

### Legislative Council Question No. 3

(Oral Reply)

Date of Sitting: 10 January 2001

Asked by: Hon Mrs. Selina CHOW

Replied by: Secretary for  
Economic Services

#### Question:

Regarding the relationship between cross-boundary travels of Mainland and Hong Kong residents and the local consumer market, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the respective average daily numbers of Hong Kong residents visiting the Mainland during weekends, long weekends and public holidays, and the annual growth in such numbers in each of the past three years;
- (b) whether it has assessed the impact of Hong Kong residents' visits to the Mainland on the local consumer market; if it has, of the assessment result; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (c) whether it will consider simplifying the formalities for Mainland residents' visits to Hong Kong and taking other measures to attract more Mainland residents here and stimulate local spending?

## Reply

Madam President,

Our reply to the question raised by Hon Mrs Chow is as follows:

- (a) The respective average daily number of local residents travelling to the Mainland (for tour and business purposes etc) during weekends, long weekends and public holidays through the control points of the Immigration Department and the annual growth over the past three years are detailed in the Annex.
- (b) On the basis of the data collected from the General Household Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, the Government Economist estimated that about 27.6 million non-business related private trips were made by local residents to the Mainland in 1999. Their spending on private trips to the Mainland was about HK\$30 billion.

In the first three quarters of 2000, the number of non-business related private trips made by local residents to the Mainland was estimated at 24.9 million, an increase of 25% over the same period last year. However, their total spending in the Mainland has dropped to HK\$22 billion, a decrease of 3% over the same period of last year.

The amount of spending by local residents visiting the Mainland as mentioned above is approximately equivalent to 4% of the local private consumption expenditure during the same period. The increasing number of visits to the Mainland in recent years, to some extent, has offset visits that might have been made to countries other than the Mainland. Their spending in the Mainland actually accounts for part of

our overall spending in outbound travels. As such, the potential impact on the consumer market in Hong Kong should be smaller than the aforementioned amount and percentage of spending by local residents in the Mainland.

- (c) At present, Mainland residents can come to Hong Kong to visit relatives or for sightseeing by obtaining a two-way permit from the Mainland public security authorities or by joining the “Hong Kong Group Tour” Scheme. There is no need for them to apply for a separate entry permit from the Immigration Department. The Department has also simplified the relevant procedures. These include standardizing and simplifying the forms for visitors joining the “Hong Kong Group Tour” Scheme, reducing the time required for travel agents to notify the Department in advance of the arrival and departure of tours from 48 to 24 hours, and abolishing the requirement for submitting tour members’ photos. Moreover, provided that the smooth clearance of other visitors is not affected, the Immigration Department will arrange designated counters at the various control points for clearance of Mainland visitors.

To attract more visitors to come and spend in Hong Kong, the Government has spared no effort in fostering the sustainable development of the tourism industry.

- (i) We will continue to implement various tourism infrastructural projects, including several major projects and a series of other projects which can be carried out more speedily, for instance, the tourist signage pilot scheme, to improve some popular tourist attractions and to make Hong Kong more visitor-friendly.

- (ii) To enhance the service standards of the local travel agents, the Government will introduce a bill to put in place a licensing scheme for the regulation of inbound travel agents.
- (iii) The Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA) launched the Quality Tourism Services Scheme in late 1999 to promote the concept of quality service to the retail and dining sectors.
- (iv) The HKTA has also stepped up its promotional efforts in the Mainland market. Representative offices have been opened in Beijing and Shanghai to promote Hong Kong to the Mainland visitors, in particular the potential high-spending ones.
- (v) In addition, plans are also in hand to launch systematically a publicity and public education campaign on hospitality culture to enhance public understanding of the role of tourism so that visitors will feel welcomed.

We will continue to maintain close liaison with the HKTA and the trade to explore ways to improve tourism products. Efforts will be made to increase visitor arrivals and tourism receipts.

**Average Daily Numbers of Local Residents  
Visiting the Mainland (for Tour and Business Purposes etc)  
During Weekends, Long Weekends and Public Holidays**

|      | <b>Weekends</b>  | <b>Long Weekends</b> | <b>Public Holidays</b> |
|------|------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1998 | 129,871          | 154,684              | 90,841                 |
| 1999 | 150,422 (+15.8%) | 163,211 (+5.5%)      | 165,468 (+82.2%)       |
| 2000 | 163,045 (+8.4%)  | 171,412 (+5.0%)      | 117,577 (-28.9%)       |

Note: Public holidays immediately preceding or following weekends are categorized as “Long Weekends”.