

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Public Service
Meeting on 19 November 2007

Updated background brief on
implementation of five-day week in the civil service

Introduction

The Chief Executive announced on 12 January 2006 the setting up of a working group, comprising representatives of the Civil Service Bureau, the Financial Services and Treasury Bureau and the Efficiency Unit, to examine the proposal and implementation details of a five-day week in the Government with effect from 1 July 2006.

2. At the meeting of the Public Service Panel (the Panel) held on 15 May 2006, the Administration briefed members on the phased approach for the implementation of the five-day week initiative in the Government under the four basic principles of: no additional staffing resources, no reduction in the conditioned hours of service of individual staff, no reduction in emergency services, and continued provision of some essential counter services on Saturdays. The Administration also briefed members on the selected government units that moved to a five-day week in phase one starting 1 July 2006 (vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1440/05-06(03)).

3. At the Panel meetings held on 20 November 2006 and 21 May 2007, the Administration briefed members on the progress of the phased implementation of the five-day week initiative as well as the outcomes of the reviews of the phase one implementation and phase two implementation. The reviews cover the following aspects:

- public sentiment;
- monitoring and contingency measures;
- impact on service utilization and operational efficiency;
- impact on performance pledge compliance; and
- staff reaction.

4. The major findings of the reviews include the following:

- (a) the general public and media have generally accepted the five-day week initiative though there are general concerns over reduced convenience as a result of the Government working five

days a week. Some also express disappointment that the Government does not mandate the five-day work pattern in the private sector;

- (b) in addition to government-wide publicity and targeted communication with stakeholders, bureaux and departments offering direct services to the public have provided a drop-in box or leave-a-message service at the closed counters/offices to render assistance to members of the public;
- (c) there is no evidence to suggest that a five-day week has led to an increase or decrease in overall service utilization, nor is there a noticeable change in the number of transactions conducted through alternative channels of service delivery;
- (d) the implementation of the five-day week initiative has not had any adverse impact on the Government's performance pledge compliance; and
- (e) most staff welcome the new arrangement but frontline staff not yet working on a five-day week continue to express their wish to migrate to the new work pattern. Requests for shortening of conditioned working hours have also been received.

5. Overall speaking, the Administration is satisfied with the implementation of the five-day week initiative.

6. In May 2007, the Administration estimated a total of 94 300 staff would be on a five-day week work mode (including those on a "five-day-work, two-day-off" duty pattern) by July 2007, comprising –

	Phase One	Phase Two	Final Phase	Total
Staff working on weekdays only	59 100	4 600	3 100	66 800
Staff on a five-day-work and two-day-off duty pattern	16 300	3 800	7 400	27 500
Sub-total	75 400	8 400	10 500	94 300 (65%)
Staff working more than five days/shifts per week				51 200 (35%)
	Total			145 500¹ (100%)

¹ Excluding those civil servants working in government schools who follow the school calendar, those working in the Judiciary, Hospital Authority, Vocational Training Council, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, etc.

7. For details, members may refer to LC Paper No. CB(1) 248/06-07(03) and LC Paper No. CB(1) 1600/06-07(03). A background brief on implementation of five-day week in the civil service prepared by the Secretariat was also circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)259/06-07.

Views and concerns of Legislative Council Members

8. When the Panel was briefed on 15 May 2006, 20 November 2006 and 21 May 2007 regarding the implementation of five-day week in the Government, members generally indicated their support for the initiative. However, they urged the Administration to provide adequate alternative channels for public access to the services on Saturdays and formulate contingency plans to cater for unforeseeable circumstances. The Administration should closely monitor the implementation of five-day week and continue to review the arrangement to ensure service quality. Given that some 50 000 civil servants will still continue with their non-five-day week work patterns, the Administration should continue to liaise with the staff sides with a view to allowing more frontline staff to work on a five-day week basis.

9. Members also raised a number of questions at the Council meetings on 15 and 22 February 2006, 7 June 2006, 1 November 2006 and 7 February 2007 regarding the implementation of five-day week in the civil service.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
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