

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FSTB(Tsy)030

(Question Serial No. 2684)

Head: (76) Inland Revenue Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (4) Taxpayer Services

Controlling Officer: Commissioner of Inland Revenue (Benjamin CHAN)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury

Question:

It is mentioned under the Programme (4) Taxpayer Services of the Controlling Officer's Report of the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) that the IRD extended the service hours of telephone enquiry services in May 2024 to assist the public in completing tax returns, and redeployed manpower resources and employed part-time staff during peak periods to strengthen the daytime telephone enquiry services. Please advise this Committee on the following:

1. the expenditure involved in strengthening the enquiry services;
2. whether the IRD will consider adopting information technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) customer service system or online customer service, etc. with a view to reducing the relevant expenditure? If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon WONG Chun-sek, Edmund (LegCo internal reference no.: 30)

Reply:

1. In May 2024, the IRD extended the service hours of telephone enquiry services (with the service hours extended to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays and from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday) to assist the public in completing tax returns. The staff of the IRD providing services outside office hours were compensated by time-off in lieu, thus no additional costs were incurred. The IRD also hired 17 part-time staff to strengthen the telephone enquiry services during peak hours and the relevant expenditure was \$380,000.
2. The IRD developed a Chatbot named "Iris" in 2021 on its website to provide round-the-clock real time interactive service in answering general enquiries relating to tax on individuals. As tax-related enquires often involve individual circumstances of taxpayers, the staff of the IRD still need to directly communicate with the taxpayers to provide appropriate replies. The IRD will continue to explore further use of information technology to enhance efficiency in handling enquiries and reducing the relevant expenditure.

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