

LCQ9: The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association

Following is a question by the Hon Leung Kwok-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (June 27):

Question:

I have received complaints respectively from parents, members of women's groups, kindergarten teachers and Unit Guiders pointing out that the Hong Kong Girl Guides Association (the Association), a statutory body under the presidency of the spouse of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Government, appointed a staff member with only secondary education to act as the Chief Executive (CE) of the Association after the former CE vacated office in early October 2010, thus breaching the basic academic qualification requirements for heads of statutory bodies in general. In addition, the Association pointed out mistakenly through the media on September 16, 2010 that the sale of raffle tickets (tickets) had been conducted for more than 20 years and the percentage of refund to its units had never been in the region of 50%, but the authorities stated in its reply to my question on October 27, 2010 that "starting from the sale of the 1 001st ticket (priced at \$2 each), a maximum of \$1 was refunded to the units per ticket". The two statements are obviously contradictory. The aforesaid complaints even pointed out that in recent years the Association held its annual general meetings (AGMs) by hosting banquets with tens of tables, each priced at \$7,000 to \$9,000, hence giving an impression of prodigality. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the amount of recurrent subvention allocated to the Association in the current financial year;

(b) whether the remuneration of the incumbent CE of the Association is paid from the recurrent subvention allocated to the Association by the Government; if so, of the monthly remuneration of the incumbent CE; if not, whether it knows who pays for the remuneration of the incumbent CE;

(c) whether it knows if the incumbent CE of the Association is a university graduate; if she is, the university from which she graduated and the year of graduation; if not; whether the basic academic qualification requirements for heads of statutory bodies in

general have been breached;

(d) whether the Government at present monitors strictly how the Association uses the recurrent subvention; if so, who is responsible for monitoring; if not, whether monitoring is impossible after the recurrent subvention has been allocated to the Association from public coffers;

(e) whether it knows if the Association will make a public apology for pointing out mistakenly that the percentage of raffle refund to its units had never been in the region of 50%, if the Association will do so, when it will apologise; if not, the reasons for that;

(f) whether it knows if the Association will revert to the practice in 1992 or before by increasing the percentage of raffle refund to 50% starting from the sale of the 1 001st ticket; if the Association will do so, when the relevant arrangement will be made; if not, the reasons for that;

(g) whether the legislation at present allows charitable bodies to host extravagant banquets for their AGMs; if so, of the relevant legislation; whether it has assessed if the Association should use the money spent on banquets in the past on the development of the units of the Girl Guides instead;

(h) whether it knows if the President of the Association has consented to holding AGM of the Association at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC);

(i) given that the Association is able to host banquets with tens of tables at HKCEC, whether the Government should immediately reduce the recurrent subvention to the Association so as to use public funds effectively; if it will reduce the subvention, when it will do so; if not, of the reasons for that;

(j) whether the Government will ask the Director of Audit to review the necessity for the Association, which is subvented by the Government, to hold AGM by hosting a banquet with tens of tables at HKCEC; if it will, when it will do so; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(k) whether the Government will appoint civil servants as ex-officio members of the Association to monitor the operation of the Association; if it will, who will be

appointed; if not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association (Association) is an independent statutory non-governmental organisation. Subvention for its youth development activities is provided by the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB). My reply to the question raised by Hon Leung Kwok-hung is as follows:

- (a) The HAB's subvention to the Association for youth development work and activities is \$10.85 million in the 2012-13 financial year.
- (b) According to the Association, the HAB's subvention accounts for only around 30% of its expenses. The remuneration policy and payment arrangements for its staff are internal matters of the Association. If necessary, Hon Leung may make a direct enquiry to the Association for such information.
- (c) The appointment of the Association's personnel is an internal matter of the Association. No specific requirements on the academic qualifications of the Association's Chief Executive are set out in the Hong Kong Girl Guides Association Ordinance, the Constitution of the Association or its internal rules.
- (d) The Association submits annual reports, audit reports and reports of other purpose-specific grants to the HAB every year for the purpose of monitoring the use of subventions.
- (e) and (f) The fund-raising activities of the Association are its self-administered affairs. As far as raffle refund is concerned, on October 27, 2010 we made a reply to Hon Leung's written question and we have nothing to add.
- (g) to (j) The activities of the Association are its self-administered affairs. According to the Association, Annual General Meetings of the Association are regular meetings convened by its Council to report its work and financial situation to all parties concerned. The holding of an annual dinner is its internal decision. As we understand, the expenditure of such an annual dinner is borne by participants of the event and other sponsors, and no daily operational fund of the Association is involved.

(k) According to the Association's Constitution, the Council is responsible for controlling and managing the affairs of the Association, with members comprising representatives from different sectors of society and appointed representatives from other youth organisations. The Assistant Secretary of the HAB who is responsible for matters concerning subventions for youth uniformed groups is one of the appointed representatives.

Ends/Wednesday, June 27, 2012