

Transcript of remarks by SCED at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at a media session after attending a radio programme this morning (March 28):

Reporter: So you described the measures yesterday as some kind of lesser evil, for example, ordering cinemas to close for a fortnight. Could you explain a little bit on that? Can the affected business owners look forward to some kind of immediate relief measures? Thank you.

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I think the measures going to be introduced tonight and tomorrow night are necessary to strengthen social distancing as an important step in fighting against the coronavirus. They are introduced for obvious reasons, because the upsurge in (infection) cases often happened in places that we try to put them under more stringent control. In this regard, I think we need understanding and cooperation of, not only the sectors involved, but also the community at large. Inevitably, these sectors will suffer a bit. But I think it's a balancing situation for the companies, the sectors and also the society as a whole. In certain sectors I think they are also facing this dilemma, for instance, cinemas. Cinema (operators) have taken some very positive steps to increase social distancing within cinemas. And they have also taken some precautions. But on balance, I think, if (the number of) people going to cinemas have dropped to such a low rate, taking a pause and closing down the cinemas for two weeks, might help to send a very clear signal to the community that the best way to handle the situation is to stay home and to avoid unnecessary social contacts. I am grateful to them for joining us in this community fight against the epidemic.

Reporter: Can the business owners look forward to short term relief measures?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: The Government as a whole is thinking of stepping up relief measures. You have seen us introducing a few rounds of relief (measures) already since late last year. Both the Budget and the Anti-epidemic Fund have rolled out quite a large number of sector specific and also across the board measures. We will continue these efforts because apparently many sectors are still very much hard-hit, and they might need further help from the Government. We are seeing a prolonged battle (against the epidemic). Therefore, the Chief Executive has asked the whole team to give consideration to what more we can do to help our respective sectors. Thank you.

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