

LCQ21: Coping with wastage of civil servants

Following is a question by the Hon Rock Chen and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

It is learnt that retirement and resignation are the main reasons for the wastage of civil servants in recent years, and the wastage of civil servants in the 2021-2022 financial year amounts to 10 487, accounting for around 5.9 per cent of the strength. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Secretary for the Civil Service has indicated that the wastage of civil servants are also attributable to civil servants resigning when finding their jobs unsuitable after working for a few years, or being dismissed due to unsatisfactory performance, of the measures put in place by the Government to reduce the wastage of civil servants, and whether the Civil Service College will strengthen the foundation training for civil servants, so as to enhance the capability, quality and vision of the civil service, thereby reducing the wastage rate;

(2) as there are views that civil servants must familiarise themselves with national affairs, and there are quite a number of "drifters in Hong Kong" (i.e. persons admitted to Hong Kong from the Mainland to study or work) who have acquired the Hong Kong permanent resident status, whether the Government will, in the light of their background of having received education or grown up on the Mainland, entice them to apply for civil service jobs (e.g. by conducting promotion and publicity campaigns as well as recruitment exercises through universities or clansman organisations), so as to find public service talents who love the country and Hong Kong; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that there is an increasing demand for governance talents in Hong Kong society, whether the Government will, in order to reinforce the advantages of the civil service and maintain the Government's governance effectiveness, build a comprehensive civil service talent pool, with a view to enlisting talents with potential as early as possible while strengthening the Government's sources of talents?

Reply:

President,

A consolidated reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

As the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government attaches great importance to nurturing and managing talents. On one hand, the Government

maintains a clear and well-structured career development system for civil servants to attract, retain and promote talents. On the other hand, the Government actively infuses new blood into the civil service to fill vacancies arising from retirement and leaving the service.

To build up a diverse pool of talents within the Government and to enhance the effectiveness of governance, departments will identify as early as possible officers with commitment, potential, outstanding performance but may have shorter years of service, and prepare them for effective performance and for taking up higher responsibilities by career management and enhanced training. Heads of departments/grades will formulate departmental development plan, arrange appropriate postings, professional and management trainings, Mainland and overseas visits, and secretariat attachments, in order to provide more opportunities for senior professions with potential to take up responsibilities beyond their professional domains in a strategic manner and to widen their exposure. In addition, departments will systematically arrange these officers to attend advanced leadership programme to equip them for fulfilling the roles of directorate officers in the future.

With regard to recruitment work, the Civil Service Bureau has been reminding bureaux/departments to take early actions to formulate manpower plans and to launch recruitment exercises in a timely manner. Bureaux/departments will also strengthen promotion of individual grades and their recruitment arrangements, maintain close communications with stakeholders like tertiary institutions etc, to keep abreast of the market situation, proactively organise recruitment talks with institutions and participate in career expo, in order to enhance job applicants' knowledge and interest on government jobs and attract more individuals with aspiration to serve the country and the community to join the civil service.

Apart from local graduates, recruitment promotion work of the Government also seeks to attract individuals of different backgrounds (including Mainland and overseas graduates, and the working population) to join the Government. Individuals who come from the Mainland to Hong Kong to study or work may apply for civil service jobs if they have Hong Kong permanent resident status and meet the requirement on public servants in the Basic Law. In addition, as more and more local students pursue further studies in the Mainland, with the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and Mainland, departments have strengthened promotion and recruitment efforts on local students studying in the Mainland in recent months.

In order to attract people with aspirations to serve the community to join the civil service, since June 1, 2023, departments/grades may, having regard to their manpower resources and operational needs, consider whether to expand the pool of eligible candidates to undergraduate or postgraduate students in their penultimate year of study (e.g. in a four-year undergraduate curriculum, they refer to students in the third year of studies), so they may apply for civil service jobs requiring an undergraduate or a postgraduate qualification. Successful candidates with conditional offers can join the civil service upon graduation, subject to their fulfillment of specified conditions, including the completion of the relevant

academic qualification within a stipulated period of time. The above initiative allows young people with aspirations to join the Government to plan their careers early, and to focus on their studies and equip themselves after being offered a conditional appointment. Universities will be able to help more students interested in public services to plan ahead and better prepare themselves. The Government will also be able to recruit talents as early as possible to infuse new blood into the civil service and build up a diverse talent pool.

The Civil Service College (CSC) has strengthened training for civil servants at different levels, including enhancing the induction training for new recruits, broadening senior civil servants' international horizons, and encouraging civil servants with potential to pursue studies in public administration. The CSC has provided civil servants with more training opportunities and encouraged them to pursue continuous learning to enhance their knowledge and perspectives.

The CSC has strengthened its induction training since July 2022 by requiring all new recruits to complete within the probationary period a foundation training programme. The contents include understanding "one country, two systems", the Constitution, the Basic Law and the Hong Kong National Security Law, the country's system and major policies, as well as the civil service's core values and public service culture. The programme aims to inculcate in civil servants a sense of national identity and a shared commitment to serve Hong Kong.

The CSC will also strengthen training for serving civil servants and infuse the service ethos of the "people-first principle" and team collaboration into different training programmes. This will enable civil servants to undergo continuous training at different stages of their career so as to update them on the knowledge and skills required at work and reinforce their public service values. Besides, departments will arrange various skill, knowledge and professional trainings for their staff to meet their operational needs and support their career development. This will enhance the job satisfaction of civil servants and help retain talents.