

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1726/02-03
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref: CB1/PL/ES/1

Panel on Economic Services

**Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 28 April 2003, at 12:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon HUI Cheung-ching, JP
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
- Non-Panel Members attending** : Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
- Members absent** : Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP

- Public officers attending** : **Agenda item IV**
Economic Development and Labour Bureau

Ms Sandra LEE
Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Economic Development)

Ms Eva CHENG
Commissioner for Tourism

Mr Charles CHAN
Assistant Commissioner for Tourism
- Attendance by invitation** : Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong

Mr Joseph TUNG
Executive Director
Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong
- Clerk in attendance** : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2
- Staff in attendance** : Ms Debbie YAU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)1

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant 5

Action

- I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1488/02-03 - Minutes of meeting held on 31.3.2003)

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2003 were confirmed.

II Information paper issued since last meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1353/02-03(01) - Tables and graphs showing the import and retail prices of major oil products from March 2001 to February 2003 furnished by the Census and Statistics Department)

2. Members noted the information paper issued since last meeting.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 26 May 2003

LC Paper No. CB(1)1487/02-03(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(1)1487/02-03(02) - List of follow-up actions

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next Panel meeting scheduled for 26 May 2003:

- (a) Toys and children's products : updating of safety standards;
- (b) Avenue of stars; and
- (c) Access to the Mainland aviation market.

(Post-meeting note: With the concurrence of the Chairman, item (c) would be deferred to a later meeting pending the control of the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).)

IV Training and certification of tourist guides

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1487/02-03(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Commissioner for Tourism (C for Tourism) briefed members on the training and certification scheme for inbound tourist guides. She said that the scheme was intended to upgrade professional skills and standard of the workforce in the industry and enhance Hong Kong's reputation as a tourist-friendly city. Under the training and certification scheme, only those who had completed the prescribed courses and passed the required examination would be eligible to apply for a tourist guide permit and only those with the permit would be able to serve as inbound tourist guides. Mr Joseph TUNG, Executive Director of the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) also briefed members on the operational details of the Tourist Guide training course and the examination. To facilitate compliance by tourist guide permit holders, Code of Conduct would be issued by the TIC.

Training of serving tourist guides

5. Noting that a 7-day full-time training course plus one day examination was launched in July 2002 to train some 8,000 serving inbound tourist guides over a projected period of two years, Mrs Selina CHOW was concerned about the low response from the trade as only about 1,500 serving tourist guides had received the training so far. She urged the Administration and TIC to step up publicity with a view to encouraging the industry players to acquire the necessary training and certification by 1 July 2004.

6. Mr TUNG said that TIC had announced to its members that with effect from 1 July 2004, all tourist guides employed by inbound travel agents to receive visitors to Hong Kong must have a valid tourist guide permit issued by the TIC. Regarding the progress of the scheme, he pointed out that some 1,000 members of the Hong Kong Association of Registered Tour Coordinators who had already received accredited in-service training courses were exempted from taking the Skills Upgrading Scheme Tourist Guide training course as well as the practical test. They were only required to be tested on the "knowledge of Hong Kong" part of the written test. He also anticipated that with the recent downward adjustment in visitor arrivals to Hong Kong due to the outbreak of SARS, more and more tourist guides would be able to attend the training courses. TIC would step up publicity to encourage tourist guides to complete the necessary training and examination in time.

7. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah was concerned about the supply and adequacy of training places to cope with a sudden surge of demand in the next 14 months. Mr TUNG replied that actions were in hand to increase the number of training places to meet the demand as and when required.

8. Regarding Mr LEUNG Fu-wah's question about the passing rate and result of the examination held so far, Mr TUNG said that TIC maintained a high standard for the qualifying examination. Whilst about 600 serving tourist guides had already attained the necessary qualification, the examination result of the remaining 900 trainees had yet to be announced, pending assessment by the training institutions.

9. Regarding the feedback from course participants on the Tourist Guide training course, Mr TUNG advised that the evaluation results showed that 24% of the participants regarded the course to be "very satisfactory" and 64% graded the course as "satisfactory". For the rest of the course participants, they were of the view that the course contents might need to be beefed up to include more practical elements rather than focusing on the examination of theories. Some were also concerned about the length of the course, and the form and design of the examination. The Tourism Industry Working Group, set up under TIC, would take into account the views expressed by course participants and refine the courses to meet the training needs of participants.

10. Mr Howard YOUNG indicated his support to the scheme and urged for its early implementation to improve the service quality of tourist guides. He also sought clarification on whether freelance tourist guides would need to complete the prescribed training courses, pass the required examination and apply for a tourist guide permit in order to serve as inbound tourist guide. The Chairman asked for a similar question regarding taxi drivers serving as temporary inbound tourist guides on an ad hoc basis.

11. Mr TUNG clarified that the Government and the travel and tourism trade agreed that a training and certification scheme should be introduced for all inbound tourist guides. Regarding the scope of application to part-time tourist guides, he said that only those part-time tourist guides who were currently employed by registered travel agents would be included. As such, taxi drivers fell outside the scope of the scheme.

12. As to whether the English language proficiency of course participants would form part of the assessment criteria for the examination, Mr TUNG explained that the Tourist Guide training course aimed at providing a structured introduction to basic tourist guide skills such as conducting group tours, customer service, knowledge of Hong Kong, etc. Whilst specific English language course would not be provided, he trusted individual travel agent operators would provide on-the-job training to serving tourist guides.

Course fee

13. Mr Howard YOUNG highlighted the financial difficulties faced by the industry. To relieve their burden, he opined that some form of subsidy should be provided to course participants. Mr HUI Chueng-ching also enquired about the re-sitting arrangement for those who failed in the examination.

14. Mr TUNG pointed out that the Skills Upgrading Scheme (SUS) introduced by the Education and Manpower Bureau already provided a 70% subsidy to the training courses so that tourist guides who attended the SUS Tourist Guide training courses only needed to pay \$725, inclusive of examination fee. For those who failed in the examination, they might choose to re-sit upon payment of the examination fees. The fee for the written test was about \$100 to \$150 and \$300 for the Practical Test on skills in guiding tourists.

Code of Conduct

15. Members noted that holders of the tourist guide permit were required to observe the Code of Conduct for Tourist Guides issued by the TIC. Failure to do so might lead to warning, suspension, revocation or non-renewal of the permit. An appeal mechanism would be in place to hear appeals against refusal of the application or non-renewal of the permit and any disciplinary action for breach of the Code of Conduct for Tourist Guides. To ensure the independence of the Appeal Board, Mr SIN Chung-kai opined that the composition of the Board

should be reviewed with the majority of members coming from non-industry players.

16. Mr TUNG explained that to ensure impartiality, every Appeal Board would consist of three members from outside the trade and two members from inside the trade. The Chairman would be elected among the non-trade members. The Application Deliberation Panel was responsible for handling complaints from tourist guides concerning their applications for the Tourist Guide Permit. The quorum for each Panel meeting was five, with at least two trade members and two non-trade members present. Mr TUNG undertook to relay Mr SIN's suggestion to the Board of Directors of TIC for consideration.

V. Any other business

17. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
21 May 2003