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Hon Mrs Selina Chow Liang Shuk-ye, JP
Chairman of the House Committee
Legislative Council Building
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Proposed Priority in the Scrutiny of Bills by Members

I am writing to suggest that first priority be accorded by Members to the scrutiny of the Travel Agents (Amendment) Bill 2001, which was introduced into the Legislative Council on 11 July 2001.

Currently, only travel agents providing outbound travel services from Hong Kong are subject to control under the Travel Agents Ordinance. The Travel Agents (Amendment) Bill 2001 seeks to put in place a regulatory framework for inbound travel agents as well. The need for such a regulatory framework has become more urgent in anticipation of the surge in the number of Mainland visitors to Hong Kong, following imminent implementation of new measures announced by the Chief Executive in his 2001 Policy Address to facilitate entry of Mainland visitors. With these developments, it is essential that service standards and the image of Hong Kong as a tourist destination for Mainland visitors be enhanced as soon as possible to tie in with our efforts to promote tourism.

The enactment of the Amendment Bill will enable the Registrar of Travel Agents to license the travel agents and a new certification system for tour guides will also be put in place. The Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong will also be given a central role in the industry self-regulation. Taking into account the lead time required to fully implement the new regulatory regime upon enactment of the Bill, we hope that Members will accord first priority to examining and enacting it.

I should be most grateful if you would put forward our above suggestion for Members' consideration at the coming House Committee meeting on 30 November 2001.

(Andrew H Y Wong)
Director of Administration