

Transcript of remarks by SLW on “Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report 2018” and social workers’ strike

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, on "Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report 2018" and the social workers' strike after attending a radio programme this morning (December 16):

Reporter: Dr Law, I've just got two questions. First of all, now that Hong Kong is expected to be in recession, how worse do you think the poverty situation will get maybe next or the year after? The second question is, tomorrow we learnt that there is going to be another three-day strike plan by the social welfare sector. What's your view on their action?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: The first part of the question in fact is really indicative of the understanding of the poverty situation that we have released a couple days ago about the situation back in 2018. The figures are very much related to "relative poverty". In fact, it's more likely to have an increase in relative poverty when the economy grows. When the economy contracts, there is always a possibility that the relative poverty actually drops. So, it is a matter of relative poverty, but whenever we talk about poverty figures, we tend to always bear in mind that we are talking about "absolute poverty" but in fact we are not. We are talking about relative poverty.

As to the second question related to the welfare sector, people are calling for a strike. Technically it is very difficult to describe it as a strike in legal terms, but definitely people have the right to express their views, particularly their political views. For the Government, it is important to ensure that some of the needed services, particularly those for the disadvantaged, can be maintained and will not be affected. That is our concern. I guess particularly the social workers would abide by their basic code of practice and their action would not affect the welfare of those needy.

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