

**For information on
21 May 2007**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

**IMPLEMENTATION OF FIVE-DAY WEEK
IN THE GOVERNMENT (FINAL PHASE)**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the outcome of the review on the phase two implementation of the five-day week initiative and the migration of further government services to a five-day week in the final phase starting 1 July 2007.

BACKGROUND

2. 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. At the Panel meeting held on 15 May 2006, we 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. We 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)). At the Panel Meeting held on 20 November 2006, we briefed Members on the outcome of the review of the phase one implementation and the government units that moved to a five-day week in phase two starting 1 January 2007 (vide LC Paper No. CB(1)248/06-07(03)).

REVIEW OF PHASE TWO

3. Working together with bureaux and departments (B/Ds), we have reviewed the phase two implementation on the basis of the experience in the month of January 2007. Our review covers the following aspects –

- (a) Public sentiment;
- (b) Monitoring and contingency measures;
- (c) Impact on service utilisation and operational efficiency;
- (d) Impact on performance pledge compliance; and
- (e) Staff reaction.

Public sentiment

4. Following the implementation of phase one, the general public and media have generally accepted the five-day week initiative. The extension of a five-day week to more government services in phase two has been smooth. The weekly number of enquiries, complaints, and suggestions received by the “1823 Citizen’s Easy Link” dropped from 282 in the first week of January 2007 to 33 up to 3 May 2007. This suggests that the general public is now more informed about and receptive to the five-day week arrangement. Of the comments/suggestions and complaints we received, there were a few compliments on the initiative while the majority expressed a general concern over reduced convenience as a result of the Government working five days a week. There were also some who expressed disappointment that the Government did not mandate the five-day work pattern in the private sector.

Monitoring and contingency measures

5. In addition to government-wide publicity and targeted communication with stakeholders, B/Ds offering direct services to the public have provided a drop-in box or leave-a-message service at the closed counters/offices. A number of departments with a wide client base arranged duty officers to monitor public reaction and to render assistance to members of the public who showed up at their closed offices and counters on the four Saturdays in January 2007. The assistance rendered included explaining the new opening hours, handing out application forms, responding to service-related enquiries, taking down questions/case numbers for follow-up action on the following Monday, etc.

Impact on service utilisation and operational efficiency

6. Of the 12 B/Ds which provide direct public services, six saw an increase in average weekly service utilisation rate while the rest recorded either increase or decrease in utilisation of different services following migration to a five-day week in phase two. B/Ds consider that any change in service utilisation in January 2007 may not be directly attributable to the five-day week initiative. Other factors such as seasonal service demand, economic recovery, property market fluctuation, special operational circumstances, etc. may have contributed to the change in service utilisation. At this stage, there is no evidence to suggest that a five-day week has led to an increase or decrease in overall service utilisation, nor is there a noticeable change in the number of transactions conducted through alternative channels of service delivery.

Impact on performance pledge compliance

7. B/Ds have compressed their performance pledges, where applicable, to ensure that affected services are delivered within the same calendar period prior to the move to a five-day week or have undertaken to clear outstanding applications by Friday where practicable. So far, the implementation of the five-day week initiative has not had any adverse impact on the Government's performance pledge compliance.

Impact on staff

8. In phase two, some 4 600 staff have migrated to working on a Monday-to-Friday basis and 3 800 staff to a "five-day-work, two-day-off" roster. Some 900 Non-civil Service Contract staff have also joined the five-day week arrangement in phase two. Most staff welcome the new arrangement, noting that they are able to spend more time with their family, pursue further studies, sports and recreational activities, etc. during the longer weekend.

9. Some Model Scale 1 (MOD 1) staff consider the extended workdays (i.e. 1 to 1.5 hours longer than before) exhausting and have requested that their weekly conditioned hours (i.e. 45 hours net per week) be shortened or that they be allowed to revert back to 5.5- or 6-day week. Departmental management has been closely monitoring the occupational safety and health situation of staff; and suitable adjustments have been made to the work programme / schedules with due consideration to the physical demands placed on frontline staff. Where operational requirements permit, they have acceded to, and will consider, requests from individual staff for transfer back to non-five-day-week work. B/Ds have not varied any outsourced contracts as a result of the phase two implementation. Frontline staff not yet working on a five-day week continue to express their wish to migrate to the new work pattern. We will remind B/Ds

to pursue fair and transparent posting/rotation arrangements to support the five-day week initiative.

Overall summary

10. We are satisfied that the phase two implementation has been generally smooth. We will continue to work with B/Ds to further improve the five-day week arrangement.

SERVICES FOR MIGRATION IN THE FINAL PHASE

11. As in earlier phases, Departments have drawn up implementation plans for the final phase implementation of the five-day week initiative, taking into account possible implications on their statutory obligations, performance pledges, occupational safety and health concerns, and views of staff and major stakeholders in the private sector as appropriate. They have ensured that the overall level of service available to the public will be fully (if not more than) compensated during weekdays, following the non-provision of service to the public on Saturdays. The government services that will migrate to a five-day week starting 1 July 2007 are set out below –

- (a) **Department of Health:** Dental services for civil service eligible persons, tuberculosis and chest service, social hygiene service. Clients needing urgent attention may seek help from general outpatient clinics or Accident and Emergency units in hospitals under the Hospital Authority;
- (b) **Hong Kong Police Force:** Applications for closed area permits, Complaints Against Police Reporting Centre, Central Traffic Prosecutions Division, permits issued by the Police Licensing Office (including security companies, massage establishments and pawnbrokers), issue of certificates of no criminal conviction, Force Armoury, headquarters shroff office. Drop-in boxes will be made available for lodging complaints against the Police and for submitting various applications;
- (c) **Land Registry:** Land search, registration and search of owners incorporations, delivery of deeds, information counters and helpdesk services. Drop-in box will be made available and enquiry service will be enhanced;

- (d) **Social Welfare Department:** Social Security Field Units. Drop-in boxes will be made available and special arrangements will be made for applicants who cannot make the new extended hours of operation during weekdays; and
- (e) **Transport Department:** Bus inspection at To Kwa Wan Vehicle Examination Centre.

12. Measures to complement the five-day week operation for services in the final phase are set out in **Annex A**.

13. Implementation of the final phase will not affect the provision of emergency and essential services on Saturdays (or even Sundays), and these services are summarised at **Annex B**.

Overall Situation in July 2007

14. We estimate a total of 94 300 staff will 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.

15. Some 51 200 civil servants may still have to continue with their current work patterns after the implementation of the final phase. They are mainly engaged in the provision of services that continue to operate on Saturdays/Sundays. These include social welfare services, immigration counter services, cultural services, postal services, environmental hygiene services, law enforcement, passenger/cargo clearance, and penal operations, etc. This notwithstanding, Departments may continue to explore the feasibility of allowing more frontline staff to work according to a “five-day-work, two-day-off” schedule, provided that public service interface remains unaffected.

Services Linked to the Operation of Other Organisations

16. Some government services operate in tandem with other organisations (e.g. counters for applications for legal aid in civil cases and the Court Registry). The relevant Departments will keep in view the decision of the Judiciary (and other relevant organisations) on the extension/introduction of a five-day week, and determine whether and when their related services should follow suit and migrate to a five-day week.

PUBLICITY

17. We will roll out territory-wide publicity for the services to be migrated under the final phase. At the central level, we will highlight changes under the final phase in our official website on five-day week, with links to individual B/Ds’ dedicated webpages on the new opening hours. Efficiency Unit’s “1823 Citizen’s Easy Link” will continue to provide a one-stop service for enquiries, complaints, and suggestions with ready source of information on the new opening hours of affected government services. Through TV/radio API(s), posters, leaflets, media briefing/interviews, etc., we will enhance public awareness of those services that will cease operation on Saturdays under the final phase and coordinate the publicity efforts of concerned Departments. At the departmental level, clients will be briefed through direct mailing, posters, fliers, pamphlets, enquiry hotlines, press releases and media interviews.

Implementation of Five-day Week in the Government

Summary of Services that will be Ceased on Saturdays in the Final Phase Starting 1 July 2007

Departments	Services/Functions	Remarks
Department of Health	Dental services for civil service eligible persons, tuberculosis and chest service, social hygiene service	DH will accept bookings for these clinical services, the service level of which will be maintained. Clients needing urgent attention may seek help from general outpatient clinics or Accident and Emergency units in hospitals under the Hospital Authority.
Hong Kong Police Force	Applications for closed area permits, Complaints Against Police Reporting Centre, Central Traffic Prosecutions Division, permits issued by the Police Licensing Office (including security companies, massage establishments and pawnbrokers), issue of certificates of no criminal conviction, Force Armoury, headquarters shroff office	Applications for closed area permits can be made at the report rooms of various police stations in the vicinity of the closed areas during Saturday/Sunday/Public Holidays. Drop-in boxes will be provided for lodging complaints against the Police ¹ and for submitting various applications. Applicants will be encouraged to make advance booking for various services, where applicable. Mail applications for traffic conviction records will be accepted starting from 1 July 2007.

¹ At the moment, some 80% of the complaints are made via the hotline maintained by the Complaints Against Police Office (CAPO). Also, follow-up interviews with the complainants will be arranged by CAPO even outside normal office hours where necessary.

Departments	Services/Functions	Remarks
Land Registry	Land search, registration and search of owners incorporations, delivery of deeds, information counters and helpdesk services	<p>LR has amended the Land Registration Regulation to enable the Registry to fully implement the five-day week initiative.</p> <p>The service hours for deeds lodgement have been extended by one hour per day from Monday to Friday with effect from 1 August 2006. LR will provide a drop-in box on Saturdays for receiving deeds by post (including by courier service).</p> <p>Electronic search services will continue to be provided on the Internet seven days a week. Customers may also collect copies of land records by post.</p> <p>Enquiry service can be made via the LR homepage or the Customer Service Hotline. The hotline service will be transferred to 1823 Citizen's Easy Link after office hours.</p>

Departments	Services/Functions	Remarks
Social Welfare Department	Social Security Field Units (SSFUs)	<p>Opening hours of SSFUs will be extended and drop-in boxes will be made available. Under special circumstances where there are good reasons that a customer cannot attend an office interview within normal opening hours of SSFUs (e.g. because of work, or where the customer who needs an escort but the escort cannot accompany the customer during the normal opening hours, etc.), special arrangement will be made to conduct the office interview outside normal opening hours.</p> <p>In case assistance from social worker is required outside office hours, needy individuals and families may call the SWD Hotline, which is manned by social workers seven days a week.</p>
Transport Department	Bus inspection at To Kwa Wan Vehicle Examination Centre	To facilitate the trade to gradually adapt to the migration, since July 2006, the bus inspection service on Saturdays has been gradually reduced but the number of bus inspection appointments on Monday to Friday has been correspondingly increased to ensure that the total weekly bus inspection appointments remain unchanged. Service hours have been extended.

Implementation of Five-day Week in the Government

Examples of Essential or Emergency Services that will Continue to be Provided on Saturdays¹

Bureau/Department	Services/Functions
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Patrolling and law enforcement in country parks and marine parks, management of government fresh food wholesale markets
Buildings Department	Round-the-clock service for emergencies relating to buildings, building works, signboards and slopes
Customs and Excise Department /Immigration Department	Passenger and cargo clearance operations at control points, airport and passenger/cargo terminals
Customs and Excise Department	Law enforcement and essential logistics services for Customs operations
Civil Aviation Department	Round-the-clock air traffic control service

¹ Including services that are available on Sundays or round-the-clock as necessary.

Bureau/Department	Services/Functions
Buildings Department / Civil Engineering and Development Department / Drainage Services Department / Highways Department / Housing Department	Services / operation related to the construction industry (e.g. supervision and auditing of construction works, surprise audit checks of construction sites, operations related to explosive and blasting activities)
Correctional Services Department	Management of penal institutions
Department of Health	Port health, public health laboratory services, methadone clinics, clinic service to inmates in correctional institutions, public mortuaries and cremation permit offices
Drainage Services Department	Clearing blocked sewers/drains
Education and Manpower Bureau	Government schools and related support services to schools, teachers and the general public (including Central Resource Centre, Hong Kong Teachers' Centre and Gifted Education Section (Support Measures for the Exceptionally Gifted Students Scheme))
Electrical and Mechanical Services Department	Gas incident investigations under the Gas Safety Ordinance

Bureau/Department	Services/Functions
Environmental Protection Department	Handling of environmental pollution incidents involving immediate threat to health, investigation of illegal import/export of ozone depleting substances, providing assistance to deal with significant spillage of chemicals, supervision of the operation of waste facilities (e.g. landfills and refuse transfer stations), provision of Air Pollution Index
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	Environmental hygiene services, hawkers management and control, market management, cemeteries, crematoria and columbaria services, dead removal, slaughterhouse, imported food inspection, duty room services (for reporting food complaint / poisoning, removal of dead animals and other emergencies)
Fire Services Department	Emergency fire, rescue and ambulance services, response to complaint of fire hazard posing imminent danger to public safety or dangerous goods
Government Flying Service	Emergency response services
Immigration Department	Immigration-related counter services (birth and death registration, marriage ceremony, registration of persons, issuance of visas and other employment-related documents, issuance of HKSAR passport and travel documents), notification system with the Mainland over major incidents
Housing Department	Hawker control service in public housing estates, warden service at Housing for Senior Citizens, communication and co-ordination service outside normal service hours and material testing laboratory (concrete testing)
Hong Kong Police Force	Maintenance of public order and law enforcement
Hong Kong Post	Mail delivery and post office counter services

Bureau/Department	Services/Functions
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau	Notification system with the Mainland over disease outbreaks
Information Services Department	24-hour service provided by Press Enquiry Desk
Legal Aid Department	Counters for applications for legal aid for civil cases ²
Leisure and Cultural Services Department	Libraries, performing arts venues, sport centres and other leisure venues
Labour Department	Job centres, occupational health clinics, handling of urgent cases of labour disputes, investigation of occupational accidents
Marine Department	Management of ferry terminals and public cargo working areas, round-the-clock emergency/search and rescue services, vessel traffic regulation, harbour patrol
Office of the Telecommunications Authority	Radio monitoring and interference investigation
Registration and Electoral Office	Essential services as required by the respective ordinances on Saturday during election / by-election periods

² The service will be closed on Saturdays subject to the Court Registry moving to a five-day week.

Bureau/Department	Services/Functions
Radio Television Hong Kong	TV and radio programmes, news reporting, Internet services
Social Welfare Department	Services provided by Integrated Family Service Centres, Family and Child Protective Services Units, Medical Social Services Units in major hospitals
Transport Department	Maintaining the operation of the Emergency Transport Coordination Centre, monitoring the performance of management contractors of Transport Department transport facilities, maintaining the operation of the Area Traffic Control Centres
Water Supplies Department	Operation of water selling kiosks, water treatment works and pumping stations, attendance to water supply fault complaints and emergency calls, maintenance of distribution system and security to installations
Various bureaux and departments	Territory-wide museums and some resource centres