

Press release

LCQ5: Disbursement of \$6,000 to Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card holders aged 18 or above

Wednesday, June 8, 2011

Following is a question by the Hon Kam Nai-wai and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Ms Julia Leung, in the Legislative Council today (June 8):

Question:

The Government will disburse in this financial year a sum of \$6,000 to each Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card holder at the age of 18 or above. Members of the public are generally concerned about the disbursement timetable, criteria, details and procedures for receiving such sum, but the Government has not yet made any announcement. It has been learnt that some elderly Hong Kong permanent residents who are residing on the Mainland on a long-term basis have to make a special trip to return to Hong Kong to receive the sum, but as they do not have residence in Hong Kong, some of them choose to wait and sleep on the streets. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it will determine the order of priority for the disbursement of \$6,000 by age so that priority will be given to senior citizens; how the Government will deal with cases of elderly persons who passed away before receiving the sum; and

(b) of the criteria, details and procedures regarding the disbursement of \$6,000 (including the cut-off date for determining whether a member of the public concerned meets the qualifying condition of "Hong Kong permanent resident who has reached the age of 18"; whether qualified members of the public will need to register in advance; how to avoid the situation where members of the public will not be disbursed the sum because they fail to register; how elderly persons in a confused state of mind, with mobility-handicapped and those living in residential care homes for the elderly on a long-term basis, prisoners and psychiatric inpatients may receive the sum, as well as whether those qualified Hong Kong people who left Hong Kong and are residing on the

Mainland or overseas have to return to Hong Kong to receive the sum, etc); whether the Government will disburse the sum through banks; if it will, whether it needs to pay handling fees to the banks?

Reply:

President,

On March 2, 2011, the Financial Secretary announced that each Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card holder aged 18 or above would be given a sum of \$6,000. At the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee (FC) on March 25, the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury submitted a note to brief Members of the preliminary thinking on the implementation details of the proposal and the issues to be addressed. On that occasion, we indicated that after finalising the details, we would submit the proposal to the relevant Legislative Council Panel for discussion in accordance with the established procedures before seeking funding approval from FC. Our discussions with the relevant departments and organisations have now reached the final stage. Once all the details are confirmed, we hope to obtain funding approval before the Council's summer recess to enable immediate launch of the scheme. I hope Members would understand that, as details of the scheme have yet to be finalised, I am not able to provide specific information on every aspect of the scheme today.

(a) Regarding part (a) of the question, we are considering two feasible options for making batching arrangements. One option is to group eligible persons into different batches according to a particular digit of their Identity Card numbers (e.g. the first numerical digit), and invite them to make registration in phases. Another option is to group eligible persons by year of birth with reference to the arrangement adopted in the territory-wide Smart Identity Card Replacement Exercise. If we adopt the latter option, elderly eligible persons would be given priority in registration and payment.

According to our plan under formulation, all persons who complete registration within the specified period and found eligible will receive payment, including those who pass away after registration.

(b) As mentioned in the note we submitted to the Special FC Meeting held on March 25, we need to establish a suitable platform to facilitate people's registration.

People are required to register for receiving the payment mainly because of the following considerations. Firstly, there is no existing system in the Government that captures the relevant personal data of all people for establishing eligibility and disbursing the sum. Secondly, even if some of the Government's existing systems do maintain the personal data of some people, in order to protect personal data privacy, we cannot readily use these data for making payment because they have been collected and kept for purposes other than giving out the \$6,000. Thirdly, we would provide people with an option under the scheme. Those who are not in urgent need of the \$6,000 may choose to receive the sum later with a "saving bonus". Operationally, to some extent this may also help achieve a batching effect. Therefore, we must provide ways for eligible persons to exercise their choice.

As the majority of the eligible persons have bank accounts and banks have the infrastructure, systems and experience required for handling personal data and providing deposit and withdrawal services, we are actively discussing with banks to see if we can make use of existing banking network for processing registration as well as handling payment. This should be a more convenient way for the public. For those who do not have a bank account, we are devising appropriate channel to facilitate their registration and collection of payment. We believe that most eligible persons should be covered by these arrangements.

We are now working out the implementation details of the scheme. Our primary consideration in developing the platforms for registration and payment is to make it as convenient as possible for the eligible persons in Hong Kong while ensuring protection of privacy as well as prevention of abuse or fraud. Eligible persons outside Hong Kong may choose the way they find suitable for registration and collection of payment according to their particular circumstances.

We anticipate that some eligible persons, such as people in impaired mental state or with limited mobility and prisoners, may need special assistance. We are working out the detailed arrangements with the relevant departments with a view to rendering assistance to these persons to register for the scheme and receive the payment. In doing so, we would ensure such arrangements could protect privacy and prevent abuse or fraud.

As I have just said, we are finalising the implementation details of the scheme including the eligibility date, registration channels and procedures, and the resource requirements, etc. We will consider the views offered by Members today and work out the implementation details of the scheme as soon as practicable.

Ends