



### **The Honourable Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, GBS, JP**

Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
Labour and Welfare Bureau  
HKSAR Government

Mr. Cheung joined the Hong Kong Government in July 1972 after graduating from The University of Hong Kong.

He first served as an Information Officer with the Government Information Services. He transferred to the Administrative Service in September 1979 and had since held a wide spectrum of positions in the policy-making and strategic management stream. Amongst his earlier postings were Assistant Private Secretary to the Governor, Sir Edward Youde; District Officer (North); Administrative Assistant to the Financial Secretary, Sir Hamish Macleod; and Assistant Director-General of Trade.

As a senior directorate officer, Mr. Cheung served as Deputy Judiciary Administrator; Deputy Head, Central Policy Unit; Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower; Commissioner for Labour; Director of Education; and Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour.

Mr. Cheung has assumed the position of Secretary for Labour and Welfare since July 2007.

## Opening Speech

Like other major cities in the world, Hong Kong needs to face the challenge of population ageing. But with challenge comes opportunity. Our senior citizens are actively contributing to society with their wisdom and life experience. Most of the elderly in Hong Kong are self-reliant, with less than 7% of them requiring assistance at different levels in performing activities of daily living.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is fully committed to promoting active ageing and enhancing the well-being of our elderly so as to promote a sense of security, belonging and worthiness among them.

Under the concept of “active ageing”, various initiatives are in place. Since 2007, the Elder Academy (EA) Scheme has enabled the elderly to pursue continued learning in a school setting. At present, 108 EAs are being set up in primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Hong Kong, providing over 10 000 learning places a year.

Apart from giving an opportunity to elderly people to learn, we also provide platforms for them to serve the community as volunteers in their neighbourhood. The Government collaborates with non-governmental organisations and district bodies to promote participation of the elderly in volunteer service and strengthen neighbourhood support network.

To facilitate the elderly to actively participate in social and community affairs, a concessionary fare scheme is in place for them to travel on most means of public transport by paying a nominal fare of about HK\$2 (US 25 cents) each trip.

The Government is also committed to providing our senior citizens with dignified choices while preserving our cherished virtue of self-reliance and family support. Diversified choices of welfare benefits and care services are available to enable the elderly to live their golden age with adequate support that suits their individual needs.

For instance, we allow eligible Hong Kong senior citizens residing in the adjoining Mainland province of Guangdong to receive the monthly Old Age Allowance there without returning to Hong Kong regularly to satisfy the local residence requirement.

Apart from providing subsidized residential care for needy elderly people in Hong Kong, the Government is planning to purchase residential places in two elderly homes in Guangdong operated by Hong Kong non-governmental organisations to provide a new option for elderly to choose from.

All these initiatives are not meant to be exhaustive. We look to organisations and institutions such as the Vocational Training Council to join hands with us in promoting the worthy cause of “active ageing”. With the concerted efforts of the Government and the community, we will make Hong Kong a truly caring and better place for our elderly to live in and enjoy their golden age to the full.