

FSD's response to public procession and sit-in by Hong Kong Fire Services Department Staffs General Association

In response to media enquiries on the public procession and sit-in staged by the Hong Kong Fire Services Department Staffs General Association this morning (May 1), a Fire Services Department spokesman made the following response today:

The Fire Services Department (FSD) does not oppose gradually reducing the working hours of its staff in the Fire Stream in line with the Government's policy on working hours. Pursuant to the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service in its Grade Structure Review Report issued in November 2008, the FSD management has proactively explored with the staff associations and policy bureaux concerned the feasibility of reducing the conditioned working hours of Fire Stream members gradually having regard to the three pre-requisites of 'cost-neutral', 'no additional manpower' and 'maintaining the same level of service to the public'.

The Hong Kong Fire Services Department Staffs General Association (SGA) put forward its proposal to reduce the conditioned working hours to 48 hours per week when the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service was reviewing the grade structure of disciplined services between 2007 and 2008. Since additional resources will be required under the SGA's proposal, it was not accepted by the Government. After carefully studying the request by the SGA and having regard to the three pre-requisites, the FSD management in February 2012 produced a proposal to reduce the conditioned working hours of Fire Stream members gradually from 54 hours to 51 hours per week (the so-called '51 proposal'). To ascertain whether the staff side accepts the proposal, the FSD between mid-March and mid-April embarked on a full-scale staff opinion survey. The survey results will be available in or around mid-May.

The FSD respects the right of staff associations and their members to take industrial action. The FSD management has taken various measures to facilitate the SGA's industrial action while ensuring that such action will in no way affect the quality or efficiency of the Department's emergency services.

As regards the procession and sit-in staged by members of the SGA today, the management has reminded all participating members to ensure that their action will in no way affect the quality and efficiency of the FSD's emergency services and public safety. To this end, the department has issued guidelines to the SGA and all staff members concerned for strict compliance. We note that the procession and sit-in were carried out in a peaceful and orderly manner without affecting public service and safety.

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