

Press release

LCQ14: Scheme \$6,000

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

Following is a question by Dr Hon Lam Tai-fai and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, in the Legislative Council today (November 30):

Question:

The batching period of "Scheme \$6,000" (the Scheme), which commenced on August 28 this year, ended on November 5, this year, and the authorities have received a total of over 4 million registration forms. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the respective numbers of registrants in various age groups, those who are eligible persons living in Hong Kong or outside Hong Kong, and those who are persons with special needs (with a breakdown set out in table form);

(b) of the number of registrants who have submitted registrations but do not meet the eligibility criteria, and the reasons for their ineligibility; among them, how many are ineligible because they do not hold a valid smart Hong Kong permanent identity card; the number of people who have filed for review and appeal, and the outcome (with a breakdown set out in table form);

(c) of the number of people who have collected their cheques; the number of people aged 65 or above who have opted to collect their cheques at the post offices in various districts; and whether the authorities have made any arrangement to assist them in collecting cheques at post offices; if they have, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(d) apart from the aforesaid people, when the other registrants will receive the payment (list the timetable);

(e) of the estimated number of people who opt to receive \$6,000 plus a bonus of \$200; the resultant increase in government expenditure;

(f) of the number of enquiries received through the Scheme hotline 186000 so far and their contents (with a breakdown set out in table form);

(g) whether the various government departments have received any complaint relating to the Scheme; if they have, of the details of such complaints (with a breakdown set out in table form);

(h) whether it has assessed if the present progress and arrangements of the Scheme are satisfactory, and the reasons for their being satisfactory; whether it will conduct a review on the Scheme; if it will, when the review will be conducted, and whether it will submit a review report to this Council; if not, of the reasons for that;

(i) since the Macao SAR Government has announced that it will continue to hand out money to Macao residents for the fifth consecutive year in 2012, whether it has assessed if this has imposed pressure on the Hong Kong SAR Government; if it has imposed pressure, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(j) whether it will consider handing out cash to members of the public again in the 2012-2013 financial year; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(k) given the view expressed by the International Monetary Fund Staff Mission on November 16 this year that in the absence of a major external shock in Hong Kong, measures taking the form of universal transfers could be discontinued in the upcoming Budget, whether the Government has assessed such a view; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(l) given that some members of the public consider that the Scheme is not a measure which makes good use of social resources and suggest that the Government should focus the resources on helping people in society who are in greater need of assistance, whether the Government has assessed such views; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(a) As at November 26, 2011, about 4.18 million people have successfully registered for "Scheme \$6000" (the Scheme). Among them, around 40 000 are persons with special need. A breakdown by age group of the number of successful registrants is set out in Table 1 of Annex.

As the registration arrangements for eligible persons in or outside Hong Kong are the same, we do not have a breakdown by geographical location.

(b) As at November 26, 2011, there were about 6,000 registration forms of which the registrants did not meet the eligibility criteria, i.e. without a valid Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card (HKPIC) (the HKPIC criterion) and/or under the age of 18 (the age criterion). Among them, about 5,600 cases did not meet the HKPIC criterion. We have so far received 68 applications for review and have completed ten cases. The original decision was upheld in four cases while the remaining six cases were confirmed to be enquiries in nature rather than review applications.

(c) As at November 26, 2011, more than 50,000 eligible persons in the first batch (i.e. those aged 65 or above) have successfully registered for the Scheme through the Hongkong Post. Cheque collection notifications have been mailed to them in phases. The cheques will be available for collection at the post offices for at most one year starting from the dates of issue.

Those who have received the notifications may collect the cheques at the post offices selected during office hours. For the convenience of the public, 50 of the 56 post offices providing cheque collection service will extend office hours to 5pm on five consecutive Saturdays on November 19 and 26, and December 3, 10 and 17 for dedicated handling of cheque collection under the Scheme. Relevant information is detailed in the notifications for reference.

(d) Other eligible persons who register through banks and are confirmed to have met the eligibility criteria will normally receive the payment directly through the specified bank account in around 10 weeks after registration. Those who register through the Hongkong Post and are confirmed to have met the eligibility criteria will normally be notified by post of cheque collection at the post office selected in around 12 weeks after registration.

(e) As there are still more than four months before April 2012, it is difficult to estimate the number of people who will opt to receive \$6,000 plus a bonus of \$200. We will continue to keep in view the progress of registration.

(f) As at November 26, 2011, a total of more than 220,000 telephone enquiries have been handled by the Scheme's enquiry hotline 186000. Details are set out in Table 2 of Annex.

(g) As at November 26, 2011, we have received a total of 859 complaints in relation to the Scheme. Details are set out in Table 3 of Annex.

(h) Since its launch, we have closely monitored the implementation of the Scheme, put in place appropriate arrangements for registration and payment, and made timely announcement to the public of the Scheme's progress and other relevant information to enable eligible persons to register and receive payment in a convenient and efficient manner as scheduled. Up till now, more than 4 million people have registered for the Scheme with eligible persons receiving payments by batches. The Scheme has been running smoothly and making good progress. We will continue to keep in view its implementation and make appropriate arrangements when necessary.

(i) to (l) In preparing for the annual Budget, we will have regard to the prevailing fiscal conditions and take into account the needs of the community and related policies before making any decision.

Ends