
Policy Agenda

Introduction

Over the past four years or so, Hong Kong has encountered many difficulties and experienced major social incidents. The Government also needs to address a number of deep-seated problems, but we are committed to a clear and firm direction. The Government must continue to work hand-in-hand with the community in building an economically vibrant, creative, harmonious and caring city with balanced development and quality living, so as to sustain Hong Kong's success story and lay a solid foundation for the future.

Through the determination and efforts of the entire Government, we have made major strides on a number of important subjects. To consolidate the economic foundation of Hong Kong, we established the Innovation and Technology Bureau to promote the development of innovation and technology, nurture smart production and high value-added industries with the aim of facilitating economic restructuring. At the same time, we capitalise on the opportunities brought by the National 13th Five-Year Plan and the Belt and Road Initiative to foster economic diversification and social development. The Government is engaging the public on the territorial development strategy "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" with a view to updating it. We are planning in phases the implementation of seven new railway schemes in accordance with the Railway Development Strategy 2014 to enhance public transport services. Also, to meet the public's housing aspirations, we are taking a multi-pronged approach to increasing the supply of land for housing, thereby ensuring the sustainable development of Hong Kong.

Improving people's livelihood and supporting the underprivileged is at the top agenda of the current-term Government. Through the work of the Commission on Poverty and making good use of public resources, we have launched a number of initiatives to render targeted assistance to the elderly, poor working families, persons with disabilities, women and other persons in need. The initiatives include the Old Age Living Allowance and Low-income Working Family Allowance. During this government term, the recurrent expenditure on social welfare has increased by 55%, which far exceeded the 32% rise in the overall recurrent government expenditure in the same period. The Government also injected an additional \$15 billion into the Community Care Fund to take forward more assistance programmes to plug the gaps in the system. Our efforts are delivering results. The poor population in 2015 remained below one million for the third consecutive year and the poverty rate of working families hit a record low since data became available in 2009. These are hard-earned achievements.

In response to the challenges arising from an ageing population and a shrinking workforce, the current-term Government has set up the Steering Committee on Population Policy to co-ordinate and implement measures to raise the quality of local talent, unleash the potential of the local labour force, attract talent from outside Hong Kong and actively develop Hong Kong into an age-friendly city, all aimed at supporting our future development. We have made long-term planning for improving public healthcare services by setting aside a dedicated provision of \$200 billion for pursuing a ten-year hospital development plan. In addition, the Government continued to invest heavily in education. Key measures include increasing the financial provision for pre-primary education to \$6.7 billion starting

in the 2017/18 school year for implementation of the free quality kindergarten education policy; improving the hardware and software of primary and secondary schools; stabilising the teaching force; providing diverse, high-quality post-secondary education as well as vocational and professional education and training; and promoting life planning education, with the aim of enabling our next generation to fully realise their potential.

The Government also strives to fulfil public aspirations for a more ideal living environment and quality living. We actively promote heritage and nature conservation, as well as greening activities. Besides, we are implementing various initiatives on air quality improvement, waste management, energy saving and biodiversity enhancement according to the objectives and plans set out in the four policy blueprints on environmental protection, whilst pressing ahead with our work on combating climate change. We also spare no effort in promoting the development of arts, culture and sports through the planning and construction of the territory's largest sports facility, Kai Tak Sports Park for hosting international and local events and for public use, and the development of the West Kowloon Cultural District for enriching people's cultural life.

In the past few years, we faced immense challenges and the society experienced huge divergence on certain issues. Nevertheless, it is the Government's duty to work tirelessly with the public to build a better society, as we share a common belief and objective to sustain economic development and improve people's livelihood. In the days to come, we hope to forge a more understanding and inclusive society. The Government is determined to joining hands with the public to continue to uphold our core values, viz the rule of law, and a free and clean society; and together endeavour to build a better Hong Kong.