

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at the Legislative Council Complex today (May 8):

Reporter: Does it mean that the current proposal accepted is still controversial seeing that the votes are quite close as the chairman actually has to cast a vote? How would you say that the current proposal has already ensured fairness in regard to the locally trained doctor?

Secretary for Food and Health: In the past few weeks, I understand that a lot of medical stakeholders have been working very hard on different proposals. Although different parties may have different views, in fact I think we all have a common goal, that is, to increase the manpower in the public healthcare system through the limited registration mechanism and attract more overseas doctors to come back and work in Hong Kong. The Government welcomes the proposal that has just been passed by the Medical Council of Hong Kong (MCHK). We felt that the proposal is more lenient and clear as well as fitting in the principle of "fairness" and "non-discriminatory". We hope that this proposal would be able to attract more non-locally trained doctors to come back to work in Hong Kong so as to alleviate the workload of our doctors working in public healthcare system. Of course, we will continue to work with our stakeholders. The proposal that has been passed is just one of the measures to increase medical manpower in the public healthcare system in Hong Kong. We will continue to work with medical stakeholders to come up with more strategies to attract more doctors to come to work in Hong Kong as well as to alleviate the workload of doctors in the public healthcare system. We plan to hold a meeting on our established platform involving key medical stakeholders to work out manpower strategies and measures.

Reporter: Why would you say that it is already fair with regard to locally trained doctors? Also, the votes are quite close, does it mean that it is still controversial?

Secretary for Food and Health: As far as "fairness" and "non-discriminatory" concerned, the proposal that has been passed, as I understand, requires one to work for three years in the public healthcare system, either in the Hospital Authority (HA), the Department of Health (DH), or the medical schools of the two universities, and then the six-month assessment period after passing the examination could be waived. That means, all the four institutions, namely the HA, DH and the medical schools of the two universities, will be given equal treatment.

Reporter: One of the Medical Council members, Alex Lam, said that he was threatened to back the Government preferred proposal. How would the Government respond to it?

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all, there is no any sort of Government proposal. The principle of the Government is to have a proposal that is more lenient and also having the principle of "fairness" and "non-discriminatory" so as to attract more overseas doctors to work in Hong Kong. Throughout the past few weeks, the Government has been communicating with many medical stakeholders including through the platform that I have just mentioned. That particular platforms include the Hong Kong Medical Association, the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine, the HA, the DH, the medical schools of the two universities and the MCHK. We exchanged views. Of course, we have also expressed the factors to be considered and our principles at all those meetings. On top of those meetings, we have also met with different frontline doctor groups to share our concerns and principles with them. We exchanged views on different proposals which have been put forth by different bodies. We have been very frank in our discussions and the atmosphere is actually satisfactory.

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