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### Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2016-17

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Session No. : 21

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**S-LWB(L)01**

**(Question Serial No. S0069)**

Head: (90) Labour Department

Subhead (No. & title): ( )

Programme: (1) Labour Relations (2) Employment Services  
(4) Employees' Rights and Benefits

Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Labour (Donald TONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Subsequent to Reply Serial No. LWB(L)004, would the Government provide further information on the following:

What was the placement rate of female trainees who completed courses offered by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) in 2015-16? Has the Government conducted more detailed surveys to get an idea about the number of graduate trainees employed in the same industry as the training courses they attended and the percentage of trainees whose jobs are unrelated to the courses taken?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Yuen-han (Member Question No. )

Reply:

Training bodies of ERB provide 3 to 6 months' placement follow-up services for trainees who have completed placement-tied courses. The training bodies have to report to ERB the trainees' placement information, including post titles, job nature and relevancy of the duties to their training.

In 2015-16 <sup>Note 1</sup>, the placement rate <sup>Note 2</sup> and relevancy to training <sup>Note 3</sup> of female trainees who completed placement-tied courses were 84% and 53% respectively.

<sup>Note 1</sup> Estimated figures as at February 2016.

<sup>Note 2</sup> The placement rate refers to the percentage of trainees who engaged in employment during the placement follow-up period over the number of completions of placement-tied courses.

Note 3 Relevancy to training refers to the percentage of trainees who engaged in jobs related to their training during the placement follow-up period over the number of trainees who engaged in employment.

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**S-LWB(L)02**

**(Question Serial No. S0070)**

Head: (90) Labour Department

Subhead (No. & title): ( )

Programme: (2) Employment Services

Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Labour (Donald TONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

According to Reply Serial No. LWB(L)002, the retention survey conducted in October 2015 showed that as many as 40% of job seekers placed into employment under the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged (EPM) remained in the same post for 6 months or less. Does the Government have any plan to conduct a thorough survey on the reasons for such a large number of early departures and the relation between these departures and the working environment and remuneration packages? If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Yuen-han (Member Question No. )

Reply:

The Labour Department conducts regular surveys to gauge the retention status of job seekers placed into employment under EPM. According to the recent survey conducted in October 2015, a majority of employers continued to engage the employees after the end of the on-the-job training period of 3 to 6 months, and nearly 60% of the cases achieved a retention period of 6 months or more. Among the cases where the employees had left employment at the time of the survey, about 80% of them left employment on their own accord for various reasons. The main reasons included personal reasons such as health or family, not able to adapt to the working environment, work arrangement and personnel issues, or switching to other jobs.

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**S-LWB(L)03**

**(Question Serial No. S0071)**

Head: (90) Labour Department

Subhead (No. & title): ( )

Programme: (2) Employment Services

Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Labour (Donald TONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Subsequent to Reply Serial No. LWB(L)003, would the Government provide further information on:

- (a) the existing number of interpreters in the Labour Department (LD) and the total number of languages covered by the interpretation service;
- (b) the utilisation of the interpretation service by ethnic minorities (EMs) and the waiting time for obtaining interpretation service after making a request upon their arrival at LD; and
- (c) whether the Government has any plan to increase the number of interpreters so as to shorten job seekers' waiting time for such service?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Yuen-han (Member Question No. )

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows:

- (a)-(b) There is no interpreter in the establishment of LD. At present, LD has made arrangements with the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER), a non-governmental organisation (NGO), to provide job seekers who are not proficient in Chinese and English with simultaneous interpretation service in 7 EM languages/dialects (including Hindi, Bahasa Indonesia, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai, Punjabi and Urdu). Posters on the interpretation service provided by CHEER are produced in major EM languages and displayed in all job centres. Meanwhile, employment services ambassadors (ESAs) who speak EM proactively approach EM visitors of job centres or industry-based recruitment centres and assist them in using various facilities and

services of the centres, including simultaneous interpretation service. LD has also produced leaflets in EM languages for distribution to every EM job seeker visiting the job centres to proactively introduce the interpretation service. In 2015, the staff of job centres introduced the interpretation service to 1 467 EM job seekers and, in the light of their needs, arranged simultaneous interpretation service on 15 occasions. In addition, LD has collaborated with relevant organisations to provide EMs with on-the-spot interpretation service at large-scale and district-based inclusive job fairs. LD does not keep information on the waiting time for individuals to obtain interpretation service. However, based on experience, CHEER can normally provide interpretation service to EMs in need within a short time.

- (c) LD will continue with the existing flexible arrangements made with the NGOs concerned to provide efficient interpretation service to EM job seekers in need and assist them in obtaining the required services with the support of EM ESAs.

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**S-LWB(L)04**

**(Question Serial No. S0072)**

Head: (90) Labour Department

Subhead (No. & title): ( )

Programme: (2) Employment Services

Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Labour (Donald TONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

According to Reply Serial Nos. LWB(L)041 and LWB(L)042, working hours were relatively long in the food and beverage services and security services industries in the past 3 years. The median weekly working hours for the former consistently reached 54 hours, while those for the latter exceeded this figure, with median weekly working hours as high as 62.5 hours in 2013. The figure dropped in 2015 but still reached 57.2 hours, seriously affecting the normal life of employees. In this connection, what specific measures will be taken by the Government in 2016-17 to address the issue of employees' prolonged working hours and to ensure that employees can strike a work-life balance?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wai-keung (Member Question No. )

Reply:

On working hours policy, the Standard Working Hours Committee plans to launch the second-stage consultation on the working hours policy directions being explored before the end of April 2016 to collect views from the public and relevant organisations for its reference in preparing a report for submission to the Government.

Regarding the promotion of family-friendly employment practices (FFEP), the Labour Department (LD), as a facilitator, has been disseminating relevant information to the community and employers. In 2016-17, apart from producing a new set of television and radio Announcements in the Public Interest, LD will continue to arrange a wide range of publicity channels and various educational and promotional activities such as publications, large-scale seminars, roving exhibitions, newspaper feature articles, periodicals of major employers' associations and trade union federations, public transport network as well as regular meetings and exchanges with business executives and human resources managers, and encourage employers to help employees achieve a balance between work and family life. LD will also continue to promote relevant messages through industry-based Tripartite Committees covering the catering and property management industries.

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**S-LWB(L)05**

**(Question Serial No. SV0022)**

Head: (90) Labour Department

Subhead (No. & title): ( ) Not specified

Programme: (1) Labour Relations

Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Labour (Donald TONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Regarding the conciliation of labour disputes involving foreign domestic helpers (FDHs), this Committee requests the Government to elaborate on the effectiveness of its work by providing relevant data such as the number of cases, the handling time, and the numbers of successful and unsuccessful cases.

(Time of discussion at the meeting: 5:57 pm, 8 April 2016)

Asked by: Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing

Reply:

The numbers of claims involving FDHs handled and settled by the Labour Department (LD) in the past 3 years are as follows:

	<b>No. of claims involving FDHs</b>		
	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Claims handled	3 186	1 913	1 449
Claims settled	2 568	1 451	1 077

LD has always been able to fulfil its performance pledge of conducting conciliation meetings within 5 weeks from lodging of claims. However, LD does not keep information on the time required for handling a claim case.

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**S-LWB(L)06**

**(Question Serial No. S0078)**

Head: (90) Labour Department

Subhead (No. & title): ( )

Programme: (2) Employment Services

Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Labour (Donald TONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Subsequent to Reply Serial No. LWB(L)097, would the Government provide further information on the following:

Age discrimination is one of the key factors that hamper the return of mature persons to the labour market. Yet at present, Hong Kong seeks to eliminate age discrimination in employment by solely relying on the Practical Guidelines for Employers, which are not backed by legislation. The effectiveness is limited as shown by the repeated cases of mature persons being rejected from the labour market owing to old age. Given the trend of an ageing population, the problem will only get worse. Does the Government have any plan to create more jobs or new industries suitable for mature persons and introduce legislation against all forms of age discrimination in employment? If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon TANG Ka-piu (Member Question No. )

Reply:

To cope with the future demographic development and promote the employment of mature persons, the Labour Department (LD) will continue to organise job fairs for middle-aged and mature persons so as to encourage enterprises to employ mature persons and tap this valuable pool of human resources. In soliciting employers' participation, LD will encourage participating organisations to offer openings with shorter working hours and more flexible work arrangements, and other vacancies suitable for middle-aged and mature persons. Since May 2015, LD's job centres have been staging district-based thematic job fairs on part-time jobs which are welcomed by some mature persons.

In addition, LD will continue to provide on-the-job training allowance of up to \$3,000 for a period of 3 to 6 months to encourage employers to engage middle-aged and mature persons aged 40 or above and provide them with on-the-job training under the Employment

Programme for the Middle-aged (EPM). EPM, which originally only covered full-time employment, has been extended to cover part-time jobs since September 2015 to encourage employers to provide more employment opportunities suitable for middle-aged and mature persons.

In introducing legislation against age discrimination in employment, the Government has to give careful consideration to, inter alia, the actual needs, public interest, effectiveness and practicability of the legislation. LD will continue to encourage employers to consider talent, not age, in recruitment and employment, implement public education and publicity programmes, and promote self-regulation through various channels to enhance public awareness on this front, thereby promoting and safeguarding equal employment opportunities.

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