

Hong Kong on right track with the elderly

Your correspondent, Fiona Bassinger, says Singapore must think beyond tradition in meeting the challenges of its greying population: this is sensible.

In Hong Kong, the government is going all out to provide more affordable homes for purchase and rent for the long waiting list of families with such needs, a good proportion of whom belong to our greying society.

During the years when I was a Hong Kong Housing Authority member, Singapore and Hong Kong public housing and community development officials kept in contact, updating each side on new trends in building and management in public housing.

Singapore's main social "exceptionalism" – in my view – was its decision to provide affordable and decent home ownership for 80 per cent or more of all Singaporean families.

Ms Bassinger made several useful suggestions, such as encouraging more elderly women to work and on job training and placement. Hong Kong respects equal rights for women, and this also applies to their special needs and opportunities within our greying society.

In January 2017, when Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor was still Hong Kong's chief secretary, her office issued a "Poverty Alleviation and Retirement Protection" report, with insights into the government's future strategies in alleviating poverty and coping with key livelihood issues of our elderly.

Hong Kong faces formidable challenges in its public housing expansion programme, in alleviating poverty in a fast-changing technological society, and in comprehensively planning ahead for our ageing society.

The government has pragmatically decided to allocate HK\$11 billion by way of a cash grant of up to HK\$4,000 to 2.8 million residents who will not benefit from the tax rebates or increased allowances in the budget.

Most of them are in the lower-income groups, such as retired elderly people, who deserve such a special one-off grant.

Hilton Cheong-Leen, To Kwa Wan

Carrie Lam at a poon choi feast for the elderly organised by the Chui Chow community, in Kennedy Town on January 13. Photo: Edward Wong



香港安老 走對了路

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貴報記者 Fiona Bassinger 說，新加坡在應付人口老化的問題上必須脫出傳統思維；這很明智。

在香港，政府正設法供應更多房屋，讓等候已久而有這個需要的家庭，以他們可負擔的能力購買或租住，這些家庭有相等大比例屬銀髮一族。

在我出任香港房屋委員會委員的年代，新加坡和香港負責公共房屋與社區發展的官員經常聯繫，就建造及管理公共房屋的最新發展互相溝通。

新加坡的主要社會福利“例外情況”——以我的看法——就是政府為八成或以上的新加坡家庭提供他們可負擔及像樣的自置居所。

Bassinger 女士提出幾項很有用的建議，例如鼓勵更多年長婦女工作，接受在職培訓和工作安排。香港尊重婦女有平等權利，對銀髮婦女的特別需要和機會亦一樣適用。

2017 年 1 月，行政長官林鄭月娥仍是香港的政務司司長，她的辦公室發表了一個“扶貧工作及退休保障”報告，就扶貧以及照顧長者基本生活所需的議題上，提出有見地的政府未來策略。

香港面對巨大的挑戰，如公共房屋的擴建計劃；在急速發展的科技社會裡扶助貧困；全面規劃應付人口老化，這些都是不容易解決的問題。

政府已務實地撥出 110 億元，為不能受惠於減稅和預算案中所增加的補助的 2 百 80 萬居民發放可達 4000 元的現金津貼。

他們大多數屬低收入人士，例如退休長者，是值得享有這類一次過的特別津貼的。

圖片說明：

1 月 13 日，林鄭月娥出席潮州社團在西環為長者舉辦的盆菜宴。

攝影：Edward Wong

土瓜灣張有興