

## Transcript of remarks at press conference livelihood initiatives (with photos/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, together with the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong and the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, held a press conference on livelihood initiatives this afternoon (January 14). Below is the transcript of remarks at the press conference:

Reporter: Hi, I want to ask Mrs Lam whether these new welfare arrangements will place a huge finance burden on public finance in a longer period because, of course, we can dip into the reserve but then the Financial Secretary had already said that the Government will be unavoidable to face deficits in these two years? Does that mean that we will face more deficits in the years to come? And another question will be on the transport subsidy scheme, because these policies, they're actually suggested by pro-establishment lawmakers for a long, long time and you have been quite reluctant about it. So may I ask why there was a change and is it because the new Beijing Liaison Office chief had told you to improve livelihood or is it because it's also part of the government effort to help the pro-Beijing camp to garner more support ahead of the legislative election? And for Mr Law, may I ask how many people aged between 60 to 64 are still working right now in these few years? Thank you so much.

Chief Executive: Thank you very much on the first two questions. These livelihood improvement measures are now estimated on a very preliminary basis to require about \$10 billion recurrent expenditure. That represents about 2 per cent of the total operating expenditure of the Government, but it also reflects our commitment to improve the living conditions of the disadvantaged people and the elderly. I think we should not look at it in terms of short-term deficits. By the way, these measures are supported by the Financial Secretary himself. On the one hand we have a lot of aspirations from society about more work to be done by the Government in improving the livelihood of these people so that they can share the benefits of economic growth, but to say that because we are now having an economic recession, that's why although we feel that these are justified measures, that we will not do it because of worries over fiscal deficits, I don't think that is a very positive way of dealing with the situation.

At the end of the day, I think we should, and I would advocate that we should have confidence in Hong Kong. Hong Kong will rebound after these months of social unrest, and we have a lot of opportunities in front of us that will give us more economic growth in the time to come to enable us to afford these measures to support the livelihood of the disadvantaged. That's the position that we take.

The second thing is about transport subsidy. As I said in answering other questions, of the 10 measures that we now propose, I'm sure you will be able to find our previous different positions on some of these measures, from expressing reservations to perhaps even resisting those proposals or aspirations from political parties or members of the public. I have to say that we are having a sort of breakthrough in our thinking, that we should be listening more to the people, we should display more humility, that instead of we are right always, we should listen to the people to what they have to tell us, in terms of ensuring that Hong Kong will be a more inclusive, harmonious society that different sectors in society will be able to share the benefits of Hong Kong's economic growth and prosperity. It has nothing to do with favouring a particular political party – if it were, I would have done it before the previous elections. This is really, as I said, to respond to the public aspirations and after we have reflected fully on the needs for doing this sort of thing. Of course different political parties have different aspirations made over the years. I believe some of these proposals have the support of cross-party legislative members, so it is not entirely just one single political party's aspiration.

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: You asked me a statistical number which I don't have it on my mind, but I remember I mentioned the figure 225 000 (about 250 000) for the number of people aged 60 to 64 in work a year ago in the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services. I guess the number right now should be something around 240 000 (the provisional figure for 2019 is between 250 000 and 260 000).

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

