

Your Ref : CB2/PL/MP

Our Ref: 242

March 26, 2001

Mrs. Sharon Tong
Clerk to the Manpower Panel
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Hong Kong

Dear Mrs. Tong

Admission of Mainland Professionals Scheme

On learning that Legco's Manpower Panel is considering the Admission of Mainland Professionals Scheme and in so doing inviting the views from interested organizations, we would like to offer the following comments for the Panel's consideration.

According to a Government survey, within the import/export sector there will be a 29,600 increase in legal, accounts and commercial related job vacancies between 1999 and 2005. If accurate, this is expected to lead to manpower shortages in these skilled professions.

It is now clear that Hong Kong has fallen behind in its search for more talented and skilled people in recent years. If we are to achieve our ambition of becoming the information technology hub of Asia, and we want to maintain our position as an international financial and service centre, we must find ways to address our skilled manpower shortages.

That is why we warmly welcome the 'Admission of Mainland Professionals Scheme', as a good initiative and move in the right direction. It is our hope that the Scheme will quickly facilitate the importation of skilled professionals from the Mainland in information technology and financial services disciplines.

Indeed, the Hong Kong Exporters' Association has been calling on the Government to relax the working visa requirements for talented mainland citizens for some time. We have always found it somewhat of an irony that talented individuals from elsewhere can more easily get permission to work in the SAR than those from the Mainland.

In designing the Scheme, we hope the Government will consider broadening the discipline categories for inclusion under the Scheme; and look very carefully at the current 'Admission of Talent Scheme', there are lessons to be learnt. Though well intentioned, the current Scheme involves many complicated application procedures, resulting in it not serving the urgent needs of Hong Kong business to recruit talented individuals.

The new Scheme must be more practical and clear so that businesses in Hong Kong can take advantage of the Scheme without having to navigate through amounts of administrative red-tape.

We believe with the opening up of the Mainland market after China's WTO accession and the development of the north-western provinces under the Tenth Five-Year Plan, many business opportunities are presented to Hong Kong. Not only should the 'Admission of Mainland Professionals Scheme' help to solve our skilled labour shortages, but it also offers local enterprises' new opportunities to recruit people with a good understanding of the Mainland market. This is important as they can help businesses in Hong Kong capitalize on new developments and opportunities in China as they occur.

In conclusion, the Hong Kong Exporters' Association welcomes the Admission of Mainland Professionals Scheme and believes that the import of Mainland professionals will help to generate more business opportunities in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely

Jeffrey Lam
Chairman