

**Consultation Paper from the Hong Kong Women Professionals and
Entrepreneurs Association**

To The Honorable Mr. John Tsang, Financial Secretary of the Hong Kong SAR

The 2008-09 Budget

February 2008

The Hong Kong Women Professionals and Entrepreneurs Association (HKWPEA) values the opportunity to respond to ‘the 2008-09 Budget – Information Pack for the Financial Secretary’s Consultation’. A panel of HKWPEA members representing a broad spectrum of professionals and businesswomen from both public and private organizations discussed and prepared this response. This document contains our recommendations which are drawn from both the Chief Executive’s 2007-08 Policy Address and Budget – Information Pack.

We support the four key economic principles and the strategy set forth in ‘An Information Pack for Financial Secretary’s Consultations’. We find that it is a positive approach for the Government to provide the public the background statistics and relevant data in the Information Pack along with a statement of the concerns and the uncertainties.

Based on the objective of ensuring Hong Kong’s future competitiveness and sustainable economic growth, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Review the Policy on Return Wealth to the People and the Enhancing Governance outlined in the Chief Executive’s Policy Address in order to
 - a. Make better use of taxpayers’ money and Hong Kong’s reserve
 - b. Raise the performance of government departments with targeted outcomes [2007-08 Policy Address Chapter D Paragraph 70 and Chapter F Paragraph 102-107 and 110-111]

2. Establish Hong Kong’s first Five-Year Plan with clear objectives and strategies to build more sustainable economic growth for Hong Kong and a better living environment for the people of Hong Kong. The Government should make long term commitments with clear strategies for sustainable development in the following areas:
 - a. To set up a better retirement plan for all as MPF is not sufficient and could not cover a good part of the population, e.g., housewives.
 - b. To create more accessible (short waiting time) and affordable (little or no cost) health care for the underprivileged, and in order not to over expand the public system we suggest the following:
 - i. subsidize the poor in primary health care by offering them cash vouchers to see private GPs.

- ii. subsidize the poor elderly in treating common diseases, e.g., cataract surgery, prostate surgery, with cash vouchers to see private specialists.
 - iii. subsidize the poor for long term medication costs when treated by private doctors, e.g., diabetic drugs, anti-hypertensive drugs, cardiac drugs, etc.
 - iv. implement a medical savings plan for all supplemented by public health insurance (basic care).
 - c. To investigate a voucher system that could be used to provide childcare for less privileged families and extra-curricular activities and tutoring for students with financial difficulties.
[2007-08 Policy Address Chapter D Paragraph 80]
 - d. To improve environmental protection, we suggest the following
 - i. review and revise the standard of the existing Air Quality Objectives of Hong Kong with reference to that of other developed countries.
 - ii. set up an Action Plan and tackle air pollution. This should include reduction of air pollution from electric companies (CLP and Hong Kong Electric), from diesel vehicles and LPG vehicles, and from ferries. The Action Plan should be in three phases, i.e., 3 years, 5 years, and 8 years.
 - iii. further enhance the network of emission trading.
 - iv. make a comprehensive review of possible alternate renewable energy action programs in Hong Kong.
 - v. quantify the amount of annual reduction of carbon dioxide in Hong Kong through different types of action on energy saving
 - vi. enhance education programs on water saving and waste reduction for the general public
 - vii. encourage more farmers to practise organic farming and try to match the standards in Hong Kong with the standard of other developed countries.
- 3. Implement and provide assistance and support to Social Enterprises
[2007-08 Policy Address Chapter D Paragraph 71-72]
- 4. Review the budget for education to realize excellence in education and to build Hong Kong as an education hub and specifically consider increased funding to enable universities to resume recruitment of top quality faculty.
[2007-08 Policy Address Chapter E Paragraph 92-94]

The five-year plan of the government should be transparent and be provided to the public. The Government should remain vigilant at all times to deliver a smaller and more efficient government for Hong Kong.