

LCQ20: Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (February 16):

Question:

The Government launched the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme (the Scheme) last year to encourage enterprises to employ local university graduates and deploy them to station and work in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and the enterprises concerned will be granted an allowance according to the number of graduates employed. It is learnt that graduates have submitted more than 20 000 job applications for some 3 000 job vacancies offered by enterprises under the Scheme. However, as at the middle of last month, the Government has only received preliminary applications for allowance from enterprises for employing 1 090 graduates, reflecting that about 2 000 job vacancies under the Scheme cannot be matched with the nearly 19 000 job applications. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has gained an understanding of the reasons why the aforesaid job vacancies cannot be matched with the job applications;

(2) whether it will consider expanding the scope of the Scheme to cover graduates of higher diploma and sub-degree programmes, so as to enable more young people to participate in the Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area proposes to build a globally competitive modern industrial system which encompasses cultural and creative industries, daily service industries and intellectual property trading, whether the Government will (i) encourage the relevant enterprises to provide more job opportunities under the Scheme, and (ii) increase the amount of allowance to be granted to them, so as to respond to the vision stated in the Outline; and

(4) whether it will extend the period for provision of the allowance to participating enterprises under the Scheme, so that such enterprises can provide graduates with more opportunities of vocational training and job rotation?

Reply:

President,

The vast development potential of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) not only provides new impetus for Hong Kong's future economic development but will also be where major opportunities for Hong Kong's

economic recovery after the pandemic lie. The Government launched the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme (the Scheme) in January 2021 to encourage enterprises with business in both Hong Kong and the GBA Mainland cities to employ university graduates in Hong Kong and station them to work in the GBA Mainland cities. A total of 2 000 places are provided. Graduates who are legally employable in Hong Kong and holding bachelor's degrees or above awarded in 2019 to 2021 may participate in the Scheme. Participating enterprises shall employ the target graduates according to Hong Kong laws with a monthly salary of not less than HK\$18,000. The Government will pay a monthly allowance of HK\$10,000 to the enterprises for each qualified graduate employed for a maximum period of 18 months. Participating graduates have to report for duty not later than end of August 2021.

Working in the Mainland cities of the GBA requires adapting to an environment and way of life different from Hong Kong. Graduates have to deal with various daily issues such as accommodation and transportation. As such, the Scheme targets at university graduates. With government support and the assistance from enterprises, it is hoped that university graduates possessing a certain level of academic qualifications and competitiveness can adapt speedily to the employment and life in the GBA and develop their careers.

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The Government has been closely monitoring the implementation of the Scheme, introduced various measures to encourage enterprises to provide suitable job vacancies and conducted a series of publicity and promotion work to reach out to qualified graduates and encourage them to participate. The Scheme received from 417 enterprises a total of some 3 500 job vacancies, about half of which are innovation and technology posts. Each graduate may apply for several jobs and they have submitted over 20 000 job applications. Enterprises succeeded in recruitment could submit preliminary applications for allowance after the graduates had reported for duty and 1 091 such applications were received by the Scheme Secretariat as at end of January 2022. Overall speaking, the response of the enterprises and graduates to the Scheme has been favourable.

The number of graduates recruited under the Scheme was affected by various factors, including the requirements and expectations of the enterprises and the applicants, the knowledge and skills possessed by the applicants, the overall employment market situation, quarantine arrangements for travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, etc.

(2) to (4) To review the implementation and effectiveness of the Scheme more systematically, the Research Unit of the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Labour Department are conducting an evaluation study on the Scheme. Through questionnaire survey, analysis of literature and administrative data, as well as consultation and interviews with stakeholders, the study collects relevant information to analyse the participation of young graduates and enterprises to the Scheme, for example: the characteristics of the participating enterprises and the young graduates, reasons for joining the Scheme, the administrative arrangements and support of the Scheme, the graduates' work arrangements and their living on the Mainland, future career development

aspirations, the benefits gained from the Scheme, etc. During the study, enterprises and graduates are also asked for their comments and suggestions on the Scheme, including the entry requirements, the amount and duration of subsidy, etc. The study is expected to be completed within this year and the Government will map out the way forward, taking into account the survey results and the views of stakeholders.