

本署檔號 Our Ref.: CAB C1/1/1 & F19
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10 November 2000

Mrs Percy MA
Clerk to the Legislative Council
Panel on Constitutional Affairs
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Percy,

LegCo Panel on Constitutional Affairs
Follow-up to meeting on 31 October 2000

I refer to your letter dated 2 November 2000.

In your letter, you asked for a written response on the incident after the panel meeting on 14 October 2000. I am afraid there may be misunderstanding of the Secretary for Constitutional Affairs' (SCA) remarks to the press on the accountability system for principal officials after the panel meeting held on 14 October 2000.

Let me recount what happened that day, and the circumstances that will help put SCA's remarks to the press in proper context.

You will recall that at the meeting held on 14 October 2000, Panel Members were mainly concerned about the overall scope and the broad direction (e.g. the timetable) of Government's review on the accountability system for principal officials. These are questions which the Chief Executive had already addressed at the Policy Address delivered on 11 October 2000, the press briefing he gave immediately afterwards that day as well as the question-and-answer session he attended in the Legislative Council on 12 October 2000. As Members will appreciate, the Administration had yet to start the review and therefore SCA was not in a position to provide further information at the panel meeting on 14 October, in addition to what the Chief Executive had said.

After the panel meeting, SCA responded to a few questions from the press. One of the questions was on the terms of employment for principal officials. In response to that question, SCA reiterated Government's position and made personal comments on the possibility of employing principal officials on contract terms. As you may recall, in delivering the Policy Address on 11 October 2000, the Chief Executive said that one of the key issues for the review was to consider devising a compatible system of appointment for these principal officials.

I hope Members of the Panel will find the above information useful. I wish to emphasize that we are fully aware of the need for the executive to be accountable to the legislature, and have done our best to provide the Panel with all the information available to us.

Yours sincerely,

(Robin IP)
for Secretary for Constitutional Affairs