

LCQ12: Employment of persons with disabilities by Government

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Joshua Law, in the Legislative Council today (October 30):

Question:

In recent years, while the overall employment rate in Hong Kong has remained at high levels, the employment rate of persons with disabilities (PWDs) has been persistently low. According to the findings of a survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2013, the employment rate of PWDs aged 15 and above was 13.6 per cent, and that of the 43 000 PWDs holding post-secondary qualifications among them was around 34.7 per cent. On the other hand, the percentage of civil servants with disabilities in the total number of civil servants had declined for five consecutive years, dropping from 2.1 per cent in 2013-2014 to 1.7 per cent in 2017-2018. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of the existing and newly recruited government employees with disabilities (including civil servants and non-civil service contract staff) and their percentages in the total number of government employees in each of the past three years, together with a tabulated breakdown by (i) the employing department of such employees, (ii) their type of disability, (iii) the grade to which they belonged and (iv) the type of jobs in which they were engaged;

(2) whether the Government, being the largest employer in Hong Kong, will consider afresh implementing within the Government an employment quota system for PWDs, so as to take the lead; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that quite a number of types of jobs within the government structure (e.g. telephone customer services and certain clerical work) can aptly be taken up by PWDs, whether the Government will consider giving PWDs priority for employment when conducting recruitment exercises for posts of designated types of jobs; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question is as follows:

(1) There is no requirement for applicants for government jobs and serving officers to declare their disabilities, if any. The situation on persons with disabilities employed in the civil service is known to us on the basis of information available to bureaux/departments through requests of applicants

during the recruitment process for special arrangements for selection interview/test having regard to their disabilities, or under situations where serving officers with disabilities apply for financial assistance to purchase technical aids to assist in their performance of duties. Hence, the figures obtained through the aforesaid channels are the lowest figures known to us. The number of civil servants known to have disabilities (excluding persons with colour blindness or defective colour perception) and the number of those who were newly recruited, with breakdown by types of disability and bureaux/departments, as well as the percentages in the strength of the civil service they accounted for from 2016-17 to 2018-19, are set out in Table 1-4 in the Annex. We do not collect the relevant information with breakdown by grades and job types of serving or newly recruited civil servants with disabilities. We also do not collect relevant figures on non-civil service contract staff.

(2) The Government's policy objectives are to provide skill training and support services for persons with disabilities to enable them to take up productive and gainful employment in the open market on the basis of their abilities rather than disabilities; provide assistance for employers; and strive to promote an inclusive society. Establishing a mandatory employment quota system for persons with disabilities to require employers (including the Government) to employ a certain number or percentage of persons with disabilities may create a negative labelling effect on these persons, which is not conducive to their integration into the workplace and the community. At present, the Civil Service Bureau has no plan to set an upper or lower limit for employing persons with disabilities as civil servants. Our policy is to ensure that persons with disabilities, like other applicants, enjoy equal opportunities in applying for government jobs by putting in place appropriate measures to facilitate their participation in the recruitment process, and give them an appropriate degree of preference for appointment.

(3) Appointment to the civil service is based on the principle of open and fair competition. All applicants in an open recruitment exercise are assessed on the basis of their character, ability and performance, having regard to the stipulated entry requirements set according to the job requirements. As mentioned above, we endeavor to ensure that persons with disabilities, like other applicants, enjoy equal opportunities in applying for government jobs by putting in place appropriate measures to facilitate their participation in the recruitment process. These measures include: (i) applicants who have declared disabilities and meet the basic entry requirements for a post will not be subject to shortlisting criteria, if any, and will automatically be invited to attend the selection test/interview; (ii) the recruiting bureau/department is required to proactively ascertain from individual applicants who have declared disabilities any assistance or accommodation needed, and suitably adjust the test/interview process to cater for their special needs; (iii) if an applicant who has declared disability is found suitable by the recruitment board to carry out the duties of certain posts in a specific rank, he/she may be recommended for appointment even though he/she may not be able to perform the full range of duties of every post in the concerned rank due to his/her disability; and (iv) if an applicant with disabilities who meets the basic entry requirements for a post is not

recommended for appointment, the recruitment board should submit the recommendation to an officer at a rank not lower than the Assistant Director level in the recruiting department/grade for consideration and decision. At the same time, an appropriate degree of preference may be given to applicants who have declared disabilities found suitable for appointment by placing them ahead of other applicants whose suitability for appointment is considered comparable to the former. As the nature of disabilities and talents of persons with disabilities vary, we consider that it would not be appropriate to adopt a preferential recruitment policy for persons with disabilities for designated types of jobs. The Government will continue to monitor the implementation of the measures above and ensure that persons with disabilities, like other applicants, enjoy equal opportunities in applying for government jobs.