

主旨:

Views on the Population Policy Public Engagement

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to give my views on some of the questions set out in the Population Policy Public Engagement Exercise as follows.

1 Chapter 2 - Measures to encourage female homemakers to work or re-join the labour force : This is essentially very tricky. The common lifestyle of people in Hong Kong has been for both the husband and wife to work full time, while having a maid or having the couple's parents at home to look after their children. My company has introduced something called a "custom track" option for those who may wish to get lower salary in return for shorter working hours. This seems to have some attraction to females who wish to join the workforce while having more time with her family. But I must note that I work in professional services sector and salary is relatively high, and it seems to me that this sort of "custom track" arrangements may not be that possible to those who are not earning much. So I think, in order to encourage female to work, the most effective way is still to **review and fine-tune the domestic helpers importation policies** (including proper laws that protect both the domestic helpers as well as the employers) so that local female can properly join the workforce.

2 Chapter 2 - Enhance integration of new arrivals, Type II children, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities : This seems to be one of the most controversial issues for this population policy public engagement exercise. This needs to be handled very carefully. My thought is that : we must focus on education and training. It is of paramount importance that appropriate educational places are allocated to the new arrivals and Type II children in the Northern District, so as to ensure that they get Hong Kong education places if they wish to. Training opportunities must be introduced to the "over-age children" admitted to Hong Kong through the One-way Permit Scheme. Only with proper education could these children and people properly integrate into and contribute to the Hong Kong economy. However, it goes without saying that priority should be to the local Hong Kong children in the Northern District, and the Government should work hard not to give an impression to the public that local Hong Kong children are prejudiced because of the arrival of children from the mainland.

I must also mention that, the Government should note that that back in the 1950s to 1970s, when people from the mainland came to Hong Kong, essentially there was not any specific policy to help these mainland immigrants to "integrate" into Hong Kong - and back then there was not as severe uneasiness and controversy about people coming from the mainland as in today. So I think what is important is for the

Government to introduce policies that are fairly applied to all people in Hong Kong, whether or not they are new immigrants. The Government should not introduce policies that are merely targeted to new arrivals. Otherwise such policies would only cause more conflicts and uneasiness with ordinary people in Hong Kong.

3 Chapter 2 - Over-age Children : I am personally very concerned about the influx of so-called "over-age" children under the One-Way Permit Scheme. I can't see from the Consultation Document as to the median age of those "over-age children" admitted to Hong Kong but I can see that the Consultation Document quotes that only 48% are economically active (meaning as many as 52% are not working). I have heard that in a lot of cases these "over-age" children are already in their 60s or 70s when they come to Hong Kong. These people are usually very poor and need a lot of care from the Government as soon as they come to Hong Kong (including medical, housing and social welfare). I believe that the OWP scheme must be urgently reviewed in order to determine the eligibility criteria of these "over-age" children. I'm not entirely sure whether these people are entitled to right of abode under the Basic Law (and I don't believe so). If they do not have any constitutional right of abode, there is no reason why Hong Kong should "import" this group of people who are only going to give hefty financial burden to Hong Kong.

4 Chapter 4 - Talent admission / Importation of low-skilled workers : I think this really needs to be carefully considered. I have heard that in some professions, there have already been too many "imported workers" and that has caused shrinking of the local people's opportunities. That include both high-income and low-income jobs. Of course, obviously the construction sector is one of the very few which has seen extreme shortage of labour and it is impossible for local people alone to cope with the increasing demand of construction workers in Hong Kong.

5 Chapter 5 - Raising birth rates : This is extremely important for continued growth of the local Hong Kong population and I support the Government to seriously focus its policies on this topic. First, it appears to me that Hong Kong still continues the "2-children policy" that the Hong Kong Family Planning Association promoted in the 1970s or 1980s. At the moment, I virtually have heard none of my friends having given birth to more than 2 children, but certainly they are financially capable to do so. I think the reason stems from lack of proper policy promotion. Hong Kong needs to have a new campaign to encourage people to give birth to at least 3 or even 4 children in order to hopefully slow down the ageing of the population. Of course, proper tax recession policy should be introduced in order to encourage the birth of more children. And also housing policy and so on, which the Government has already been working hard and we are going to see some positive results within the next 5 years. I think the "2-children policy" being so effectively promoted in Hong Kong back in the 1970s/1980s, there is no reason why a "3-children/4-children policy" would not gain popularity among the people at the moment. Given the Government has rightly introduced "low-income family subsidy" in the latest Policy Address, which I wholly support, I do believe that an introduction of a "3/4-children policy" is certainly going to gain support from the community of the Government's determination to tackle the ageing population problem.

What I do not agree is for the Government to think about "importing" young population from the mainland, such as through the one-way-permit scheme, in order to tackle our ageing population. As the Government acknowledges, whenever there are new arrivals, we need to

think about how they could "integrate" into the local community. That in itself is costing public money, and that in itself is causing the kind of conflict, unrest and uneasiness among local Hong Kong people. I think local Hong Kong people certainly have the capacity to raise birth rates and it is not necessary for the Government to import any people from anywhere just to tackle the ageing population problem.

I hope the above helps.

Best regards

Philip Kwok