

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

2004 Legislative Council Elections: Inclusion of Registered Chinese Medicine Practitioners In the Medical Functional Constituency

This paper provides an up to date account on reactions to the proposal of including Chinese medicine practitioners in the Medical functional constituency (FC) for the 2004 Legislative Council (LegCo) elections.

Background

2. On 10 December 2002, we informed Members that in principle we agreed to consider including registered Chinese medicine practitioners in the Medical FC for the third term LegCo elections given that a statutory registration scheme had been put in place and several thousand Chinese medicine practitioners would have been properly registered by mid-2004. We undertook to consult the relevant professions and interested parties on the proposal before taking a decision on the issue.

Consultation

3. We have consulted widely relevant sectors in the past two

months. To gather views from doctors and dentists, we have met with the Hong Kong Medical Association, Hong Kong Dental Association and Hong Kong Doctors Union. The Hong Kong Public Doctors' Association has provided a written submission. As for Chinese medicine practitioners, we have written to 47 Chinese medicine associations and met with the ten which are the constituents of the Chinese Medicine Subsector of the Election Committee. Of all the Chinese medicine associations to which we have written, only 19 (two are constituents of the Chinese Medicine Subsector whom we have met) have provided their views in writing. We have also attended a meeting of the Chinese Medicine Council to seek the views of members. We have also participated in a forum organized by Dr the Hon. Lo Wing-lok for doctors, dentists and Chinese medicine practitioners.

Views on the Proposal

4. Doctors and dentists strongly opposed the proposal in the context of the 2000 LegCo elections mainly on the grounds that the statutory framework for registering Chinese medicine practitioners was not yet fully ready.

5. Despite the development in the regulation of Chinese medicine practitioners since then, doctors and dentists continue to oppose the proposal this time round, arguing that it is not appropriate to include Chinese medicine practitioners in the Medical FC. Instead, Chinese

medicine practitioners should be given a separate FC seat. Dentists have also conveyed their discontent with the current arrangement of including both dentists and doctors in one FC and are worried that the inclusion of Chinese medicine practitioners may further reduce their representativeness in the Medical FC.

6. Chinese medicine practitioners have divergent views on the issue. A number of them support the proposal of including registered Chinese medicine practitioners in the Medical FC in the 2004 LegCo elections but many among this group also urges that a separate FC should be given to them in elections after 2007. Others demand that they should be given a separate FC seat in the 2004 elections. There are also some who acknowledge the difficulty of adding an extra FC seat in 2004 and propose to maintain the status quo until after the review of the post-2007 constitutional arrangements.

7. Representatives of doctors, dentists and Chinese medicine practitioners have all expressed doubt as to whether one single representative of the Medical FC can take care of the interests of doctors/dentists and Chinese medicine practitioners given their differences in background and training as well as different theoretical origins of Western and Chinese medicine.

8. Dr. the Hon. Lo Wing-lok has also provided us with the results of an opinion poll which he conducted. Respondents to the poll

included 1 276 doctors, 222 dentists and 1 505 Chinese medicine practitioners. According to the survey results, out of a total of 3 003 respondents, 78% agreed that registered Chinese medicine practitioners should be given a separate FC, while 64% disagreed that they should be included in the Medical FC.

Conclusion

9. Members are invited to express any further views which they may have on this matter, so that we can take these into account before making the final recommendation.

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