

**Legislative Council Motion Debate on
“That this Council notes the Report of the delegation of the
Panel on Manpower to study the experience in the implementation of
standard working hours in the Republic of Korea”
on 15 February 2012**

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting held on 15 February 2012, the motion on “That this Council notes the Report of the delegation of the Panel on Manpower to study the experience in the implementation of standard working hours in the Republic of Korea” moved by Hon LEE Cheuk-yan was carried. The wording of the motion is at Annex.

2. This paper briefs Members on the relevant work progress.

Policy Study on Standard Working Hours

3. The Government attaches great importance to the issue of working hours of Hong Kong citizens. In the 2010-11 Policy Address, the Chief Executive initiated a policy study on standard working hours, reflecting the Government’s concern about the issue. The Labour Department (LD) is actively conducting the study which, among other things, looks into the systems and experiences of other places in regulating working hours. The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) has assisted in collecting statistics on the current working hour situation of our labour force and various sectors of Hong Kong so as to facilitate in-depth and objective analysis.

4. The issue of standard working hours is an extremely complex and controversial one. It involves subjects far more complicated than those of minimum wage and impacts on a wider spectrum of employees. Other than basic conceptual issues such as the objective of regulating working hours and whether working hour limits should be set, the working hour system involves specific implementation details, such as its scope of coverage, appropriate exemptions and flexibility arrangements, etc. These are the major issues that require in-depth consideration in the course of the study.

5. As the implementation of standard working hours would have far-reaching implications on our society and economy, we must be prudent in handling the matter. The policy study also looks into our economic and social conditions as well as the characteristics of various sectors in Hong Kong. Owing to diversity in the modes of operation among various sectors under different social conditions, the impact of standard working hours on different sectors will also vary. Moreover, as statutory minimum wage has been in force for some time, we need to closely monitor its impact on the labour market, small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the economy.

Experience of Other Places in Implementing Standard Working Hours

6. In formulating a working hour policy, places around the world will take into account such factors as their own socio-economic development and labour market conditions, while local cultural background, work culture and values must also be considered. While the experience of Korea in implementing standard working hours is of reference value, we also have to pay attention to other places' distinctive social, economic and cultural backgrounds against which their working hour policies were worked out. Therefore, each place should make the most appropriate arrangements in the light of its actual situation.

7. Discussion on the working hour regime elsewhere reveals that various sectors of society have different demands regarding various aspects of the regime. Consensus can only be reached after in-depth discussion and balancing of interests among all parties concerned. This shows that the process of consensus building is of prime importance.

Report of Study Findings

8. We will continue to take due account of the interests of the community as a whole and examine in a pragmatic, objective and practical manner the issue of standard working hours which has far-reaching implications. The study will be completed by mid-2012, after which the findings of the study will be reported to the Labour Advisory Board and the Panel on Manpower of LegCo.

(Translation)

Motion on
“Report of the delegation of the Panel on Manpower to study
the experience in the implementation of standard working hours
in the Republic of Korea”
moved by Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
at the Legislative Council meeting of
Wednesday, 15 February 2012

Wording of the Motion

“That this Council notes the Report of the delegation of the Panel on Manpower to study the experience in the implementation of standard working hours in the Republic of Korea.”