

LCQ16: Family Council

Following is a question by the Hon Abraham Shek and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (June 10):

Question:

The Family Council was established in 2007 with the terms of reference to discuss and promote core family values and harmonious relationships among family members. The Family Council recommended that it should form a closer alliance with the Commission on Elderly, Commission on Women and Commission on Youth, and make more concerted efforts to help enhance support services for families. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the work schedule of the Family Council and the aforesaid three Commissions, and how each of them interfaces with the existing consultative framework and government departments concerned;

(b) of the details of and the latest progress in the promotion of family-friendly work practices in the business community as pledged in the 2008-2009 Policy Address by the Chief Executive, and the latest progress in the related work areas of the three Commissions; and

(c) whether the Government will establish an inter-departmental mechanism to assess the possible impact on families of any new policy; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(a) The Elderly Commission is tasked to provide advice to the Government on the formulation of a comprehensive policy in caring for elders, including matters relating to the care, housing, financial security, health and medical, psychological, employment and recreational needs of the elderly. The Women's Commission is tasked to take a strategic overview on women issues; develop a long-term vision and

strategy for the development and advancement of women; advise the Government on policies and initiatives which are of concern to women; and assist the Government in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international instruments related to women. The Commission on Youth advises the Government on matters pertaining to youth development. It provides advice to relevant bureaux and government departments so that the interests of young people can be taken into account in the design of relevant policy and service programmes. It also commissions research studies on different aspects of youth matters.

As an advisory body to the Government, the Family Council provided a high-level platform for discussion of major issues from the family perspective and strategic directions and priorities on family-related policies. The provision of services to support families would continue to be delivered by different relevant service providers. The Family Council has identified family core values, discussed ways to achieve a pro-family environment and made recommendations on better synergy of work between the Council and the three Commissions.

While the three Commissions would continue to perform the roles in relevant sector-specific areas, they would form a closer alliance with the Family Council and make more concerted efforts to help enhance support services for families. To facilitate communication and co-operation between the Council and the three Commissions, the Chairpersons of these Commissions had been appointed as ex-officio members of the Family Council with effect from April 1, 2009.

The Family Council will continue to work with relevant stakeholders to further promote and publicise family core values in a sustainable manner, identify ways to enhance effectiveness and co-ordination of family education in particular parental education, and ways to foster pro-family measures.

(b) The Labour Department (LD) has been actively promoting direct and frank communication between employers and employees to discuss employment conditions and work arrangements. We have further encouraged employers to put in place employee-oriented good people management measures including family-friendly employment practices (FFEP).

Making the workplace family-friendly is a shared responsibility of the entire society. As part of our on-going work in promoting good people management

measures, LD has been acting as a facilitator in encouraging employers to adopt FFEP with a view to assisting employees fulfill work and family responsibilities simultaneously.

Major on-going publicity efforts of LD include:

- * Organising seminars/briefings to promote FFEP and related good people management practices;
- * Promoting FFEP to human resources practitioners and trade representatives of employers and employees through the network of 18 Human Resources Managers Clubs in various trades and 9 industry-based tripartite committees; and
- * Staging roving exhibitions at various locations throughout the territory to widely publicise FFEP and increase public awareness on the subject.

As an initiative to promote FFEP, LD published 20 newspaper supplements weekly between July and November 2008 to showcase exemplary examples in the implementation of FFEP as well as other good people management measures, with a view to enhancing public awareness and encouraging the wider adoption of such practices. Furthermore, LD has uploaded an electronic version of the supplements onto LD's website to facilitate public viewing and consolidated the supplements into a booklet for distribution in February 2009.

In 2009-10, LD will continue to promote good people management practices through different publicity activities. In addition to our regular initiatives, we plan to produce a video on FFEP to deepen public understanding on the subject and encourage the wider adoption of such practices at the workplace.

On the other hand, the Women's Commission (WoC) collaborated with the LD in October 2008 to engage small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs) in collecting their best practices in Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices. WoC will publish a leaflet to share their experience with other stakeholders, especially SMEs employers. The leaflet is expected to be released by September 2009.

(c) The Government is committed to including the family as a factor to consider in its policy-making process. Different bureaux and departments are therefore encouraged to look into the family perspective in the policy-making process, and demonstrate

good awareness and sensitivity and balance such considerations against other policy objectives and considerations. Bureaux and departments have to keep regular review on whether their policies have given proper regard to the family core values and impact on families.

Ends/Wednesday, June 10, 2009

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