

Speech by SEDL at Service Quality Symposium 2005 (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, at the Service Quality Symposium 2005 today (July 5):

Eva, Selina, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you all today at this Service Quality Symposium.

I am delighted to see that so many of you have taken the time to attend this symposium. We have a good mix of both executives and front-line practitioners from a wide spectrum of tourism-related sectors including airlines, hoteliers, travel agents, retailers, restaurant operators and public transport operators. I am sure we will have very fruitful exchanges this afternoon.

Last time when we held the Tourism Symposium in March, 2004, it was at a time when the tourism industry had just begun to see positive growth after the severe blow of SARS. I am sure most of you still remember how the tourism industry worked together all in one heart to bring our visitors back. All our efforts have proved successful and once again demonstrated our “can-do” spirit. I am particularly encouraged by the World Tourism Organisation’s latest report which ranks Hong Kong as one of the top 10 most popular tourist destinations in the world; and we are the only city destination on the list. I am happy to note that our strong performance continues into 2005. The first five months of 2005 already saw a 10.4% growth in overall visitor arrivals, particularly the long haul markets which continued to recover strongly by 23% year-on-year.

Of course we should not be complacent about our achievements. Tourism is a very competitive business. It is most important for us to continue to invest in our tourism infrastructure. Starting from September with the opening of the Hong Kong Disneyland, we will see the opening of a series of new projects including a more spectacular version of “A Symphony of Lights”, Hong Kong Wetland Park and Ngong Ping 360. With these new attractions, we believe Hong Kong has unprecedented opportunities to tap into. The Hong Kong Tourism Board has designated 2006 as the “Discover Hong Kong Year”. It will be actively promoting Hong Kong globally as a

“must visit” destination in Asia.

The tourism industry of course has an important role to play. To attract new and repeated visitors, not only do we need new attractions and effective promotion, we must also deliver professional, first-class and value-for-money service, and give them good reasons to come back. Tourism is a people business. We should not underestimate the power of the word of mouth, which can do more to build or destroy a reputation than any form of promotion in a short span of time.

Providing excellent service quality has been one of the key objectives of the tourism sector in Hong Kong for many years. To help the trade understand visitors’ expectation and perception of the tourism service, the Tourism Commission has launched a Service Quality Study to look into visitors’ perception vis- -vis the industry’s performance, and identify sector-specific recommendations for improvement. Our consultant will share with you the key findings and recommendations in a moment. We hope you will find the study useful in maintaining and improving your service.

Ladies and gentlemen, Hong Kong will be under the spotlight globally when the Hong Kong Disneyland opens on September 12. We expect to break another record of having over 23 million visitors by end of the year. Our service quality has a direct bearing on whether Hong Kong can maintain its position as a quality destination. We must work very hard, and hand in hand, to outperform our regional competitors by the quality of service we offer, and leverage on this golden opportunity to showcase our service excellence to the world.

Lastly, I would like to thank Selina and all our distinguished speakers including heavy weights like Don Robinson, Philip Chen, Mark Lettenbichler, Allan Zeman, Ronnie Ho and Frank Lee, for making time to share with us their experience and insight into the industry’s best practices, and demonstrate how we can, with our quality service, win the hearts of our visitors (and of course their money as well)! I look to your active participation to make the symposium a meaningful and rewarding event. Thank you.

Tourism Commission
Economic Development and Labour Bureau
5 July 2005