

Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting
Special Meeting on Saturday, 11 March 2006

**Speech by Mr S K Cheong, General Manager – Broadcasting,
Television Broadcasts Limited**

**Mr Chairman, Honorable Panel Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,
This morning, we have heard from many of our esteemed colleagues in
the academic field and in the media industries and we agree with many of
their views.**

**A public service broadcaster must not compete with commercial
broadcasters for revenue in advertising and sponsorship. Allowing this
to happen would introduce a non-level playing field in which a
publicly-funded broadcaster is competing for advertising and
sponsorship dollars with free-to-air broadcasters who are entirely
dependent on these dollars for survival.**

**We also agree totally that public service TV, in Hong Kong like in many
developed countries of the world, should have its own channel or even a
group of channels especially after the switch-off of analogue TV. The
legacy of the two terrestrial TV channels ATV and TVB having to carry
signals of RTHK's public service TV programmes, is a result of spectrum
scarcity, a problem that disappears the moment that digital broadcasting
commences in 2007.**

From a commercial free-to-air broadcasters point-of-view, in the highly

competitive multi-channel TV environment that they are faced with today, it is hugely detrimental to, and decidedly unfair for, the competitiveness of the broadcaster to have a block of its broadcast time outside of its scheduling control, particularly when the broadcaster has no control over, or prior knowledge of the contents of the programmes that will go into that block of airtime.

From the public TV broadcaster's point-of-view, it is equally limiting and unfair that it does not have the benefit of a full fledged channel with which to build up its brand identity and channel loyalty. A schizophrenic existence in the, mandatorily occupied time slots of the commercial broadcasters is not good for the public broadcaster, nor is it good for the commercial broadcasters and for the public.

Mr Chairman, Hong Kong will have digital terrestrial television (DTT) within 2007. The Government would be deciding, some time in 2008, on how to allocate the two remaining DTT single frequency network (SFN) multiplexes after ATV and TVB have successfully deployed their SFNs. It is a most opportune time for the Government to decide on the future of Public Service TV Broadcasting in Hong Kong.

For Public Service TV to have its own channel or group of channels is clearly the way forward. Perhaps even more boldly, for Public Service TV to move to the digital domain completely may well be its biggest public service for Hong Kong. I say so because if Public Service TV

were to move completely to the digital domain, it would certainly speed up digital adoption because the only way that the public could get quality public service TV programmes would be to convert to digital TV.

In summary, my main message today in the interest of Hong Kong public service broadcasting, is that public service TV should and must take advantage of the advent of digital TV to come of age and to serve the Hong Kong public in the fullest way by having its own channel. As to more detailed matters, I refer you to our written submission.