

LCQ3: Employment of PWDs by HK Disneyland

Following is a question by the Hon Dr Fernando Cheung Chiu-hung and a reply by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, in the Legislative Council today (January 18):

Question:

Regarding the employment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) by the Hong Kong Disneyland ("HKD"), will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the number of PWDs currently employed by HKD, with a breakdown by the modes of employment and job nature;
- (b) of the respective longest and shortest employment periods among the former and existing HKD employees who are PWDs; and
- (c) whether the Administration will request HKD management to set an indicator for employing PWDs; if it will not, whether it has assessed if this runs contrary to the Government policy of assisting PWDs in securing jobs?

Reply:

Madam President,

The Hongkong International Theme Parks Limited (HKITP)'s employment policy is to provide equal opportunities to all applicants, including persons with disabilities (PWDs). If an applicant, who is a PWD, possesses the necessary skills and qualities for a job, HKITP is very willing to employ him. To ensure that potential PWDs are aware of job opportunities at HKITP, apart from its normal advertising channels, HKITP has since August 2005 developed a process to disseminate recruitment information to PWDs. It passes a monthly update on all job openings to the Social Welfare Department (SWD), Labour Department (LD) and Hong Kong Council of Social Services. HKITP has undertaken to review every application referred by these channels.

In addition, HKITP has arranged site visits for representatives from SWD and LD to introduce the operation of the theme park to them so that the two departments can better explain the job opportunities offered by HKITP to their clients. Representatives of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau, SWD and LD have met with the Hong Kong Disneyland to introduce to them the employability of PWDs and the support services provided by government departments for the employment of PWDs, e.g., job matching and referral services and how to make use of the services and products of non-governmental rehabilitation organisations. This two-way communication will continue.

Since August 2005 over 100 PWDs have expressed interest to HKITP in employment opportunities at Hong Kong Disneyland. Currently, 25 PWDs are working full-time in various positions across different lines of business in the theme park, including cleaning, hotels, food and beverage, and clerical and administration support. They joined the company at different points in time since park opening. In addition, HKITP has contracted out

short-term projects to rehabilitation organisations through the Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) under SWD. This has provided job opportunities to PWDs. Between August and December 2005, a total of 66 employment opportunities for PWDs have been provided through this channel.

It is the Government's policy to assist PWDs to develop their personal capabilities for securing jobs in the open market, so as to enable them to become self-reliant and integrate fully into society. The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau, SWD and LD encourage and help employers to employ PWDs. The Government has also launched a series of measures to encourage and assist employers in the public and private sectors to employ PWDs. For example, SWD and LD have provided funding to non-governmental organisations to provide employment-related training to PWDs. LD itself will also provide training of similar nature to some of its clients, e.g. job interview skills.

The Government will not require a particular employer to set up a specific employment indicator for the employment of PWDs. Hon Lee Cheuk-yan asked a question on employment of PWDs by the Government on 4 May 2005. The Secretary for the Civil Service's reply stated our long-standing policy: "The Government, and indeed the whole community, should help PWDs to find jobs on the basis of their abilities rather than disabilities. Under a compulsory employment quota system, PWDs will be perceived as a liability, making them difficult to be accepted by their peers at work. A mandatory employment quota system is therefore unlikely to be effective in achieving the desired results." On the same occasion, the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food also said, "A majority of the countries which used to implement the quota system, the United Kingdom, for example, have already given up the system since 1995 as it was not reckoned as a good measure. A lot of European countries deem that combating discrimination is the most important task presently.From the point of view of PWDs generally, especially those PWDs having a job at the present moment, they think that they have to be treated equally with other staff at work. They should enjoy no special status, nor should they enjoy any status simply because of compliance with certain legislation."

We believe that the prevailing policy and arrangements, which place emphasis on vocational rehabilitation, promotion and practical assistance, are appropriate for the objective of promoting employment opportunities for PWDs.

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