

Transcript of remarks by SLW on poverty situation

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, on the analysis of the poverty situation in Hong Kong in 2017 after attending a radio programme this morning (November 25):

Reporter: Secretary, there are calls to review how poverty is calculated, for example by taking into account the household expenditure. Do you think it would be a more accurate indicator on poverty? Also, would you say no matter how hard the Government tries, it can never eradicate poverty in Hong Kong? Thank you.

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: Let me answer the latter part first. As we are using the idea of "relative poverty" (in setting the "poverty line"), it would be almost impossible to eradicate poverty under the "relative poverty" concept. If you are rich while I am less rich than you are, I am relatively poorer than you are. So, somehow in terms of "relative poverty", it would be almost impossible (to eradicate poverty). Particularly under a market economy (in Hong Kong), that would be impossible.

Going back to the question on how we work on the "poverty line", particularly with respect to the idea of including some (household) expenditure as a way of looking at it. Every five years, the Government has an (household) expenditure survey. The next survey will start next year, 2019, and end in the middle of 2020. So, we would have some data by the end of 2020 to look at how expenditure affects the livelihood (of households) and see how we can incorporate such data to look at the poverty situation. We don't have year-to-year data for expenditure, but the expenditure survey to be done every five years will give us some hints to understand it. That is what we can do.

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