

LCQ8: Encouraging young people to pursue development in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

Following is a question by the Hon Lillian Kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (May 11):

Question:

To encourage and support young people to work and pursue their career in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area), the Chief Executive announced in the 2020 Policy Address the launch of the "Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme" (the Scheme). Whilst the Scheme provides 2 000 places, as at the end of January this year, the Government received preliminary applications for allowance from enterprises for employing some 1 100 graduates only. Some young people consider that the Scheme has inadequacies, which have deterred them from participating in it. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has reviewed the effectiveness of the publicity of the Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will set up an online job information platform in respect of the Scheme; if so, of the details (including the target number of participating enterprises); if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that amid the epidemic, normal traveller clearance between the Mainland and Hong Kong has not been resumed for a prolonged period of time, of the Government's measures in place to continue encouraging young people to work and pursue their career in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area?

Reply:

President,

The vast development potential of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) 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 Greater Bay Area Mainland cities to employ university graduates in Hong Kong and station them to work in the Greater Bay Area Mainland cities. 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 employed under the Scheme have all reported for duty. The Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Labour Department are conducting an evaluation study on the Scheme which is expected to be completed within this year. The Government will map out the way forward, taking into account the survey results and the views of stakeholders.

After consulting the Home Affairs Bureau, my reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The Government has launched a series of publicity activities to encourage graduates and enterprises to participate in the Scheme. The Government has advertised in various newspapers, recruitment magazines, job-hunting websites (including the Joint Institutions Job Information System) and major means of transport; launched radio announcements and promoted the Scheme on various websites, mobile applications and online search tools to reach out to more young people and encourage graduates to join the Scheme. In addition, the Government has organised a large-scale online cum physical thematic job fair to provide a convenient and effective platform for participating enterprises to conduct recruitment and graduates to submit job applications. A series of online briefing sessions were co-organised with employer associations and universities to introduce the Scheme and encourage enterprises and graduates to join it.

The Scheme has received from 417 enterprises a total of some 3 500 job vacancies, about half of which are innovation and technology posts. Graduates have submitted over 20 000 job applications. These show that the publicity work has effectively encouraged enterprises and graduates to participate in the Scheme. The evaluation study being conducted on the Scheme also covers the effectiveness of the publicity work.

(2) The Government has set up a thematic website upon launching of the Scheme. All job vacancies submitted by enterprises were uploaded to the website after vetting for eligible graduates to choose. The website also has online application function to facilitate graduates to make job applications. In addition, the Government has uploaded details of the Scheme, as well as practical information on working and living in the Greater Bay Area on the thematic website, which is hyperlinked to a number of related websites so that graduates can obtain more information relevant to the Greater Bay Area. The Government welcomes all eligible enterprises to join the Scheme and is not bounded by a target number.

(3) The Government has been closely monitoring the possible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Scheme, and has followed up with the enterprises on their arrangement for the employed graduates to work in the Greater Bay Area Mainland cities and offered necessary assistance. As of end of February 2022, about 85 per cent of the recruits under the Scheme have already been working on the Mainland, and the remaining 15 per cent are mainly employed in innovation & technology posts. According to the Scheme requirements, the latter recruits should be stationed in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area

Mainland cities for about six to 12 months, and so some of them are still working in Hong Kong.

Apart from the above-mentioned Scheme, the Home Affairs Bureau has launched two funding schemes on support for young people starting their businesses in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area Mainland cities, namely the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship) and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes), providing entrepreneurial support and incubation services to young people. The Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship supports 16 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to organise youth entrepreneurship projects, providing capital subsidy to about 230 youth start-ups (involving more than 800 Hong Kong young entrepreneurs) and rendering entrepreneurial support and incubation services to about 4 000 young entrepreneurs. Funded NGOs have started rolling out youth entrepreneurship projects and the response has thus far been positive. Subject to the latest situation of the pandemic, the funded organisations will gradually assist young entrepreneurs in settling in innovative and entrepreneurial bases in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area. The Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes supports 15 NGOs to organise short-term experiential projects at innovative and entrepreneurial bases in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, with a view to deepening Hong Kong young people's understanding of such entrepreneurial bases, as well as the relevant policies and support measures on innovation and entrepreneurship. About 700 young people are expected to benefit from the projects.