

LCQ14:PayThruPost payment service

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Following is the question by the Hon Sin Chung-kai and a written reply by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, in the Legislative Council today (May 10):

Question:

At present, members of the public can settle at post offices bills issued by some of the public utility companies and government departments. It is learnt that when the due dates of such bills are approaching, in particular when the due dates of various bills are rather close to one another, and at certain small post offices, people need to wait for a long time to have their bills settled. In this regard, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the number of bills handled by Hongkong Post each month and the annual gross profits derived from bill payment services in the past three years;
- (b) of the respective current numbers of counter staff responsible for bill payment services and other services in each post office;
- (c) whether it has conducted any survey on the longest waiting time acceptable to members of the public when they pay their bills and, based on the findings, review the appropriateness of the relevant service pledges (i.e. to serve 98% of customers within 25 and 10 minutes during peak hours/periods and other hours respectively); if it has, of the findings of the survey and review; if not, whether it will conduct such a survey and review; and
- (d) of the measures Hongkong Post will adopt to reduce the waiting time for making payment, such as discussing with the public utility companies and government departments concerned the spreading out of the due dates of their regular bills and increasing the numbers of counters and staff providing such services?

Reply

Madam President,

- (a) Hongkong Post introduced the PayThruPost (PTP) payment service to maximise

the utilisation of the existing resources of the post office network and provide additional service. In the past three years, the number of bills handled each month ranged from 1.41 million to 2.63 million. All the revenue of the PTP service has been used to cover the extra cost in providing the service as well as to share the operating cost of maintaining the postal counter services.

(b) Currently, 131 post offices provide the PTP service. The total number of their counter staff is 754. Most of the counter staff provide both postal and PTP services. Moreover, during the peak periods for Government rates payment, i.e. January, April, July and October, an additional 75 staff members are deployed to individual post offices with a higher demand for the service to maintain the service quality.

(c) Hongkong Post conducts surveys on customers' satisfaction levels on its services and reviews its performance pledges from time to time. In March/April of both 2004 and 2005, Hongkong Post conducted a "Customer Perception Survey". In the two surveys, in respect of the PTP service, the average satisfaction levels of the customers interviewed were 7.81 points and 7.86 points out of a 10-point scale and their average waiting time was 9.95 minutes and 9.47 minutes respectively. Moreover, a "Counter Service Mystery Shopper Survey" was conducted in September of the two years and the percentages of "mystery shoppers" who rated the PTP service as either "satisfactory" or "very satisfactory" were 90% and 87%.

(d) Since the launch of the PTP service in 2000, Hongkong Post has implemented a number of measures to reduce the waiting time for the service. They include:

(i) increasing the manpower of post offices with a higher demand for the PTP service and deploying additional staff to help out during the peak periods;

(ii) during the busiest period for Government rates payment, i.e., every Monday and the last week of January, April, July and October, extending the office hour by half an hour for those post offices with a higher demand for the service;

(iii) flexible deployment of staff members to provide postal and the PTP services in individual post offices according to customer service demand; and

(iv) displaying notices in individual post offices to inform customers of their respective peak periods.

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