For discussion on
30 June 2009

**Legislative Council Panel
on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

**Progress Update on the Implementation of the
Government Wi-Fi Programme**

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the latest progress on the implementation of the Government Wi-Fi (Gov*WiFi*) programme and its achievements.

Background

2.   The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved a funding commitment of $217.6 million in May 2007 for the provision of Wi-Fi facilities at government premises with high public patronage for free use by the public.   The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) provides updates to Members at major milestones of programme implementation.   We last briefed Members on the progress of the programme on 10 June 2008.

Latest Progress

3.   Programme implementation has been proceeding well so far, with the planned services delivered on time and within budget.   As of end June 2009, the cumulative expenditure of the programme is around $103 million, which is well within the planned budget.   We have completed installation of Wi-Fi facilities at around 350 premises, marking the achievement of the planned

implementation target.   Distribution of Gov*WiFi* premises by type is provided at **<u>Enclosure 1</u>**.

4.   In response to user demand, we have selected more premises for provision of Wi-Fi facilities, making a total of around 380 premises.   These additional premises include venues of the Hong Kong 2009 East Asian Games, major district parks, more community halls and centres and a few more government offices.

Achievements of the Gov*WiFi* programme

Serving the Public

5.   Usage statistics show encouraging growth in adoption of the service by the public.   With reference to the starting position of July 2008 when 130 premises of Phase 1 were rolled out, the monthly usage in number of Gov*WiFi* service connections has increased from around 59 000 to around 210 000 in May 2009.   An average monthly growth of around 13% is noted.   More information on usage statistics is provided at **<u>Enclosure 2</u>**.

6.   We have been monitoring the service performance and collecting feedback from the public.   The user feedback received was mainly on service coverage, service time and usability issues, such as providing free Wi-Fi service in more government premises, extending the connection time of each session, removing the restriction on using instant messaging service in public libraries, etc.   In response to user feedback, we have selected more suitable premises for inclusion in the programme, extended the connection time from 1 hour to 1.5 hours per session, and allowed using instant messaging service in all government premises.   We will continue to collect feedback from users and fine-tune the Gov*WiFi* service as necessary.

7.   To facilitate users to have quick access to electronic information and services of government departments, we have enhanced functions of the Gov*WiFi* portal.   Starting from June 2009, users can easily access location-specific information or services through the new web portal at

Gov*WiFi* premises. For example, the public can access the Interactive Employment Service while visiting job centres or view the e-Event Calendar while at museums.

Arousing Awareness of Wireless Security

8.　　We have been publicizing and promoting information security to the public through various media and channels such as Announcements for Public Interest on television and radio, leaflets and our web site. The Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) also sponsored a public awareness campaign on Wi-Fi safety called "SafeWiFi" and launched a programme for raising citizens' security awareness called "Blue Tone's Tips for Broadband Service Users". With the joint promotion efforts of Government and industry associations, there has been an increase in the use of secure Wi-Fi connections by households and businesses. According to surveys conducted by industry associations[1], the percentage of wireless access points that make use of encryption features has increased from about 72% in 2007 to 78% in 2008.

Stimulating Development of Public Wi-Fi Services

9.　　As well as Government taking the initiative to implement the Gov*WiFi* programme, we observed significant increases in public Wi-Fi hotspots provided by commercial service providers in Hong Kong. At present, five local fixed carrier operators are authorised to provide public Wi-Fi services and there are 25 class licensees providing the services to the public. The number of public Wi-Fi hotspots has increased by 17% from around 6 800 in April 2008 to around 8 000 in May 2009 while the number of public Wi-Fi locations has increased by 11% from around 4 200 to around 4 700 over the same period. In addition to wireless coverage at fixed locations, Wi-Fi services are also provided on board buses, ferries and Airport Express trains. Ten buses, seven ferries and the MTR Airport Express trains have been installed with wireless access points whereby passengers can enjoy on-board Internet access service. More information on the development of public Wi-Fi hotspots is provided at **Enclosure 3**.

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[1]　Two Wi-Fi surveys conducted by the Hong Kong Wireless Technology Industry Association and the Professional Information Security Association in November 2007 and November and December 2008.

10.   The use of Wi-Fi Internet connection by both business and home users in Hong Kong has also shown steady increase.   According to the surveys conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, the number of business establishments having Internet connections via Wi-Fi had increased by 40% from around 14 000 in 2007 to around 19 700 in 2008, while the number of persons aged 10 and over accessing the Internet via mobile web device had increased by 16% from around 540 200 in 2007 to around 624 800 in 2008.

Upholding Hong Kong as a leading digital city

11.   To facilitate travelers to get access to the Internet and to promote Hong Kong as a leading digital city, we have provided free Wi-Fi service at some tourist spots and will expand our coverage to more parks and 16 Hong Kong 2009 East Asian Games venues.   According to the departing visitor survey of Hong Kong Tourism Board conducted from October to December 2008, 16.9% of foreign visitors have used free public Wi-Fi services in Hong Kong.

Other Government Wi-Fi Initiatives

12.   Through collaboration with the ICT industry on the "Ubiquitous City – HK" project sponsored by Government, more wireless applications are available for use by the public.   Between January 2008 and June 2009,   12 applications have been developed and selected for awards under this project.

13.   Under initiatives of the Housing Authority to facilitate service vendors to offer free Wi-Fi service to public rental housing tenants, two service providers have installed about 1 100 Wi-Fi hotspots covering 150 public rental housing estates.

14.   As an initiative of OFTA, interested service operators are allowed to make use of public payphone kiosks for provision of public Wi-Fi services.   As of 31 March 2009, 1 230 payphone kiosks have been deployed to provide Wi-Fi service in urban as well as remote areas.

15.   Service operators are also allowed to make use of highways facilities (such as lamp posts) for the provision of public Wi-Fi service.   One operator has completed a six-month field trial using a lamp post in Tsim Sha Tsui, while another operator is planning to conduct a similar trial in North Point.   The two operators are preparing detailed technical proposals on installation, operations and maintenance arrangements for consideration by the Highways Department.

16.   OFTA has made available public Wi-Fi service locations on its website[2] for public information.   Members of the public may search Wi-Fi service locations by selecting the name of the Wi-Fi service provider or by inputting the location to find out the relevant Wi-Fi service providers.   A more user-friendly map-based presentation of the Wi-Fi service locations and service providers is being developed and is scheduled to be available in the fourth quarter of 2009.

Advice Sought

17.   Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
**Commerce and Economic Development Bureau**
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[2] https://apps.ofta.gov.hk/apps/clr/content/public_search.asp

**Distribution of Gov*WiFi* Premises by Type
as of 1 June 2009**

Premises Type	No. of Premises
Sports Centres	81
Public Libraries	66
Government Offices	52
Community Halls, Centres and Complexes	43
Cooked Food Markets and Cooked Food Centres	38
Public Enquiry Service Centres	20
Job Centres	12
Parks, Gardens and Visitor Centres	12
Museums	8
Cultural and Recreational Centres	7
Ferry Terminals	3
Sports Grounds	3
Stadiums	3
Piazza/Beach/Waterfront Mart	2
Total	**350**

Gov*WiFi* Usage Statistics

(1) Total number of Internet connections per month

Chart 1 : Gov*WiFi* Usage - Total number of Internet connections per month
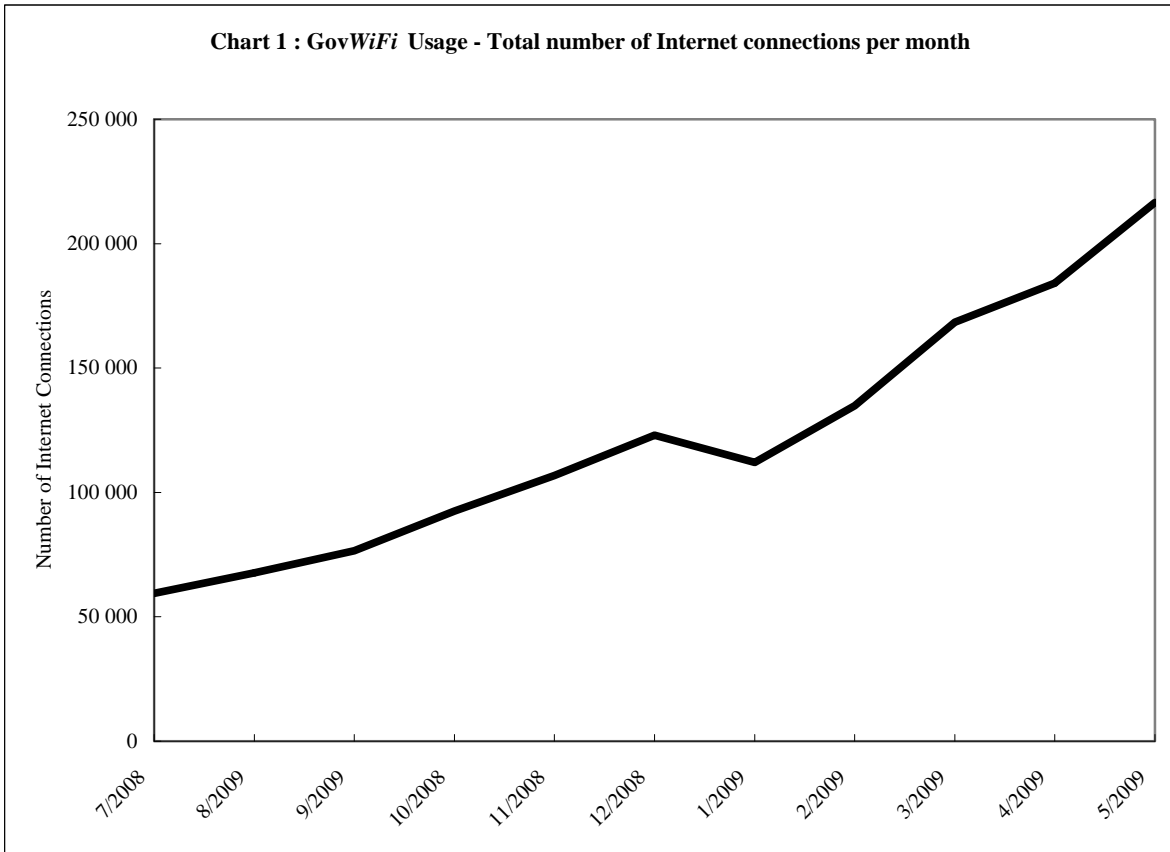
Note: There was a drop in number of connections in January 2009 as most of the government premises were closed during the three days of Lunar New Year holidays.

(2) Usage profile by type of use

Type of Use	Percentage
Browsing	75%
Communication (e.g. e-mail)	59%
Online chatting (e.g. instant messaging)	24%
Online entertainment (e.g. games)	22%
Online transaction (e.g. e-banking)	11%
Upload/Download	10%

Remark: Users may select more than one type of use.

Growth of Public Wi-Fi Hotspots in Hong Kong

Chart 2 : Numbers of Public Wi-Fi Hotspots (Access Points) and Locations

No. of public Wi-Fi hotspots (access points)

No. of places where public Wi-Fi is available