

SCED speaks on launch of Community Care Fund Digital Television Assistance Programme (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, on the launch of the Community Care Fund Digital Television Assistance Programme today (January 14):

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: We are happy to announce today a scheme whereby we will provide assistance to those families still using analogue TVs, as we go into the full implementation of digital (TV) broadcasting by the end of this year. We have set out a plan that by December 1 this year, Hong Kong will move into the full implementation of digital (TV) broadcasting.

A recent survey shows that despite a penetration rate (of digital TV) of 92 per cent, there are still around 100,000 households still using analogue TVs, among which we believe there might be more than 80,000 households, because of various reasons and largely of low-income or elderly households, are still sticking on analogue TVs. We intend to provide assistance to help these households in need to shift to digital TVs. The scheme that we are rolling out today, funded by the Community Care Fund, is to support these households by giving them either a set-top box, so that they can convert their analogue TVs into digital, or giving them a brand new TV set so that they can continue to enjoy watching TV at home.

The programme is targeting at households of lower income or elderly families. We need to engage a partner to bring this service to them. The essence of the service is that with the help of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and their service units, eligible households will be helped with the applications. The final delivery of the scheme will be having these (digital TV) devices taken to their (the applicants') homes and then be installed. We will also take this opportunity to bring back the old TVs for recycling as well as provide a (three-year) warranty period for the new TV sets. We hope this scheme would, on the one hand, bring Hong Kong into the full implementation of digital broadcasting, and on the other hand, give support to those who are not able to enjoy digital TV at this moment.

Reporter: Can you tell us more about the application procedures? How can people apply for the programme? Because many of them are elderly people and they may not be very familiar with the application system. Also, how confident are you that the people will be able to get a new TV or a set-top box on time before the switching off of the analogue TV in December?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: We have set this timetable a bit of time ago that when it comes to December 1 this year, we will move on to the full digital TV broadcasting. With more than 10 months ahead and a very simple application procedure that we have laid out, and together with

suitable publicity and the aid of the member service units of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, we believe we have sufficient time for aiding households who want to be benefited from the scheme. But of course, there might be families or households waiting for the last minute or not aware of the scheme. When December 1 comes, in case they cannot watch the analogue TV by then, I think they would be alerted immediately. That is why in addition to having more than 10 months ahead of the implementation day, there will be seven months (of application period) afterwards, so that any households who might not be able to receive digital TV after the D-Day would still be benefited from the scheme.

Noting the background of these eligible households who might be families with elderly people or of lower-income, we wish to make sure that the entire services will be able to deliver to their homes. That is why we have arranged that after an application is successfully processed, either a set-top box or a brand new TV with two dimensions choices will be delivered to their homes with channels tuned properly. We will also take back the old ones plus provide warranty for the new devices. We hope that these arrangements will provide a better service for them.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)