

(English translation prepared
by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for Members' reference only)

(Letterhead of the Office of Emily LAU, Legislative Councillor)

18 February 2002

Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, JP
Chairman of the House Committee

Dear Mrs CHOW,

Mr Antony LEUNG Kam-chung, Financial Secretary (FS), has recently announced an abrupt change to the arrangements for presenting the 2002-03 Budget. Under the revised arrangement, both the expenditure and revenue parts of the Budget will be presented at the Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting on 6 March, and the Special Finance Committee (FC) meetings to examine the Draft Estimates of Expenditure will have to be postponed for a week. I would like to express my regret at FS's failure to consult LegCo Members before introducing such a fundamental change, and propose that this matter be discussed at the House Committee meeting on 22 February.

In line with the usual practice, the Secretary for the Treasury would brief LegCo on the expenditure part of the Budget on 1 March (i.e. on the Friday immediately before FS delivers his Budget Speech) as suggested by the Executive Authorities weeks ago, and the Special FC meetings on Draft Estimates would be held from 19 to 22 March as suggested by the Administration. FS has recently made an abrupt change to this usual practice by rescheduling the briefing to the morning on 7 March (the exact time has yet to be confirmed). As a result, the Special FC meetings will have to be postponed to 25 to 27 March. As the committees of LegCo have busy meeting schedules, such a hasty decision by FS will unavoidably disrupt their meeting arrangements. The fact that FS has failed to consult LegCo Members is dictatorial and disrespectful to LegCo, not to mention that it is not conducive to improving the relationship between the Executive Authorities and the Legislature.

Therefore, I write to propose that the above matter be discussed at the House Committee meeting this Friday.

I look forward to your reply.

Emily LAU

c.c. Mr Antony LEUNG Kam-chung, Financial Secretary