

LCQ17: Support for DC members

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Tai-fai and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 12):

Question:

Since 2006, the Government has strengthened the role of District Councils ("DCs") in the management of district facilities and improved the support for DC members, so as to comprehensively enhance the functions of DCs. Yet, some DC members still consider the support from the Government inadequate and not comprehensive enough. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether the Government had, in the past three years, conducted studies in any form on how to comprehensively enhance the social status of DC members (including their recognition or image, etc.); if it had, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(b) what plans the Government has at present to support DC members to pursue continuing education or receive any form of training; if there is no such plan, of the reasons for that;

(c) given that in its reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on November 5, 2008 regarding the end-of-service gratuities and medical allowance for DC members, the authorities had advised that they would review the remuneration arrangements for DC members and seek advice from the Independent Commission on Remuneration for Members of the District Councils, whether the review has been completed; if so, of the details and the Commission's views; if not, the reasons for that;

(d) whether the authorities had, in the past three years, conducted a comprehensive survey in relation to the average monthly workload and average daily working hours of elected DC members in undertaking the work of DCs, so as to determine whether the current level of their remuneration and allowances is reasonable (including whether their basic living expenses can be met); if they had, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(e) whether the authorities have planned to grant full exemption of salaries tax to elected DC members or provide retirement protection for them; if they have, of the

details; if not, the reasons for that;

(f) whether it has, since 1997, compiled statistics on the total number of DC members who encountered accidents and were assaulted while discharging duties; if it had, of a breakdown by the type of accident and assault; if not, the reasons for that;

(g) whether the authorities had, in the past three years, assessed the danger in the work of DC members; if the assessment outcome indicates that danger is involved, of the form of support to be provided for them; if the assessment outcome indicates otherwise, the reasons for that; and

(h) given that the Government has proposed to have all the five new Functional Constituency seats in the Legislative Council and the existing DC Functional Constituency seat returned through election by elected DC members from among themselves in 2012, whether the Government has planned to immediately raise the level of remuneration and allowances for DC members after the passage of the constitutional reform proposals?

Reply:

President,

The District Councils (DCs) have been an important partner of the Government in district administration, and we recognise the valuable public services provided by DC members for the community.

As regards the remuneration package for DC members, it has been the established practice to complete the review before the next DC election, so that candidates are aware of the agreed remuneration package before they decide to take part in the election. We have already commenced the review of DC members' remuneration package, and shall consult the Independent Commission on Remuneration for Members of the District Councils of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("the Independent Commission") in a timely manner.

We note the new arrangements for medical allowance and end-of-service gratuity for Legislative Council members in the current term. We shall take into account this development, the views received from the Independent Commission and DC members as well as other relevant factors, and ensure that the arrangements will meet the needs

of changing circumstances.

As regards training for DC members, the Government has been organising briefings on Government policies and programmes as well as visits for DC members from time to time. Examples include the briefings on the strategic planning of railways and highways, environmental protection policies and programmes as well as the visits to the venues of the East Asian Games and exhibitions, etc. In addition, DC members may make use of their Miscellaneous Expenses Allowance (MEA) for self-development courses as appropriate.

We have not conducted any study on the social status of DC members. Nor do we compile statistics on the workload of elected DC members, and the number of DC members who encountered accidents and were assaulted while discharging duties.

Ends/Wednesday, May 12, 2010

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