

Applications invited for Trial Scheme on Full Rent Exemption for Elderly Under-occupation Transfer

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) today (December 16) invites applications for a trial scheme by which under-occupation households residing in the HA's public rental housing (PRH) estates whose family members are all aged 70 or above are allowed to enjoy full rent exemptions upon transfer to other PRH flats of suitable sizes.

The initiative, which aims at enhancing the effective use of public housing resources, was suggested in the Policy Address 2018, and was approved by the Subsidised Housing Committee of the HA at its meeting in June.

The HA will allocate 300 PRH flats for the trial scheme. Eligible applicants will be given a maximum of three housing offers of either a new or refurbished flat.

"We hope to offer a choice to elderly under-occupation households, while helping recovery of larger units for re-allocation," a spokesman for the HA said.

"A one-off domestic removal allowance will be provided to households upon successful transfer.

"The rent exemption will be withdrawn if a household subsequently fails the eligibility criterion that all members of the household are aged 70 or above, or when additional resources are given to them under different housing policies, such as household splitting," the spokesman said.

The trial scheme will be reviewed after its implementation for one year, he added.

Notification letters will be served to individual eligible households. Applications are open throughout the year with a limited quota and on a first-come-first-served basis.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday,

December 16, 2019 is 106.3 (same as last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, December 14, 2019 was 106.3 (up 0.4 against last Friday's index).

[LegCo Public Accounts Committee to hold public hearing tomorrow](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) Public Accounts Committee (PAC) will hold a public hearing on "Provision of consultancy, research and development and training services by the Hong Kong Productivity Council" (Chapter 2) of the Director of Audit's Report No.73 at 9am tomorrow (December 17) in Conference Room 1 of the LegCo Complex.

Seven witnesses have been invited to appear before the above hearing to respond to points raised in the Report and answer questions asked by PAC members.

The programme for the public hearing is as follows:

Date: December 17 (Tuesday)

Time: 9am

Venue: Conference Room 1

Witnesses

Mr Nicholas W Yang

Secretary for Innovation and Technology

Ms Annie Choi

Permanent Secretary for Innovation and Technology

Ms Rebecca Pun

Commissioner for Innovation and Technology

Mr Ivan Lee

Deputy Commissioner for Innovation and Technology

Mr Mohamed D Butt

Executive Director, Hong Kong Productivity Council

Dr Lawrence Cheung

Chief Innovation Officer, Hong Kong Productivity Council

Ms Vivian Lin

Chief Financial Officer, Hong Kong Productivity Council

PAC is chaired by Mr Abraham Shek, and its Deputy Chairman is Mr Kenneth Leung. Other members include Mr Paul Tse, Mr Steven Ho, Mr Lam Cheuk-ting, Mr Shiu Ka-fai and Ms Tanya Chan.

[Hong Kong Customs reminds public not to bring cannabis products from overseas into Hong Kong](#)

With the Christmas and New Year holidays approaching, Hong Kong Customs today (December 16) reminds members of the public that they should pay attention to whether the products they purchased when travelling contain cannabis since illicit import of cannabis is a criminal offence. They are urged not to break the law.

A spokesman for Hong Kong Customs said the department attaches great importance to combating trafficking in dangerous drugs, and takes rigorous enforcement action in accordance with Hong Kong's laws. The recreational use of cannabis has been legalised in individual overseas jurisdictions where products containing cannabis or controlled cannabinoids (such as tetrahydrocannabinol, or "THC") in the form of food, drinks or topicals, may be available for sale. Customs reminds the public that cannabis and THC are controlled dangerous drugs in Hong Kong. It is a criminal offence to bring such products into Hong Kong.

Cannabis and THC (a major cannabinoid present in cannabis plants) are dangerous drugs controlled under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Cap 134). Any products that contain cannabis or THC are also controlled under Cap 134.

"Members of the public should pay attention to the packaging labels of the products concerned while making purchases in foreign places as well as the relevant domestic legislation in relation to cannabis, so as to avoid breaching the law inadvertently," the spokesman continued.

Under Cap 134, trafficking in dangerous drugs, or illicitly importing to and exporting from Hong Kong, procuring, supplying, manufacturing, or dealing in or with dangerous drugs, constitutes a criminal offence. The maximum penalty is life imprisonment and a fine of \$5 million. Illicitly possessing, or smoking, inhaling, ingesting or injecting dangerous drugs is subject to a maximum penalty of imprisonment for seven years and a fine of \$1 million.

Customs has all along been closely monitoring the trends concerning dangerous drugs in other places and implements appropriate strategies. Stringent law enforcement is imposed on passenger and cargo clearance,

including air postal packets and express cargo, to effectively combat drug trafficking activities and interdict the flow of dangerous drugs into Hong Kong.

Customs also appeals to members of the public to report any suspected illicit drug-related activities through Customs' 24-hour telephone hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Government establishes Tree Review Panel

The Development Bureau (DEVB) announced today (December 16) the establishment of the Tree Review Panel to advise DEVB on complex tree cases.

The two members of the Panel are Dr Greg Moore and Mr Guy Watson, who are overseas experts in arboriculture. The Panel will take effect today for a term of three years.

Dr Moore is currently an Honorary Doctor of the School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences of the University of Melbourne, Australia, and has taught plant science and arboriculture for 40 years. He has contributed to the development of Australian Standards in arboriculture and often teaches arboriculture around the world (including in Hong Kong).

Mr Watson is an experienced consulting arborist in the United Kingdom. He authored a number of field guides related to tree management published by the Arboricultural Association in the United Kingdom and has years of experience in teaching professional tree inspection courses in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong.

A DEVB spokesman said, "The two overseas experts have extensive tree management knowledge and experience in field assessment and diagnosis of trees, and are also familiar with local tree species and their features. As such, they have the ability to provide in-depth and professional research, analysis and advice on complex tree cases. They will also advise on matters related to the policy and technical aspects of tree management having regard to the prevailing circumstances."