

For information on
20 November 2008

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

An overview of the promotional efforts of the Labour Department on labour-related matters

Purpose

This paper provides an overview of the promotional efforts of the Labour Department (LD) on labour-related matters, including employment services, labour relations, labour rights and responsibilities, as well as occupational safety and health.

Overall performance

2. Promotional efforts are an integral part of effective implementation of policy initiatives. The public needs to be aware of the services available before using them. Stakeholders need to be advised of the “dos” and “don’ts” and their rights and benefits under the labour laws to facilitate compliance with statutes and regulations. The paragraphs that follow will outline the key services of LD and the concomitant promotional and publicity efforts. Members are invited to note them and advise on how LD may enhance such efforts with a view to facilitating the delivery of our services to the public.

Facilitating job search and bridging employment information gap

(A) *Job search facilitation*

3. LD widely publicises its employment and recruitment services through various channels, such as Announcements in the Public Interest (APIs), promotional leaflets and posters, bus body advertisements and Interactive Employment Service website, etc. LD also makes use of outdoor television billboards and newspaper advertisements to disseminate employment information to the public.

4. To respond speedily to the recruitment needs of employers and offer user-friendly service to the job-seekers, LD organises large-scale job fairs in shopping malls and community halls at various districts. In the first nine months of 2008, a total of nine large-scale job fairs was organised, attracting over 19 000 job-seekers. LD also organises district-based job fairs in Job Centres to cater for the needs of employers and job-seekers in the vicinity. During the same period, 150 small scale district-based job fairs were held, attracting on average 130 job-seekers for each job fair.

5. For bankruptcy/winding-up cases affecting large number of employees, we would set up special counters at our Job Centres to provide priority referral and job matching services. Moreover, we would appeal to prospective employers to solicit suitable vacancies. We would inform the affected workers of the employers interested in hiring them to facilitate their job search.

(B) *Employment of youth and disabled persons*

6. On youth employment, LD's Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme provide a full range of pre-employment and on-the-job training to young people aged 15 to 24, with a view to enhancing their employability, facilitating a smooth transition to employment and providing sustainable employment opportunities. To publicise the support services in place, reach out to the young people and appeal to the support of the community for youth employment, LD from time to time promotes the two Programmes through various channels including APIs, award ceremonies, wall and street banners, posters, school talks and Internet advertisements, etc. Feedbacks on the programmes are often received during such activities too.

7. To promote the employment opportunities of people with disabilities in the open market and to enhance public understanding of their working abilities, LD regularly organises public education and publicity activities, including conducting seminars, producing videos on successful employment stories, leaflets and guidebooks on people with disabilities, and conducting special promotional campaigns to targeted trades to canvass suitable vacancies.

Fostering harmonious labour relations

8. LD is committed to fostering harmonious labour relations through strengthening tripartite cooperation and promoting good people management practices.

(A) *Strengthening tripartite cooperation*

9. Nine Tripartite Committees (TCs) have been set up for the catering, construction, theatre, logistics, property management, printing, hotel and tourism, cement and concrete as well as retail industries. Members comprise representatives of employer associations and employee unions, major employers and professionals in the respective trades. The TCs provide an effective forum for members to discuss labour issues of mutual concern in a frank and cordial atmosphere. For instance, members of TCs for catering, printing and property management industries have discussed issues relating to the Qualifications Framework promulgated by the Education Bureau in their recent meetings.

(B) *Promoting good people management practices*

10. LD has been publicising good people management practices at the industry level. For example, in early 2008, a Lunar New Year poster was produced and distributed to trade unions and establishments of the catering industry to promote enlightened employment measures including fair recruitment, reasonable employment terms and conditions, labour-management cooperation, etc. A seminar was organised for employers, subcontractors and management staff in the construction industry to promote good people management practices and to enhance understanding of the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57)(EO).

11. LD also has a well-established network of 18 Human Resources Managers' Clubs formed in various trades and industries. We have reached out and will continue to reach out to enterprises in specific trades through regular activities such as experience sharing sessions, workshops and seminars for members. Through interaction and exchanges in such activities, LD introduces and commends good people management practices adopted by different enterprises.

12. LD has been actively promoting family-friendly employment practices (FFEPs) with a view to assisting employees in maintaining a balance between work and family responsibilities. Publicity efforts undertaken recently include –

(a) Showcasing actual cases

A series of newspaper supplements (20 issues) is being published in a newspaper every Friday from July 2008 to showcase exemplary examples on the adoption of FFEPs as well as other good people management measures. The supplements will also be consolidated into a booklet for distribution in early 2009;

(b) Running roving exhibitions

These are held at different locations to widely publicise the theme and increase public awareness. So far, seven exhibitions have been held in 2008; and

(c) Collaborating with non-governmental bodies

A large-scale seminar was held in 2007 in collaboration with the Women's Commission, the Hong Kong Council of Social Services and two professional bodies of human resources practitioners to encourage adoption of FFEPs at the workplace.

Protecting employees' rights and benefits

(A) *Enhancing public understanding of EO*

13. To promote public understanding of employees' rights and benefits under the EO, various promotional activities such as talks and roving exhibitions have been organised for employers, employees and human resources professionals. A wide range of publications is produced for free distribution to the public. Publicity information is also disseminated through the mass media from time to time. When new provisions under or major amendments to EO are enacted, appropriate publicity programmes are launched to promote understanding of the changes.

14. Furthermore, LD has made special efforts to enhance the understanding of EO among specific clientele. The following are some examples –

(a) Combating wage default in the construction industry

LD published a leaflet to enhance the awareness of construction workers of their statutory rights. A poster has also been produced for display in construction sites reminding them of the major provisions on wage protection under EO and encourage them to act as prosecution witnesses in case of wage defaults. In addition, souvenirs have been produced and distributed to remind them to report wage defaults at an early stage;

(b) Safeguarding rights of employees employed by government service contractors

Through organising seminars regularly for procuring departments, government service contractors, their supervisors and workers, LD enhances their understanding of the statutory requirements under EO and contractual terms of the employment contract; and

(c) Publicity targeted at foreign domestic helpers (FDHs)

To help FDHs and their employers understand their respective rights and obligations under EO and the standard employment contract, a variety of promotional activities and programmes are organised. These include producing and distributing a special guidebook and a leaflet printed in five different languages (English, Chinese, Tagalog, Thai and Indonesian), organising information kiosks to screen publicity videos and distribute information packs, and placing advertisements in local newspapers in their respective languages to reach out to FDHs and their employers.

(B) Extensive publicity to warn against illegal employment

15. The Government is determined to protect the employment opportunities of local workers by combating illegal employment. To this end, apart from taking out rigorous enforcement actions, LD has made extensive efforts in educating the public that it is a serious offence to employ illegal workers. Publicity leaflets highlighting imprisonment cases have been produced to remind employers of the serious consequences of employing illegal workers. Advertisements disseminating similar message have been put up on public transport, including MTR stations and trains, buses and trams. Souvenirs and calendar cards printed with LD's Complaint Hotline (2815 2200) are widely distributed to members of the public to encourage reporting of illegal employment activities. Press releases on enforcement operations are also issued through the media, where appropriate, to demonstrate the Administration's determination to combat the illegal activities. We shall continue unabated with our publicity efforts on this front.

(C) Familiarising stakeholders on the medical functions of registered Chinese medicine practitioners

16. With the recognition of Chinese medicine under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282) (ECO), the medical treatment, examination

and certification given by registered Chinese medicine practitioners (CMP) are recognised under the ECO with effect from 1 September 2008. With a view to ensuring the smooth implementation of the new provisions, LD has organised the following promotional and publicity programmes to familiarise stakeholders with the medical functions of registered CMPs labour laws –

- (a) promoting good practices to registered CMPs: LD organises seminars on maintaining medical records and disseminating guidelines on the issuance of sick leave certificates;
- (b) enhancing understanding of statutory rights and responsibilities: there are also seminars and leaflets for employers, human resources practitioners, employees, trade unions and insurers to strengthen understanding of the relevant provisions and matters requiring their special attention;
- (c) conducting visits to major Chinese medicine associations to brief them on relevant legislative provisions and the respective medical functions of registered CMPs under labour laws and the guidelines on the issuance of sick leave certificates; and
- (d) conducting briefings for undergraduates undertaking Chinese medicine programmes in local universities.

Promoting occupational safety and health

17. LD attaches great importance to occupational safety and health (OSH), and is committed to ensuring that risks to the safety and health of people at work are properly managed through the three-pronged approach of enforcement, promotion and publicity, and education and training. Promotion and publicity have all along been one of the key pillars for enhancing the safety awareness of employers and workers, and improving the safety and health performance at the workplace.

(A) *Objectives*

18. The great variety of promotional programmes and publicity evolves around three main objectives underlying our OSH work –

- (a) Fostering a strong safety culture in the community

Publicity campaigns and promotional programmes through different media and communication channels such as television, radio and

public transport enable us to promote a positive and people-oriented safety culture in the community and heighten public awareness towards the importance of work safety and health. We also organise large-scale health talks for members of the public to promote awareness on occupational health and hygiene.

(b) Effecting a change of attitude among employers and workers that accidents are preventable

Parallel general promotional work across all sectors, we also put special focus on accident-prone industries and high-risk work processes. For the construction and catering industries which record a relatively high accident toll, for instance, we endeavour to change the attitude of employers, workers and stakeholders through safety award schemes to recognise and reward excellence in safety and health management. We also jointly organise territory-wide safety seminars with major stakeholders to cultivate a safety concept among employers and employees involved in high-risk work processes, such as tower crane operation and scaffolding works, and to promote knowledge of safe practices. Examples include the collaboration with the cargo handling industry in promoting container safety and the construction industry in promoting safety of minor renovation and maintenance works and working-at-height.

(c) Promoting compliance with relevant safety and health legislation among duty holders

Issuance of codes of practices and relevant guidebooks on specific work processes or operations, and publication of promotional materials on various OSH topics help promote understanding of the laws and compliance. These are complemented by safety talks and seminars for duty holders. LD officers also make promotional visits targeting strategic industries and large corporations which are more prone to industrial accidents to advise the management to adopt effective safety management systems and measures. Special seminars for employers and employees of various industries such as the catering and retail sectors are also organised to introduce OSH requirements and good safety practices pertaining to their operation.

(B) Tools

19. We adopt a multifarious approach to achieve the promotional and publicity objectives. Major tools include –

(a) Publicity

Tools like Announcements of Public Interest on television/radio and in public transport, feature articles in newspapers and on LD's website, roving exhibitions, and publicity of safety messages in MTR stations and popular commercial arcades are commonly adopted in specific publicity campaigns to disseminate safety and health messages to the public. Examples of recent publicity drives include the publicity on heat stroke prevention launched during the hot season, and the launch in mid-November 2008 of a publicity campaign targeting safety of repair, maintenance, alteration and addition (RMAA) works and working-at-height. In particular, given the obligatory safety inspection and, where necessary, maintenance of all structures aged 30 years or more, RMAA would deserve priority attention. Such projects present a great challenge to law enforcement since they are less visible and small scale.

(b) Promotion

Publications (e.g. booklets, leaflets and posters) and audio-visual educational materials on various OSH topics for free distribution to stakeholders serve the useful function of changing attitude among employers and employees, and imparting on them practical skills and knowledge. Safety and health talks, as well as territory-wide seminars and promotional visits for specific accident-prone industries (e.g. construction and container industries) and hazardous work activities (e.g. scaffolding works and tower crane operations) are also organised. In the past three years, some 4 800 OSH talks/lectures/seminars were organised and 11 000 promotional visits were conducted to workplaces to encourage adoption of good workplace management. We shall continue to tailor our promotion work to suit the purpose and nature of target beneficiaries. For instance, in respect of RMAA works, we intend to enlist strategic partners at the local community level, in addition to support from the building management sector.

(c) Partnering with government departments and stakeholders

Through a partnership approach, we enlist the support, assistance and ownership of relevant stakeholders, including the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC), employer associations, workers' unions, professional bodies, related organisations and government departments, in launching various publicity and promotional

programmes. Apart from safety awards in the construction and catering industries, we promote the Occupational Safety Charter in collaboration with OSHC to enhance the spirit of “shared responsibility” in workplace safety and health. In 2008, we also established strategic partnership with various government departments and stakeholders (e.g. the Home Affairs Department, Housing Department, Hong Kong Housing Society, related trade associations, universities, building owners’ corporations and property management companies) in launching promotional activities targeting the safety of RMAA works.

(d) Assistance to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to purchase safety equipment

SMEs are generally less equipped to invest in work safety. Sustained improvements in safety performance can only be achieved through internalising the value of making safety a priority. LD joins hands with OSHC to launch various sponsorship schemes to encourage these enterprises to purchase safety equipment, such as fall arresting equipment for working-at-height, cut resistant gloves and slip resistant shoes in the catering industry, and installation of reversing video device for heavy vehicles on construction sites. The aim is to build safety awareness and change work habits among SME employers and contractors. There are, where applicable, complementary requirements on subsidised SMEs to send their employees to attend related free OSHC safety training courses to consolidate the safety awareness and knowledge of the workers.

Conclusion

20. Looking ahead, LD will keep up its efforts on all fronts and put in place comprehensive promotional measures to provide quality service to the community. Members are invited to note this paper and advise on ways to further enhance the effectiveness of our publicity and promotional work.