

5 December 2001

Hon Mrs Selina Chow Liang Shuk-ye, JP
Chairman of the House Committee
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Proposed Priority in the Scrutiny of Bills by Members

I am writing to suggest that priority be accorded by Members to the scrutiny of the Import and Export (Electronic Transactions) Bill 2001, which was introduced into the Legislative Council on 13 June 2001.

The Bill seeks to provide the legal basis for the use of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) services in submitting cargo manifests. At present, carriers and traders of cargo imported into and exported from Hong Kong are required to submit separate cargo manifests to the Customs and Excise Department, Census and Statistics Department and Trade and Industry Department. With the implementation of the new EDI system, carriers and traders may submit cargo manifests to the relevant government departments simultaneously through electronic means. Such electronic submissions eliminate the paperwork required, reduce the operating costs of the carriers and traders concerned and help enhance their competitiveness. A helping-the-business initiative, the new service also constitutes part of Government's overall efforts to promote e-commerce. Full operation of the EDI service will also improve efficiency of the government departments concerned.

The Legislative Council approved a funding of \$110 million to implement the project in 1999. The new system will be ready by early 2002. To enable the trade to reap early benefits brought about by the EDI services, we hope that Members will accord first priority to examining and enacting the Bill.

I should be most grateful if you would put forward our above suggestion for Members' consideration at the coming House Committee meeting on 7 December 2001.

(Andrew H Y Wong)
Director of Administration