

社評
雙語道

最低工資應反映通脹 紓解在職貧窮

Minimum wage should reflect inflation to alleviate working poverty

原文

下文摘錄自 10月14日香港《文匯報》：

消息指，最低工資委員會已經完成檢討，勞資雙方同意將目前每小時37.5元的最低工資上調約6.7%至40元，預料明年5月生效。勞工處回應表示，政府會適時公布決定。最低工資因疫情原因「凍薪」4年，今次的加幅只是勉強追上過去4年的通脹，對商界的影響輕微。事實上，基層勞工感受到的生活通脹，遠高於整體通脹，政府應完善最低工資形成機制，更準確反映基層市民的生活成本，並考慮由「兩年一檢」加密至「一年一檢」，以更準確反映經濟環境，保障基層生活。

本港法定最低工資自2019年上調至每小時37.5元後，至今未有調整。如果最終加幅如消息所言是6.7%，只是勉強追上這幾年累積的通脹升幅，並不算高。每次調整最低工資，勞方和資方都各執一詞，勞方覺得加幅不足以令基層勞工分享經濟發展成果，資方則稱目前經濟環境差，加太多會令企業百上加斤。

本港經濟受疫情影響仍未復原是不爭事實，今年更可能錄得負增長，但最低工資制度執行

十多年來，領取最低工資的僱員一直越來越少。根據最低工資委員會的報告，最低工資2011年生效之初，全港約有18萬僱員受惠，佔全港僱員的6.4%；到2019年只有21,200名僱員領取最低工資，佔全港僱員的0.7%。據統計處最新數據，去年的受惠人數更跌至僅有1.4萬人，較2011年的18萬人大跌九成多。這些最基層的勞工加最低工資，對資方增加的負擔實在有限，無需誇大其詞。

本港在過去4年一直維持較低通脹水平，但市民生活必需的衣食住行、水電煤氣所形成的生活通脹，加幅其實並不少。據統計處最新公布的8月份消費物價指數，整體通脹率按年升1.9%，但其中屬於必需的電力、燃氣及水費升幅最高，上升15.2%；其次為衣履，升5.9%，基本食品、外出用膳及外賣則分別升4.7%、3.3%，均明顯高於整體通脹，可見基層市民面對的通脹壓力絕對不小。

面對這些生活必需品的通脹，收入水平較高的市民可能只是在其他方面稍微壓縮開支，去少次旅行，買少個手袋而已，但對收取最低工資生活的基層勞工而言，日常開支已經減無可減，一分一毫都要精打細算。如果最低工資加

幅追不上生活必需品的通脹，就意味着要面臨實質生活水平的倒退，連基本的食物、電費開支都要發愁。所以，資方給予最低工資僱員較高一點的加幅，實在無可厚非。

另外，最低工資的金額是否過低、形成機制和檢討機制是否合理，也一直是社會爭論的焦點。有人說現時最低工資水平低於綜援是不合理的。以4人家庭為例，現時平均每月綜援金額為16,975元。但若以最低工資40元計，4人當中有2人從事每天8小時、每月26天全職工作，月入也僅有16,640元，的確較領取綜援更低。但如果這個家庭領取在職家庭津貼，收入就可以較領取綜援多約5,000元。

根據現行機制，最低工資委員會會參考一系列的指標數據，涵蓋整體經濟狀況、勞工市場情況、競爭力等。但社會上一直有聲音，要求政府全面檢討現行最低工資機制，確保最低工資要高於通脹、綜援和貧窮線水平；現時「兩年一檢」的制度未能及時反映市場變化，亦一直有聲音建議改為「一年一檢」。對此，特區政府應廣納民意，積極完善執行了11年的最低工資形成機制，確保底層勞工透過辛勤付出可得到合理回報，紓解在職貧窮問題。



◆ 基層市民面對的通脹壓力絕對不小，不少必要開支的通脹率均明顯高於整體通脹。 資料圖片

譯文

The Minimum Wage Commission (MWC) has completed a review and reached the consensus with both labour and management sectors to increase the Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) of \$37.5 per hour by about 6.7% to \$40, which is expected to take effect next May, according to a source. The Labour Department responds that the decision will be announced in due course. The current increase, after a 4-year freeze because of the pandemic, can only keep up with the inflation rate in the past four years, thus impacting minimally on the business sector. In fact, the inflation felt by grassroots workers is much higher than the overall one; therefore, the Government should improve the SMW formation mechanism to more accurately reflect the cost of living of the grassroots and consider an annual review of the rate instead of the current biennial process to reflect the economic environment more precisely and safeguard the living standard of low-paid workers.

The SMW has been frozen since it reached \$37.5 in 2019. The new increase rate of 6.7%, if approved, can only keep up with the cumulative inflation rate in the past few years, which by no means is aggressive. Whenever for the SMW review, disputes arise between employees and em-

ployers: the former argue that the increase rate is not enough for grassroots workers to share the fruits of economic development, while the latter refute that greater extent of increase will add to the burden of enterprises.

It is an indisputable fact that Hong Kong's economy has not yet recovered from the pandemic and may even record a contraction this year, but the number of employees on the minimum wage has been decreasing since the introduction of SMW a decade ago. According to a report by the MWC, about 180,000 employees, or 6.4% of all employees in Hong Kong, benefited from the minimum wage in 2011 when the SMW came into effect, and the number decreased to 21,200 in 2019, accounting for 0.7% of all HK employees, then declined to 14,000 only in 2021, a sharp drop of over 90% since 2011, according to the latest figures from the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD). The SMW increase for the low-paid employees will only add a limited burden to employers and the implications of such increase should not be exaggerated.

Hong Kong has maintained a relatively low level of inflation in the past four years, but the inflation rate in basic daily necessities and public utility services is actually quite high. According to the latest Consumer Price Indices for August released

by the C&SD, the overall inflation rate rose by 1.9% year-on-year, but the rate in electricity, gas and water rose the most by 15.2%, followed by clothing and footwear (5.9%), basic food (4.7%), and meals out and takeaway (3.3%), all significantly higher than the overall inflation rate, showing that the pressure of inflation on the grassroots is not low at all.

In the face of inflation in these daily necessities, people with higher income levels may only need to reduce their expenses slightly in other areas, such as going on fewer trips or buying fewer handbags; however, for grassroots workers living on minimum wage, they have no way to cut back on their daily expenses and have to make every cent count. They will have to face a retrogressive living standard in real terms and worry about paying basic food and electricity bills if the increase rate of SMW cannot match the inflation of daily necessities. Therefore, a higher rate of increase to low-paid employees is reasonable and appropriate.

In addition, it has been a focus of debate in society whether the SMW is too low, and whether its formation and review mechanism are reasonable. Some criticise that it is unreasonable for the current SMW rate to be lower than the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). Take a

four-person family as an example, the average monthly CSSA payment currently is \$16,975. However, if we take the minimum wage of \$40 as the basis, two of the four persons working full-time for eight hours a day and 26 days a month will only earn a monthly income of \$16,640, which is indeed lower than the CSSA payment. But if this family receive the Working Families Allowance, their income will be about \$5,000 higher than the CSSA payment.

Under the existing mechanism, the MWC makes reference to a series of indicators, including the overall economic situation, the labour market, competitiveness, etc. However, there have been calls from the community for the Government to conduct a comprehensive review of the existing SMW mechanism to ensure that the SMW should be higher than the inflation, CSSA and poverty line levels, and calls for an annual review of the rate instead of the current biennial process which cannot reflect market changes in a timely manner. In this regard, the Government should take on board public opinion exhaustively and proactively improve the SMW mechanism which has been in place for 11 years, to ensure that low-paid workers can receive reasonable returns for their hard work and the problem of working poverty can be alleviated.

不愛聽音樂 可能是壞人？

恒 大英萃

隔星期二見報

莎士比亞在《威尼斯商人》一劇中曾提及：「內心沒有音樂、對美妙音樂無動於衷的人，總擅長賣國陰謀與掠奪……這樣的人是不可相信的。」

(The man that hath no music in himself, nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils... Let no such man be trusted.) 大家可能會想：對音樂一竅不通是死罪嗎？就音樂盲而已，有這麼不濟嗎？假如你知道英語中「音樂」(music)一字起源的話，說不定你也會認同莎翁的觀點。

音樂源於心靈思想

英語中 Music 一字來自 Muse，根據詞源字典所載，Muse 有守護靈 (guiding spirit) 和靈感之源 (source of inspiration) 的意思，而 Muse 一字則來自拉丁文 Mūsa 及希臘文 Moṓsa，字根為梵文 manas- 和印歐語 men-，泛指思想、記憶、心志、心靈和預感等，相關的英文詞彙亦多不勝數，包括 mantra、mind、mental、museum、amuse、bemuse、remind、reminisce、memoir、memory、mnemonics、memento、remembrance、premonition 等。因此，莎士比亞之所以對「內心沒有音樂」的人有所顧忌，是因為 muse 這項元素實在是人生不可或缺，

沒有思想、記憶與靈魂的人，多是冷酷無情、人面獸心的魔鬼。

在希臘神話中，第一代的繆斯 (Muses) 是詩歌三女神，她們是天空之神 Uranus 和大地之母 Gaia 所孕育的三位女兒，分別是歌唱 (Aoidē)、沉思 (Melete) 和記憶 (Mneme)。

第二代的繆斯女神們更厲害，她們是眾神之首宙斯 (Zeus) 與記憶女神繆妮摩西妮 (Mnemosyne) 的九位女兒，當中包括司掌英雄史詩的卡利俄珀 (Calliope)，象徵歷史與讚美的克利俄 (Clio)，代表抒情詩與音樂的歐忒耳佩 (Euterpe)，編寫愛情詩與獨唱的厄妮托 (Erato)，代表悲劇與哀歌的墨爾波墨涅 (Melpomene)，創造喜劇與牧歌的塔利亞 (Thalia)，象徵頌歌、修辭與幾何學的波里謙尼亞 (Polyhymnia)，以及司管天文與占星學的烏拉尼亞 (Urania)。

兩代繆斯女神們，合共涵蓋了文藝與科學的無數領域。在荷馬的史詩《奧德賽》、但丁的《神曲》，以及米爾頓的《失樂園》，都可以看到其倩影。繆斯女神可說是詩人、藝術家、設計師、發明家和科學家的至愛。

不過，希臘眾神多少也總有些黑歷史，繆斯女神們也不例外。有說人們在酒後特別容易靈感澎湃，而醉意濃時，繆斯的降臨更像狂風暴雨……因為九位女神少女時代的玩伴，正是瘋狂又玩世不恭的酒神戴安尼西斯 (Dionysus)。

拿錯枋杖吠錯樹 同樣形容錯重點

英 語世界

隔星期二見報

電視劇情節中，偵探們重新調查多年未破的懸案，再次審視資料和證據，發現以前查案的探員未能偵破案件和捉拿犯人，是由於對案件的理解有偏差，定位錯了，所以調查方向有錯，手法不對，即是用錯方法，捉錯用神，用英文說就是 bark up the wrong tree (向着不對的樹叫吠)，或者 get the wrong end of the stick (錯拿了枋杖的另一端)。

Bark up the wrong tree 來自狩獵活動，獵人到樹林捕獵小動物，例如兔子、松鼠等，會用狗隻幫忙尋找獵物。18世紀時，美國盛行捕獵浣熊 (raccoon)，浣熊喜歡夜間出沒，而且藏身樹上，獵人派出獵犬找尋浣熊蹤跡，獵犬發覺某棵樹有浣熊藏身，便會向着樹上吠叫，在樹下等候主人。不過，浣熊亦是聰明靈活的動物，經常從一棵樹跳到另一棵樹，當獵人來到獵犬吠叫的大樹時，浣熊已跑了，失去了蹤影，於是責備獵犬吠錯了樹 (bark up the wrong tree)。

後來，這語句引申比喻對事情理解錯誤、找錯根源、用錯方法，或者是基於錯誤的假設，走錯方向，沒有找出事件的真正原因，採用了不適合的辦法，針對了錯誤的對象，所以沒法達成目的。

The police couldn't solve the case because they barked up the wrong tree. They thought it was about money, but in fact it was all about human relations.

警方沒法偵破這案件，因為他們的偵查方向有錯。他們以為是金錢糾紛，其實完全是人際關係問題。

She believes that her new plan can save the economy, but many think that she is barking up the wrong tree.

她相信她的新方案能挽救經濟，但是很多人認為她走錯方向，用錯方法。

Get hold of / get the wrong end of the stick 其實意思亦相似。當中的 stick 指的應該是手杖、枋杖 (walking stick)。使用者拿着手杖的一端，而另一端則接觸地面，如果倒着拿，就是拿着沾了泥濘污垢的一端；而且手杖上下倒轉，亦失去了枋杖的用處，本末倒置，自然是錯了。因此 get the wrong end of the stick 用作比喻沒有正確了解情況，忽略重點，或者錯誤理解某些行為或說話，即是誤判形勢，捉錯用神。

Many people were confused about her speech and got the wrong end of the stick.

很多人對她的演辭感到混淆，錯誤理解她的意思。

Don't get the wrong end of the stick. Your parents haven't talked to you much because they want to give you more freedom.

不要誤解，錯怪他們。你的父母甚少與你談話，是因為他們想給予你更多自由。

Bark up the wrong tree 或者 get the wrong end of the stick 就是想錯了，判錯了，做錯了。要避免，就應該仔細把問題看清楚，掌握充分資料，正確了解事情，找出根源，對症下藥，那就不會失去焦點，走錯方向而徒勞無功。

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