

議會力爭印花費下調

Outbound levy expected to be lowered thanks to TIC



拿今年一月、二月和去年同期相比，外遊印花金額急挫百分之三十三，機票銷售額也大跌百分之二十七。在環球金融海嘯的衝擊下，外遊業正面對重大困境。這次危機無論是規模還是嚴峻程度都遠超從前，希望會員能藉著服務和創意去熬過難關。

目前的印花徵費是團費的百分之零點三，上一次減少印花徵費時，已是一九九七年的事了。這十二年來，旅遊業屢經頓挫，而議會一直游說當局把印花徵費再次下調。終於，旅遊業賠償基金管理委員會發出諮詢文件，建議把印花徵費減至百分之零點一五。諮詢期截至四月三十日為止，請會員踴躍提出意見。

議會三月中舉行了會員論壇，以探討與外遊會員切身相關的事情。當晚的主要課題之一，是外遊旅行社集體購買責任保險。當晚絕大多數出席的會員都認為需要購買，但暫時還有一些實質問題未能解決。議會不久就會向會員發出問卷，詳細探詢大家對此事的意見。

關於領隊的法定權益補償一事，議會與多家主要外遊會員連番磋商，大家都承諾會按法院的判決解決此事。不過，由於補償額極為龐大，牽涉到的領隊人數又十分眾多，恐怕難以像香港旅遊業(外遊)領隊及導遊工會的要求那樣，在一兩個星期裡解決此事。金融海嘯當前，我再次呼籲大家同舟共濟，共渡難關。

議會將於五月初首次推出郵輪課程，這是專門給旅行社職員修讀的郵輪假期銷售課程(見「特稿」)。有意投身這個潛力甚巨的市場的話，就不要錯過大好良機了。✎

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In January and February this year, the outbound levy plunged by 33% and the ticket sales also plummeted by 27%, over the same period a year earlier. **The current global financial storm, whose magnitude and severity are by far the most gargantuan, has already posed a huge threat to the outbound industry. It is hoped that members can weather the financial storm with good service and creativity.**

The current levy rate has stood at 0.3% of the outbound tour fare since it was last reduced in 1997. **During the past 12 years, the industry has undergone one crisis after another, and the TIC has lobbied the authorities for a reduction in the levy rate on one occasion after another. At last, a consultation paper is released by the management board of the Travel Industry Compensation Fund, in which a proposal to lower the rate to 0.15% is raised.** Members are advised to voice their views before the consultation ends on 30 April.

Another Members' Forum was held in mid-March for discussion of issues concerning outbound members. One of the major topics at the forum was the purchase of collective liability insurance by outbound agents. Although almost all members present found it necessary to do so, there were some substantive matters which needed to be solved first. The TIC will soon issue a questionnaire to members so as to solicit their views on the issue in detail.

Regarding the compensation for the statutory entitlements of tour escorts, all major outbound members which have had many discussions with the TIC have agreed to settle the matter according to the judgements of the courts. Nevertheless, as the compensation amount is gigantic and the tour escorts involved are numerous, it is most unlikely that the matter can be settled within one week or two as demanded by the Hong Kong Travel Industry (Outbound) Tour Escort and Tour Guide Union. **With the whole industry facing a financial tsunami, I urge again all parties to combine their efforts at this critical moment.**

The TIC is going to launch in early May its first course on cruise, which is specially designed for staff of travel agents to sell cruise holidays (see "Feature"). Anyone who wishes to tap this market's great potential should not miss this chance. ✎

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