



立法會 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

何鍾泰議員(工程界) 博士、工程師、太平紳士

Ir Dr the Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai (Engineering Functional Constituency) MBE, JP

12 June 2007

The Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Chairman
Establishment Subcommittee
Finance Committee
Legislative Council
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong

By Fax 2869 6794 and By Post

Dear Fung Ying

On 24 and 28 May 2007, I met representatives from 5 government staff associations as well as concerned groups of serving Engineers from BD, CEDD, DSD, EMSD, HyD and TD (hereafter referred as "Engineer" and Environmental Protection Officers from EPD (hereafter referred as "EPOs").

- (i) Association of Building Services Engineers of Housing Department;
- (ii) Association of Professional Engineers of Electrical & Mechanical Services Department;
- (iii) Buildings Department Structural Engineers' Association;
- (iv) Civil Engineering and Development Department Geotechnical Engineers' Association; and
- (v) HKSARG Government Civil Engineers Association.

They all support the recently proposed adjustment to the starting salaries of respective Grades based on the findings of the 2006 Starting Salaries Survey (SSS). However, they disagree to the proposed conversion arrangement which is considered unfair, unreasonable and unjust to the affected serving Engineers and EPOs due to disregard of their in-service post-qualification experience.

Taking into account their appealing letters addressed to or copied to me (see attachments), I write to provide some important background information and capitulate my thoughts as follows for your reference and necessary actions.

- (1) Due to the 1999 SSS exercise, **126 Engineers** (76 from CEDD, DSD, HyD and TD including 31 Geotechnical Engineers in GEO of CEDD; 45 from EMSD; and 5 from BD) and **45 EPOs** were affected by the downward adjustment of starting salary by 5 MPS points when they were appointed to civil servants after 1 Apr 2000. In general, they have been serving in the Government with about 1 to 6 years of post-qualification experience. Over the years, these Engineers and EPOs are dedicated to the Government since they have gone through many hard times without having any grievance on their lower salary, much less fringe benefits, career uncertainty due to



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ambiguity of the New Agreement Terms and financial adversity after SARS, as compared to the elder peers recruited before 1 Apr 2000. On top of 5 pay point's reduction, they tacitly shared the 6% salary cut in 2004 and 2005.

- (2) The proposed conversion arrangement however excludes and discriminates these serving Engineers and EPOs. They will earn only the same salary as those of the new recruits even though they have accumulated more years of in-service professional experience. As for Engineers, their salary has been reduced from MPS point 32 to point 27. They took 5 years to revert to point 32. However, the new recruits in future will enter the same point 32 straightway for freshly qualified engineers. Despite the proposed raise of one single point, it is still grossly unfair, unreasonable and unjust to these serving Engineers and EPOs because their in-service post-qualification experience is not fully recognized on equal basis as for the serving ones recruited before 1 Apr 2000 and the new ones to be recruited although all have the same educational and professional qualifications. In fact, in-service post-qualification experience is an invaluable asset in our profession and to the Government. As such, we see that incremental credit(s) for experience has been persistently adopted for a long time for Engineers and other professional grades.
- (3) In accordance with the established practice, serving civil servants will retain their existing higher pay if a SSS results in the lowering of starting salaries. The Government claims fair that such protection of downward adjustment should be balanced by appropriate (rather than full) upward adjustments under the normal conversion arrangement, while ensuring the pay of affected officers will not be overtaken by new recruits under normal circumstances. If all increments awarded to affected officers before the implementation of the new starting salaries were to be retained on top of the new starting salaries, it would be against the principle of even-handedness in treatment for both ups and downs in starting salaries. However, this practice overlooks the fact that there exist two different batches of civil servants recruited before/after 1 Apr 2000 and the latter suffers great inferiority compared to the former peers as detailed in Para. (1) above. This is the crux why the principle of evenhandedness only goes to the elder civil servants recruited before 1 Apr 2000 but not the one recruited after 1 Apr 2000.
- (4) I sadly heard at recent LegCo meetings that the proposed conversion arrangement is claimed to follow the recommendation by the Standing Committee on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service (Standing Committee) since its inception in 1979. I question the fairness and reasonableness in strict application of the same conversion principle to 2 different scenarios at different decades. In 1979, the Standing Committee should have not anticipated and taken into account a substantial 5 pay point reduction in starting salary twenty years later in 1999 due to the exceptional predicaments of Asian financial crisis and Hong Kong's economy downturn. Referring to Para. 3.17 of the Standing Committee's Report No. 5 (1979), the diagrams illustrating the conversion principle of bringing up by one pay point encountered only 1 to 2 pay



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point adjustments in the starting salary instead of 5 pay point's cut at present.

- (5) I fully appreciate and support the proposed increase in starting salaries for the need of recruiting new suitable staff on one hand. However, sad to say, the conversion arrangement has caused wide-spread frustration in many grades of affected serving officers including Engineers, EPOs, Government Counsels, clinical psychologists, teachers etc. On the other hand, this contravenes your stipulated policy to offer fair and considerable remuneration to retain and motivate serving officers so as to upkeep an effective and efficient public service. In summary, these Engineers and EPOs are young, dedicated and critical new blood in your civil service engineering crew to bridge the succession gap and serve to implement infrastructure and development projects in maintaining the present strong economic growth and to execute your policy agenda for the coming 5-year term.
- (6) I sincerely hope that you will truly treasure and recognize the in-service post-qualification experience of the affected serving Engineers and EPOs as well as value their dedicated effort and contribution all over the difficult years. I propose to review the unfair part of the conversion arrangement and to reimburse them with the same pay level as all the civil servants in the past and in the future, recognizing their years of in-service post-qualification experience on top of the adjusted starting salary.
- (7) Considering the Non Civil Servant Contract engineers/assistant engineers (NCSC Es/AEs) as an integral part of your civil service engineering crew, I also hope that you will duly consider raising their starting salaries that have been lowered since 1999 SSS, in conjunction with the proposed adjustments. As mentioned in my previous letter to you dated 22 Jan 2007, there exists about 280 NCSC Es/AEs in 10 departments including BD, CEDD, DSD, EMSD, EPD, HAD, HyD, LandsD, TD and WSD.
- (8) In considering recruiting competent graduates in the Government. I suggest you review and revert the engineering graduates' starting salary from \$10,700 to the former of \$16,095.

With best regards

Yours
Raymond Ho

Ir Dr the Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai

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