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The new specifications in Standard 006 require all businesses to modify their cheques, and many have done so since the publication of the Standard in January 2005. Businesses that have not yet updated their cheques are strongly encouraged to do so by June 30, 2007 in preparation for the new image-based clearing process. In particular, any new cheque orders printed after that date should reflect the new specifications.

Notwithstanding the above target date, to help their business customers make a smooth transition, financial institutions will continue to process "old format" business cheques until implementation of the new clearing process begins in the latter part of 2008. This extended transition or "grace period" will allow businesses that are still working on the changes to use up their existing supply of cheques and to make any required changes to software.

Personal Cheques

Formats for personal cheques have also been modified. Financial institutions and their printing industry partner have been filling orders from customers with "new format" cheques since April 2005. Consumers with a supply of "old format" personal cheques can continue to use them until they need to re-order, provided that a good image can be captured from them. Based on experience to date, the vast majority of personal cheques are already "image friendly".

Cheque Testing

Cheque printers, software providers and organizations that print their own cheques are strongly encouraged to provide pre-production samples of their new cheques to their financial institution's Quality Assurance Division to verify that they meet the new specifications. These organizations should contact their financial institutions for more information about the testing process and timelines.
