

25th March 1996

The Right Honourable Christopher Patten
Governor of Hong Kong
Government House
Hong Kong

Dear Sir,

**Proposed Upgrading of Entry Qualification
of the Land Inspector Grade**

We have been invited by the Administration to advise, under Clause 1(b) of our Terms of Reference, on its proposal to upgrade the entry qualification of the Land Inspector (LI) grade in the Lands Department from a grade not requiring a full School Certificate to a School Certificate grade.

BACKGROUND

2. Created in 1976, the LI grade comprises two ranks of LI/II (MPS 3-12) and LI/I (MPS 13-17) who are employed in the Lands Department on a wide range of duties including processing of small house applications, lease enforcement and resumption and clearance of land.
3. The Commission first examined the upgrading proposal in the context of the 1989 Salary Structure Review, but rejected it because there was insufficient evidence to justify the proposal.
4. In 1992, the upgrading proposal was revived by the then Buildings and Lands Department which focused on the new responsibilities taken up by the LIs since 1989 as well as the increased complexity of existing duties. The Department's findings supported the upgrading proposal. Following detailed examination, the Administration concluded that the upgrading proposal should be recommended to us for consideration.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S VIEWS AND PROPOSALS

5. The Administration's reasons for the upgrading proposal are set out as follows -

- (a) Enrichment in job content through devolution of duties from higher grades to the LIs

Since 1989, LIs have taken up additional duties which were previously performed by other grades including the Land Executive (Matriculation Grade), Assistant Building Services Inspector and Inspector of Works (both belonging to the Technical Inspectorate & Related Grades), Health Inspector II (Higher Diploma, Diploma and Related Grades). These are grades with entry requirements set at School Certificate or higher. The effective discharge by the LIs of the devolved duties requires them to exercise a high level of analytical skills and judgement.

- (b) Increased complexity of the LIs' duties

Owing to the enactment of new legislation, changes in land control procedures and increased public objections, the LIs' duties have become more difficult and complex in recent years. As a result, LIs are required to work independently and to exercise judgement and discretion without constantly seeking guidance from their supervisors. In addition, they are required to understand and proof-read complicated legal documents which, according to the Director of Lands, are beyond the capability normally expected of Form IV graduates.

- (c) Retention difficulties

Over 40% of serving LIs are School Certificate holders. The wastage rate of this group during the first two years of appointment is much higher than that for non-School Certificate officers. The Director of Lands considers that an enhanced pay scale will improve the retention of School Certificate holders.

6. Because of the above reasons, the Administration proposes that the LI grade be upgraded to Group I of the School Certificate group, with new entry requirement to be set at passes in five subjects in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education including English Language (Syllabus B), Chinese Language and Mathematics.

PROPOSED PAY SCALES

7. The benchmark for Group I of the School Certificate group is MPS 3 (currently \$8,035 per month) and the maximum point of its first tier rank is normally set at MPS 15 (currently \$16,450 per month). The existing pay scales of the LI grade was set at two points above the norm in recognition of special job factors such as working in remote areas and occasional confrontation with hostile members of the public. The Administration proposes that the new pay scales of LIs upon upgrading be set at one point above the norm for Group I as follows -

| | <u>Existing Scale</u> | <u>Pay Norm for Group I of School Certificate Grades</u> | <u>Proposed Scale</u> |
|-------|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| LI/II | MPS 3 - 12 (\$8,035 - \$14,055) | MPS 3 - 15 (\$8,035 - \$16,450) | MPS 4 - 16 (\$8,555 - \$17,270) |
| LI/I | MPS 13 - 17 (\$14,905 - \$18,145) | MPS 16 - 21 (\$17,270 - \$22,035) | MPS 17 - 22 (\$18,145 - \$23,080) |

SALARY CONVERSION ARRANGEMENTS

8. An established principle of the Standing Commission is that only officers in the existing grade who are already in possession of the education qualification specified for the grade, after its regrading, should be eligible for the new starting pay. The Commission's detailed recommendations on salary conversion are set out in Appendix G to the Commission's Report No. 25 (hereby attached at Annex I for ease of reference). The Administration proposes to follow the conversion arrangements as promulgated by the Standing Commission.

9. As for those who do not possess a full School Certificate, the Administration proposes that they be dealt with in the following manner -

- (a) where an officer's pay is less than the new minimum, he should convert to a sub-entry point, to be determined for individual cases, but his new salary point should at least be one point above his existing one;
- (b) where an officer's pay is equivalent to or above the new minimum, the conversion arrangements set out in paragraphs (a ii) and (a iii) of Appendix G should apply.

In the present case, as the old and the new minimum points differ by only one pay point, the question of a sub-entry point does not arise. In effect, all LI/Is without a full School Certificate would convert to the next higher point on the revised scale.

10. The conversion arrangements proposed by the Administration are graphically illustrated at Annex II.

STAFF CONSULTATION

11. The Administration has consulted staff associations of the LI grade. They are in full support of the upgrading proposal, the revised pay scales and the proposed conversion arrangements.

COMMISSION'S VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12. We accept the Administration's case that the duties of the LIs have become more arduous over the years and the level of expertise required of them appears to be beyond the capability of Form IV graduates. We support therefore the Administration's proposal that the LI grade be upgraded to Group I of the School Certificate group with revised salary scales and conversion arrangements as set out in paragraphs 7 to 9 above.

13. We note the concern of the Director of Lands over the retention difficulties of the LI grade. We understand, however, that the reason for many LIs leaving the service is because of the grade's limited promotion prospects. It is common for LI/Is to remain in their rank for between 15 to 20 years

without any promotion. Opportunities for LIs to transfer to higher grades such as the Land Executive grade were limited in the past. We wish to point out that the normal civil service method of dealing with grades with retention problems is to provide for omitted points in the pay scales rather than through the upgrading of entry qualifications. However, a side effect of upgrading the entry qualification and enhancing the pay scales is that the retention difficulties of the LI grade should, according to the Director of Lands, be alleviated to some extent.

14. As a related issue, we would urge the Administration to review the situation in other grades with similar wastage problems and consider what appropriate action to take. The Administration should not only look at these grades from the retention angle but also examine whether there is any functional justification for changes.

CONCLUSION

15. In conclusion, we support the Administration's proposal to upgrade the entry qualification of the LI grade from a grade not requiring a full School Certificate to a School Certificate grade with revised pay scales as in paragraph 7 and conversion arrangements as in paragraphs 8 and 9 above. The revised pay scales, if approved, should take effect from a current date to be determined by the Administration.

Yours faithfully,

(Sidney Gordon)

Chairman

for and on behalf of

Members of the Standing Commission
on Civil Service Salaries & Conditions of Service

Appendix G of the Standing Commission's Report No. 25 dated March 1990

Normal Conversion Arrangements

Subject to the continuing overriding consideration that no one should receive less pay on conversion, civil servants should convert to revised points on the Master Pay Scale or other appropriate scale as follows :

(a) When both the minimum and the maximum of the scale are raised

(i) where a civil servant's pay is less than the minimum of the revised scale he should receive the new minimum;

(ii) where a civil servant's pay is equivalent to or above the new minimum he should advance to the next point on the scale;

(iii) where the revised scale has a maximum which is two or more points higher than the old maximum, a civil servant who has served for one or more years on the old maximum should convert to two points above his existing pay point.

(b) When the minimum of the scale is raised and the maximum remains unchanged

(i) where a civil servant's pay is less than the minimum of the revised scale he should receive the new minimum;

(ii) where a civil servant's pay is equivalent to or above the new minimum he should advance to the next point on the revised scale subject to this not being above the scale maximum.

(c) When the minimum of the scale is raised and the maximum is lowered

(i) where the maximum of the revised scale is lower than the maximum of old scale a civil servant should be given a continuing option to retain his old scale on a personal basis until such time as it is to his advantage to transfer irrevocably to the revised scale;

(ii) where a civil servant opts to transfer to the revised scale and his pay is less than the minimum of that scale he should receive the new minimum;

(iii) where a civil servant opts to transfer to the revised scale and his pay is equivalent to or above the new minimum he should advance to the next point on the revised scale subject to this not being above the scale maximum.

(d) When the minimum of the scale remains unchanged and the maximum is raised

(i) where a civil servant's pay is less than the maximum of the old scale or where he has served on the old maximum for less than one year he should convert to the same numbered point on the revised scale;

(ii) where a civil servant has served for one or more years on the maximum of the old scale he should convert to the next higher numbered point on the revised scale.

(e) When the minimum of the scale remains unchanged and the maximum is lowered

(i) where the maximum of the revised scale is lower than the maximum of the old scale a civil servant should be given a continuing option to retain his old scale on a personal basis until such time as it is to his advantage to transfer irrevocably to the revised scale;

(ii) where a civil servant opts to convert to the revised scale he should convert to the same numbered point on that scale subject to this not being above the scale maximum.

(f) When the minimum of the scale is lowered and the maximum is raised

(i) where a civil servant's pay is less than the maximum of the old scale or where he has served on the old maximum for less than one year he should convert to the same numbered point on the revised scale;

(ii) where a civil servant has served for one or more years on the maximum of the old scale he should convert to the next higher numbered point on the revised scale.

- (g) When the minimum of the scale is lowered and the maximum remain unchanged

where the minimum of the scale is lowered and the maximum remains unchanged, a civil servant should convert to the same numbered point on the revised scale.

- (h) Where both the minimum and the maximum of the scale are lowered

(i) where both the minimum and maximum of the revised scale are lower than the minimum and maximum of the old scale a civil servant should be given a continuing option to retain his old scale on a personal basis until such time as it is to his advantage to transfer irrevocably to the revised scale;

(ii) where a civil servant opts to convert to the revised scale he should convert to the same numbered point on that scale subject to this not being above the scale maximum.

Proposed Pay Conversion Arrangement for Land Inspectors

All Serving LIs/I

Officer whose pay is less than the minimum of the revised scale should receive the new minimum.

Officer whose pay is equivalent to or above the new minimum should advance to the next point on the scale.

Officer who has served on the old maximum for one or more years should convert to two points above his existing pay point.

| <i>Existing</i> | <i>Proposed</i> |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 17(264) | 22 |
| 16 (8) | 21 |
| 15 (19) | 20 |
| 14 (47) | 19 |
| 13 (0) | 18 |
| | 17 |

All Serving LIs/II

Officer whose pay is less than the minimum of the revised scale should receive the new minimum.

Officer whose pay is equivalent to or above the new minimum should advance to the next point on the scale.

Officer who has served on the old maximum for one or more years should convert to two points above his existing pay point.

| <i>Existing</i> | <i>Proposed</i> |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 12(136) | 16 |
| 11(9) | 15 |
| 10(24) | 14 |
| 9 (13) | 13 |
| 8 (17) | 12 |
| 7 (24) | 11 |
| 6 (19) | 10 |
| 5 (20) | 9 |
| 4 (29) | 8 |
| 3 (8) | 7 |
| | 6 |
| | 5 |
| | 4 |

Note

Total number of LIs : 637
 Number of LIs on each pay point is shown in brackets.