

LCQ8: Management of Hong Kong Girl Guides Association

Following is a question by the Hon Leung Kwok-hung and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Ms Florence Hui Hiu-fai, in the Legislative Council today (July 14):

Question:

I have received complaints from quite a number of parents and kindergarten teachers that since the incumbent Chief Commissioner (CC) of the Hong Kong Girl Guides Association (the Association) assumed the office, the Association has made use of government funds or donations to organise many activities which served no practical purposes or were not related to the training and mission of the Girl Guides. Those parents and teachers have also pointed out that one of the Association's schemes even recruits male children as members. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows the appointment method and tenure of CC, as well as the requirements on the training received and years of work experience;

(b) whether it knows if the Unit Guiders in Hong Kong have the nomination and voting rights to elect CC; if they have, of the number of votes received by the incumbent CC and the percentage of that number in the total number of Unit Guiders in Hong Kong; whether any mechanism is in place for the dismissal of CC; if not, whether it has assessed if the appointment of CC was made in a black box;

(c) of the amounts of government funds, donations and proceeds of charity lottery tickets received by the Association in each of the past five years (set out in the table below);

Year	Amount of government funds	Amount of donations	Amount of proceeds of charity lottery tickets
2005			
2006			
2007			

2008

2009

(d) how the Government regulates how the Association uses the donations or government funds received (including the amount of charitable donations and government funds spent respectively on the anniversary function held in a hotel in Tsim Sha Tsui on November 3, 2009 and the anti-drug related performance activity held in the Hong Kong Coliseum on April 25, 2010, in which CC and 1,000 girl guides participated); and

(e) whether it knows the year in which the Association started to recruit male children as members of the "Uniform Subsidy Scheme for Happy Bee"; given that apart from that scheme, no other scheme or branch of the Association accepts male children/adults as members, whether the Government has assessed if this situation is a breach of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 480); if the assessment result is in the affirmative, when the Government will refer the aforesaid case to the Equal Opportunities Commission for follow up?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association was established in 1916 with a view to providing girls and young women with the opportunity for self-training in the development of character, responsible citizenship and service to the community. My reply to the questions of Hon Leung Kwok-hung is as follows:

(a) The Chief Commissioner is appointed by the Council of the Association. The initial term of appointment of the Chief Commissioner shall be three years, and may be further appointed for a further three-year term at the end of this period. But there must be a break of three years before the same person can be appointed as Chief Commissioner after two consecutive terms. There is no particular requirement on the training received and years of work experience for Chief Commissioner. From record, all Chief Commissioners had been Deputy Chief Commissioner and held other positions in the Association before their appointment as Chief Commissioner.

(b) Chief Commissioner, Deputy Chief Commissioners, Assistant Chief Commissioners, International Commissioner, Division Commissioners, Assistant

Division Commissioners and the District Commissioners are all ex-officio members of the Council having the nomination and voting rights to elect the Chief Commissioner. The incumbent Chief Commissioner was appointed in the election in October 2007, and the number of votes received by the Chief Commissioner in the said election represented 88% of the total number of votes casted. Pursuant to the constitution of the Association, the Council may resolve to remove the Chief Commissioner at an Extraordinary General Meeting.

(c) The amounts of government funds, donations and proceeds of charity lottery tickets received by the Association in each of the past five years are set out in the annex.

(d) The Government issued an internal control guideline to all subvented uniformed groups including the Hong Kong Girl Guides Association, and requested them to comply with the guideline to ensure that they would have prudent financial management. The Government also issued the "Guide to Corporate Governance for Subvented Organisations" produced by the Efficiency Unit to them. The Association submits audited financial accounts to the Home Affairs Bureau every year. According to the information provided by the Association, expenses of the anniversary function held on November 3, 2009 were borne by different sponsors of the activities and no charitable donations or Government subvention were involved. Regarding the Association's "Beat-Drug Grand Musical" held on April 25, 2010, in addition to the amount borne by different sponsors, it was also one of the events in an anti-drug project, which had received funding from the Beat Drugs Fund in 2009; other activities include seminars and visits. The said application was supported by the Action Committee Against Narcotics, and was provided with grants up to \$272,800 from the Beat Drugs Fund. The project was launched in September 2009 and would last for one year. It was a funding requirement that applicants shall submit half-yearly progress reports to the Secretariat of the Beat Drugs Fund. All vouchers shall also be submitted after the completion of individual events for verification before the grant would be issued. Applicants are also required to submit a final report upon two months after the completion of the entire project to account for the financial accounts and programme results. Since the project is still being conducted, the actual sum of grant can only be ascertained later this year.

(e) The Association recruits members by district. In 2000, the Association started accepting kindergartens in all districts of Hong Kong to establish their "Happy Bees" teams. Boys and girls aged 4 to 6 in kindergartens may join a "Happy Bees" team to

become a member of the Association. Both male and female members in the "Happy Bees" units may apply to various schemes applicable to their teams. A provision in the Association's constitution provides that one of the aims of the Association is to provide girls and young women with the opportunity for self-training in different areas. Given that the Association is a tax-exempt charity under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance, pursuant to Section 49 of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 480) where a provision contained in a charitable instrument for conferring benefits on persons of one sex only, relevant parts in the Sex Discrimination Ordinance shall not render unlawful an act which is done in order to give effect to such a provision.

Ends/Wednesday, July 14, 2010

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