and neuroscience to improve the quality of clinical services to patients suffering from complex and serious illnesses as well as to enhance the standards of research and training in the two respective medical disciplines. To contribute to the long-term development of paediatrics and neuroscience, the Centres will bring together medical professionals in the public, private and academic sectors from both within and outside Hong Kong, and partner with major international medical centres in professional collaborations, research and training;
- (e) Enhancing public healthcare services through public-private partnership to increase the volume, reduce waiting time, offer additional choices for patients, and enhance cost-effectiveness. To continue planning and implementing a series of pilot projects, including: purchasing of primary care services from the private sector in Tin Shui Wai North for specific patient groups under the care of public General Out Patient Clinics; implementing public-private shared care programme for chronic disease patients; purchasing haemodialysis service from private centres for end stage renal disease patients currently under the care of public hospitals, etc;
- (f) Continuing to explore other public-private partnership initiatives to facilitate integration of the public and private healthcare sectors, promote healthy competition for service quality and professional standards, and provide more choices for the public;

- (g) Under the newly-established Electronic Health Record Office, continuing to develop a territory-wide patient-oriented electronic health record system for sharing important medical and health records of patients among healthcare providers subject to the patients' consent so as to provide a pivotal infrastructure for implementing healthcare reform, planning for the work relating to protection of personal data privacy and system security, and promoting the partnership of public and private sectors;
  - (h) Further expanding the HA's "Electronic Patient Record Sharing Pilot Project" to allow more private healthcare providers, including those participating in public-private partnership projects, to access their patients' records kept at HA and enter the patients' clinical information upon the patients' consent with a view to promoting sharing of patients' records;
  - (i) Enhancing professional training and facilitating professional development for medical and healthcare practitioners, and improving their working arrangements; and
  - (j) Overseeing the implementation of the three-year interim funding arrangement for the HA pending the development of a sustainable long-term funding arrangement in the light of the outcome of public consultation on the healthcare reform.
- Strengthening the regulation of Chinese medicine with the full implementation of the registration of proprietary Chinese medicines and enhancing inspections of Chinese medicines traders.

- Preparing for the establishment of four public Chinese Medicine clinics, thereby increasing the number of clinics from 14 to 18, so as to enhance Chinese medicine service in our public healthcare system.
- Implementing the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance and continuing to improve our infectious disease surveillance, control and notification system.
- Developing a multi-pronged strategy to minimise the risk of avian influenza outbreaks, including the development of a poultry slaughtering centre.
- Implementing the Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, which is a comprehensive strategy to co-ordinate multi-sectoral efforts in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.
- Enhancing cancer surveillance by improving case reporting.
- Continuing our efforts in tobacco control through the multi-pronged approach of publicity, promotion, education, legislation, taxation and smoking cessation, and implementing the fixed penalty system to strengthen enforcement of the smoking ban.
- Promoting healthy eating habit in schools and food premises and creating an environment conducive to making healthy choices of food to protect the public from life-style diseases.
- Developing a statutory regulatory proposal on medical devices, taking into account the findings of the regulatory impact assessment and the views of the stakeholders.

- Through collaboration with relevant organisations, continuing to promote registration for organ donation on the Central Organ Donation Register among the public.