

LCQ21: Encouraging employment of more half-time and part-time professional drivers

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

Some members of the transport sector have pointed out that the shortage of bus and minibus drivers has affected the daily lives of members of the public. Regarding encouraging public transport operators to employ more half-time and part-time drivers, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the respective total numbers of half-time and part-time drivers employed by operators of (i) bus, (ii) tram, (iii) minibus and (iv) MTR in each of the past five years and, among them, the respective numbers of female drivers;

(2) whether it knows the numbers of (i) half-time and part-time drivers and (ii) half-time and part-time female drivers as mentioned in (1) by various age groups to which they belonged (i.e. aged below 25, 25 to 39, 40 to 49, and 50 or above) (set out in a table); and

(3) whether it will provide incentives to encourage various public transport operators to engage more housewives to take up half-time or part-time driver posts, with a view to enabling them to join the labour market and earn a living while unleashing more labour force?

Reply:

President,

The Government is paying close attention to the manpower shortage situation in the local public transport sector, and has actively taken forward various initiatives to assist the relevant trades in their recruitment efforts. Such measures include relaxing the requirements for applying for commercial vehicle driving license, collaborating with the relevant trades to participate in different employment schemes, launching training programmes along with training subsidies and allowances, as well as facilitating the trades to diversify their recruitment channels, etc. The Government also encourages public transport operators to improve the staff welfare through enhancement of remuneration and benefits and adopting more flexible employment terms, with a view to creating a better work environment and attracting more new entrants (including women and young people) to the trades.

In consultation with the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the reply to the question raised by Hon Holden Chow is as follows:

(1) and (2) The numbers of half-time and part-time drivers employed by franchised bus companies, MTR Corporation Limited and Hong Kong Tramways Limited in the past five years, as delineated by age groups and gender, are set out in Annex.

As for public light buses, the Transport Department does not keep the relevant statistics.

(3) The Government has been implementing a range of measures to identify and unleash potential labour force, which include the Labour Department (LD)'s provision of comprehensive employment services to job seekers (including women) and employers of different sectors (including public transport operators) to assist them to recruit employees. The LD implements the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged to encourage employers to hire the elderly and middle-aged, who are aged 40 or above, to take up full-time or part-time jobs and provide them with on-the-job training (OJT) through the provision of an OJT allowance. The LD has also set up a dedicated webpage on part-time vacancies on the Interactive Employment Service website and organises part-time job fairs from time to time.

The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) implements the "First-Hire-Then-Train" Scheme to encourage employers to provide suitable job vacancies and modify the working hours (including flexible hours and part-time positions) as well as leave arrangements to cater for the family commitment needs of trainees, and to provide OJT and other related support measures, with a view to attracting women and homemakers to join the employment market. Training bodies appointed by the ERB will assist employers in the recruitment and provide employed trainees with designated training courses within working hours. In the past few years, participating employers mainly covered professions of care workers and cleaning assistants for residential care homes as well as hotel room attendants. The ERB recently explored with public transport operators on the possibility of their participation in the Scheme.

In respect of the public transport sector, the Government has always encouraged operators to recruit employees of different backgrounds, including working women who are also homemakers, through improvement of remuneration package as well as adoption of more flexible and attractive employment terms. Currently, there are public transport operators who provide paid maternity and paternity leaves to their employees, scholarships to employees' children, as well as free rides and medical benefits to employees' family members. On top of these, some operators also allow drivers to work on five-day week, half-time, or part-time basis, in order to accommodate those who are inclined towards flexible employment or those who need to reserve time for attending to family commitments. Full-time drivers who work on five-day week, as well as half-time drivers, are also entitled to fringe benefits provided by operators.