

Chapter 3: Conclusions

Female participation in the labour force

There was a clear consensus that it is possible to increase female participation in the labour force, with many constructive suggestions about how to achieve this, including better child care services, more family-friendly workplaces, more part-time jobs and better retraining. These would reduce the instance of women being forced to choose between having children and working. More specifically child care services could be improved through better child care provision in the community, such as through increased government support for child care in the community, expansion of the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project and provision of after-school care. That would address the frequently expressed concerns about the difficulty in finding affordable and reliable child care services in the community, especially given the current difficulties in retaining good domestic helpers. For a more family friendly workplace, common suggestions included flexible working hours, allowing parents to take leave when their children are sick, rainstorm or typhoon warnings or school holidays and increased support for working from home.

Retirement age

There was strong support expressed for increasing the normal retirement age in general, for allowing employees to choose their retirement age and for government departments providing job opportunities to the elderly first and for encouraging private employers to hire old people possibly through tax benefits or subsidies. Although there was general support for increasing the normal retirement age, there was also widespread concern (especially through signature campaigns) about the adverse affect on younger workers, particularly for civil servants, for whom there was not a clear consensus in favour of increased normal retirement age. In addition, there was support expressed for allowing physically fit employees to continue to work.

New arrivals

For new arrivals, there was substantial feedback (especially through signature campaigns) about the One-Way Permit Scheme, about fake marriages and specifically about the burden on Hong Kong. Many of the comments about the One-Way Permit Scheme (dominated by signature campaigns) were about Hong Kong taking over the authority for issuing permits, imposing screening criteria, reducing the quota, and retaining household registration in the Mainland so that they could return to the Mainland if they cannot adapt. There were also suggestions of training to help

integration. In some cases there were suggestions about stopping family reunion for future marriages. There was also concern expressed about the seven-year residence requirement for entitlement to selected government welfare and services.

People with disability

There was no strong theme in the comments about disability, but the most popular response was about encouraging employers to hire people with disability.

Ethnic minorities

The key suggestions for ethnic minorities in the workforce were about employment including training, Chinese language training support and integration into the community.

Manpower quality and education

There were many comments about the need to improve provision of vocational education including the promotion of career development for less attractive jobs, about ensuring that post-secondary education matches labour market/social needs, about improving university education, additional support for continuing education and the Qualifications Framework, as well as about sub-degree courses.

Admission of talents

The major issues raised about admission of talents were the barriers to talents, such as limited nursery/kindergarten/school places, the need for government to be more proactive and to provide incentives to encourage non-local students to stay and work and the need for prioritizing specific industries in admitting talent.

Hong Kong emigrants and their children as returnees

There were no strong themes on Hong Kong emigrants and their children, but the most common themes were barriers and the need to reach out.

Importation of low-skilled workers

There was a lot of feedback on importation of low-skilled labour, particularly through signature campaigns that emphasize the need to protect existing local low-skilled workers and wanting stringent requirements to approve the working visas. There is no consensus about the need for importing these workers, with both positive and negative views widely expressed. There were suggestions of a focus on the manpower shortage in less attractive industries, e.g. construction or care service and similarly about

prioritizing industries with need. Overall there was no consensus about the importation of low-skilled workers.

Other comments on importation of labour and immigration schemes

Of the other comments on importation of labour and immigration schemes without specific reference to the qualifications or skill-levels (i.e. not relating to low-skilled workers or talents), many were about protecting local labour by employing them first or raising wages. Again, in the general context there were split views about whether labour importation is necessary.

Other manpower issues

There were also many comments about other manpower issues, including encouraging those on welfare and CSSA recipients who are capable of work to work, implementing standard working hours, suggestions of developing new industries with new job opportunities and encouraging recognition of overseas qualifications.

Support for marriage and family

There were many comments encouraging enhanced support for family, covering family financial support, such as tax benefits and child subsidies and other forms of support such as subsidized housing for families.

Fertility and pregnancy support

There were many comments encouraging enhanced support for fertility and pregnancy, including financial support for pregnancy, longer maternity leave and provision of paternity leave.

Barriers for marriage and family

There were many comments about the barriers for marriage and family, such as housing costs including the impact on apartment size, access to education including kindergartens and schools, too costly to raise children including education costs, concerns about competition for milk powder, the education system and long working hours.

Active ageing

There were many suggestions about active ageing, including the potential of elderly volunteers and building Hong Kong into an age-friendly city.

Silver hair market

There were relatively few comments about the silver hair market, and the main theme was the potential of this emerging market.

Retiring outside Hong Kong

There was no common theme for comments about retiring outside Hong Kong, except that the destination is the Mainland.

Support for the elderly

There were many comments about the need for enhanced support for the elderly, including financial support, residential care and medical care and the provision of elderly housing.

Population growth

There were many concerns expressed about population growth (largely through signature campaigns), about wanting population limits or not aiming to increase population, given the current density.

Quality of life

There was concern that the consultation focused too much on manpower or the economy and too little on quality of life.

Other population issues

There was concern expressed about Type II children and suggestions to abolish the Individual Visit Scheme (largely expressed through web forums). There were also concerns expressed about population projections, and for government to prioritize the interests of Hong Kong people.

Other general issues

Other general issues that were raised in the PE process, but are outside the scope of the consultation document, were housing, specifically more public housing, health and education.

Public engagement process

The main area of concern about the PE process was the lack of sufficient information.