

LCQ11: Encouraging Hong Kong young people to take up employment in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area

Following is a question by the Hon Martin Liao and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

The Government implemented the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme on a pilot basis (the pilot scheme) in 2021 and regularised the scheme (the regularised scheme) in 2023. On encouraging Hong Kong young people to take up employment in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Greater Bay Area), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025, the Government indicated that 718 job offers for young people had been received under the regularised scheme as at February 29 this year, of the industries in which the employed young people are engaged, and whether the participation in the regularised scheme has met the Government's expectation;

(2) as it has been reported that a total of 1 091 young people had been employed under the pilot scheme, and among the 632 people who had completed the 18-month on-the-job training, 464 were offered further employment, whether the authorities have followed up on the reasons why the young people participating in the pilot scheme quitted midway and were not offered further employment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as a survey has pointed out that some young people who have completed the pilot scheme aspire to pursue development in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, but they have indicated that the Mainland job search platforms are not clear about how to recruit Hong Kong young people to work on the Mainland and resolve technical issues such as taxation and the "five insurances and one housing fund" for them, how the authorities will optimise the regularised scheme to assist the young people who have completed the scheme to continue to seek development in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, so as to enhance continuity of the relevant policy initiatives;

(4) whether the authorities will consider arranging cross-programme collaborations between the regularised scheme and other youth programmes in the Greater Bay Area (e.g. the Alliance of Hong Kong Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Greater Bay Area, and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area), so as to provide assistance for the entire community of Hong Kong young people who pursue development in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, and to enhance the long-term exchanges between young people on the Mainland and in Hong Kong; and

(5) given that the authorities of the Guangdong Province have introduced measures, including the Centralised Public Recruitment of College Graduates by the Public Institutions in the Guangdong Province in 2023 and the Guangdong Province Internship Programme for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Students, to provide Hong Kong young people with employment and internship opportunities in various industries in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, how the authorities will step up co-operation with the authorities of the Guangdong Province to attract more Hong Kong young people to take up employment in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, so as to encourage them to integrate into the country's overall development?

Reply:

President,

The Government launched the pilot Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme (the pilot scheme) in 2021 and has regularised the scheme (the regularised scheme) since March 2023, encouraging enterprises with business in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) to employ Hong Kong young people in accordance with Hong Kong laws with a monthly salary of not less than HK\$18,000 and station them in the Mainland cities of the GBA to work and receive on-the-job training. Based on the number of young people employed, the Government disbursed a monthly allowance of HK\$10,000 to enterprises for each person for up to 18 months.

In consultation with the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) and the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB), our consolidated reply is as follows:

(1) The regularised scheme for 2023 received a total of 718 notifications of employment. A breakdown of the number of employed young people by industry is set out at Annex. The regularised scheme is open to all eligible young people for participation with no pre-set quota.

(2) The pilot scheme received a total of 1 091 notifications of employment. Among the 632 young people who had completed the 18-month on-the-job training, 464 continued to be employed by the relevant enterprises. The Labour Department (LD) does not maintain information on the reasons for leaving employment or not being further employed in respect of young people participating in the pilot scheme. To evaluate the effectiveness of the regularised scheme, the LD has commissioned a contractor to conduct a 3-year "longitudinal study". The study involves following up with the participating enterprises and young people with a view to understanding the employment situation of the young people, and collecting opinions from enterprises and young people on the Scheme. The first phase of the study commenced in March

2024.

(3) The Government provides various supporting measures to young people participating in the regularised scheme, including setting up a dedicated website to provide the scheme details and a practical guide on working and living in the GBA. The LD has also commissioned service providers to provide support services for the participating young people in the Mainland, including a telephone hotline manned by a dedicated staff to answer enquiries on daily life, laws, taxation in the Mainland, etc., setting up platforms and groups in social media, organising seminars, and assisting young people who have participated in the Scheme to establish alumni associations to strengthen their social networks and promote the sustainable development of their careers. In addition, the Interactive Employment Service website of the LD hosts a dedicated webpage of Information on Employment in the Mainland. It links to employment websites of the Mainland and publishes practical information on working in the Mainland for the reference of enterprises and job seekers.

Moreover, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Office (the Office) under the CMAB has strived to make use of diversified and multi-media means and channels to promote the GBA development to various sectors of the community (including Hong Kong young people). For example, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), the Office has launched and continuously optimised the "GoGBA" digital platform, which provides support to Hong Kong residents and enterprises interested in pursuing development in the Mainland cities of GBA. The Office has also co-organised with the HKTDC a number of "GoGBA Development Day" events in Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of GBA every year and invited representatives of governments to introduce the respective local policies and support measures for entrepreneurship and employment, as well as entrepreneurs and experts to share their experiences in starting businesses or working in the GBA, etc. The Office also actively participates in the "Education and Careers Expo", "Entrepreneur Day" exhibitions, etc., so as to provide young people and members of the public with more information about entrepreneurship and employment in the GBA, including information about the GBA Youth Employment Scheme.

The HKSAR Government also established the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Promotion Centre (Promotion Centre) in April 2023. Through further strengthening strategic co-operation with the HKTDC, Invest Hong Kong and relevant Mainland organisations and institutions, the Promotion Centre organises different types of activities in the Mainland cities of the GBA for Hong Kong residents (including participants of the GBA Youth Employment Scheme) and enterprises pursuing development there, so as to promote the opportunities brought about by the GBA development and to better understand their needs for providing them with practical assistance.

(4) The HYAB and the Youth Development Commission rolled out the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Experiential Scheme) and the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-

Macao Greater Bay Area (the Entrepreneurship Scheme), which assist young people to understand the entrepreneurial opportunities in the huge Mainland market, as well as to provide start-up capital, entrepreneurial support and incubation services to Hong Kong young people who are interested in starting their businesses, help them cope with the difficulties they encounter at the early stages of starting a business, and support them in establishing and developing their businesses. The new round of Entrepreneurship Scheme and Experiential Scheme just started in early April 2024, with a number of optimised arrangements to provide more comprehensive support services for more Hong Kong young people who are interested in starting their businesses locally and in the Mainland cities of the GBA. Furthermore, the HYAB provides funding through the Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland (FSYEM) for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to organise youth exchange projects in the Mainland. The objectives are to promote Hong Kong youth's awareness and understanding of their home country, strengthen their sense of national identity, and enhance exchanges between youths of Hong Kong and the Mainland. Under the first round of the FSYEM in 2024-25, over 140 projects were approved to provide around 12 000 exchange places in the Mainland cities of the GBA.

The Government established the Alliance of Hong Kong Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Greater Bay Area (the Alliance) in December 2023 to further support Hong Kong young people to start their businesses in the GBA. The HYAB, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the People's Government of Guangdong Province, and the Human Resources and Social Security Department of Guangdong Province are the leading parties of the Alliance. Nearly 60 organisations from various sectors in the GBA have joined the Alliance as members, including government and public organisations, innovation and entrepreneurial bases, NGOs and social organisations, post-secondary institutions and scientific research institutes, professional organisations and venture funds. The Alliance leverages the resources and networks of member organisations to provide a one-stop information, publicity and exchange platform, thereby providing young entrepreneurs with comprehensive support. The HYAB also provides funding through the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland (FSYIM) for NGOs to organise youth internship projects in the Mainland. Participants may deepen their understanding of the employment market, workplace culture and development opportunities in the Mainland, which will help them set their future career goals, accumulate work experience, build interpersonal network and boost their employment advantage. Under the FSYIM in 2024-25, 75 projects were approved to provide around 2 600 internship places in the Mainland cities of the GBA.

(5) The LD maintains close contact with the governments of the Guangdong Province and the GBA Mainland cities to step up promotion of the GBA Youth Employment Scheme and the support for young people, and visits higher educational institutions in the Guangdong Province from time to time to conduct promotional briefings. The Guangdong Provincial Government has introduced supporting measures, including online and offline support. Individual municipal governments also offer housing, taxation and other preferential treatment to young people participating in the Scheme. To

further support the participating young people to adapt to working and living in the Mainland, the Guangdong Provincial Government doubled the living allowance to a maximum of RMB2,000 per month in August 2023. The Government will continue to strengthen the collaboration with the Guangdong Provincial Government to support Hong Kong young people to pursue careers in the Mainland cities of the GBA and to actively integrate into overall national development.

The LD will continue to listen to the views of enterprises, tertiary institutions and other stakeholders, and actively explore appropriate measures to further enhance the GBA Youth Employment Scheme.