

#### LCQ4: Communication between the Government and the Youth

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Following is a question by the Hon Kam Nai-wai and a reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (February 3):

Question:

At the Question and Answer Session of this Council last month, the Chief Executive (CE) said that he would strengthen communication with young people. However, he did not go out of the Legislative Council Building immediately to talk to those young people who were on a fast in protest against the allocation of funds for constructing the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, as suggested by some Members of this Council, and said that he would look for an appropriate occasion to communicate with them. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of:

(a) whether it has assessed when the appropriate time is for CE and the principal officials under the accountability system to directly communicate with young people; if it has, of the results, as well as through what means and with which groups of young people they will communicate;

(b) of the respective numbers of members of the Commission on Youth who were born before 1950, between 1950 and 1959, 1960 and 1969, 1970 and 1979, and in 1980 or after; of the criteria and standards for appointing these members by the Government; whether the Government has assessed the effectiveness of the work of the Commission in the past five years; if it has, of the results, including those issues of wide public concern on which the Commission had consulted young people, and the youth matters on which it had given its views to the Government; and

(c) whether it has assessed the effectiveness of the activities which were organised in the past three years for the purpose of receiving the views of young people, such as youth forums, youth councils and youth summits; if it has, of the results and the issues on which the aspirations and wishes of young people had been heard, as well as the future plan to receive more widely and seriously the views of young people on government policies?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the three-part question of the Honourable Member is as follows:

(a) Young people are our future hope. The political accountability team of the HKSAR Government agrees that communication with young people should be strengthened. The Government has always listened to and received views from people of all social strata in the community, including those of young people, through different channels. This includes face to face direct communication and communication through representatives of public opinion and different intermediaries. While the Legislative Council is a statutory body of public opinion, we note that it reflects the views of different age groups. District Councils also actively reflect public opinion, including the needs of the young generation, at the district level. District Councils and a number of local organisations have played an important role in the anti-drug campaign for young people being launched by the Government. The Government would conduct public consultation in formulating major policy initiatives, and young people are welcome to express their views. The Government has established the Commission on Youth (COY) to advise the Government on youth development. The Government also takes note of the needs and feelings of young people through such channels as public media and the internet. We are aware that the internet has become so popular and widespread that it has changed not only the operation mode of the economy but also the method of communication of the society and among people. Young people are accommodative to new things and adept at new technology. They prefer to express their views at social websites via the internet platform. In this connection, while consulting young people with traditional methods, the Government is actively considering how to make better use of the internet to communicate with them so as to better understand the issues that they come across in their growth and matters of their concern.

(b) The COY comprises 28 non-official members, including student, social workers, academics and incumbents of youth groups. According to the information provided by them, their age distribution is as follows:

Year	No. of members
1950 -1959	15
1960 -1969	6
1970–1979	4
1980 or after	3

In the appointment of these members, the Government has upheld the principle of appointing individuals on their merits. Due consideration is given to a candidate's ability, expertise, experience, integrity and commitment to public service.

The COY advises the Government on matters pertaining to youth. Other than the Home Affairs Bureau, representatives from the Education Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Security Bureau sit on the COY as ex-officio members to listen to the views on their respective policy areas. In formulating or reviewing youth-related policies, policy bureaux often consult the COY on the issues concerned. In the past few years, these issues include the one-stop portal for young people, a new Family Commission, the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund, and the review of the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance. The COY also relays to the Government views of young people and provide it with statistics on youth matters by carrying out studies and collating reference materials. The COY would promote the development of young people on a variety of fronts.

(c) As I have replied in the first part, the Government understands the thinking of young people and receives their views through different channels. Organising the Youth Summit is one of such approaches which offers young people with an opportunity to air their views on matters of their concern and provides a channel for direct dialogue with government officials. In 2006, the Youth Summit was held with the theme "When China Moves into the World - The Development and Commitment of Youths in Hong Kong" and there were discussions over areas of concern of young people, such as education, culture, technology and employment. In March this year, the COY, in collaboration with the Home Affairs Bureau, will hold the Youth Summit 2010 with the theme "Building the Future - Challenges and Opportunities for the Youth". There will also be a number of discussion topics for young people to express their views on matters of their concern, which include "Challenges Arising from Demographic Changes", "Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development", "Healthy Life, Healthy Mind" and "Versatility and Collaboration in Culture and Technology". Representatives of the relevant policy bureaux and departments will attend the summit to listen to the voices of young people and have exchanges with them.

Ends/Wednesday, February 3, 2010