

17 January 2003

Ref: PC/ly:038:03:IA13

Mrs. Sharon TONG
Clerk to Panel
Panel on Manpower
Legislative Council
Hong Kong SAR Government

Dear

Panel on Manpower
Registration Requirements under the
Proposed Construction Workers Registration Scheme

Thank you for inviting our Association to the meeting of the Panel on 23 January 2003. We would give our view with regard to the registration requirements in the following paragraphs.

The main objective of the Scheme is to ensure the construction industry possess skilful workers to allow us to construct good quality buildings that serve our society. We have many construction workers who are skilful to a varying degree, and the proposed registration scheme is to help identify them, grade them and properly recognise them according to their skill levels. To this effect, our Association is of the view that an objective and impartial trade test is the only proper way to grade the workers. It is also the fair method by which skilful workers are recognised by the award of the skilled workers status.

The Construction Industry Training Authority (CITA) has been running the Trade Testing Scheme for many years. We have learnt that there are already 30,000 workers who have taken the tests and gained their Trade Testing Certificates. This result of the CITA Trade Testing Scheme is a strong proof that skilful workers are not afraid of taking on the challenge of the test. For the trade-tested workers, we should respect them and protect them. Any other less stringent means of admission to the skilled workers category is unfair to this group of workers and would lead them to misunderstand that their hard-earned status are not respected by the society.

Page 2

Ref: PC/ly:038:03:IA13

However, we also know that there is a small group of “grandfather” workers who has served the industry a long time, learning the skills tirelessly, and has acquired a high standard of their trades. We understand that a test or examination might be an insurmountable psychological barrier to them to register under the Registration Scheme. We treasure their contribution to the industry and do not want to lose their service. For this reason and on the condition that the number of admissions through this route will not be overwhelming large, our Association had agreed to exempt long service workers the trade testing admission requirement. Our Association had originally proposed that the exemption should only be granted to workers who had served 15 years in the industry and this period was eventually negotiated down to ten years by the Labour Unions.

We feel very strongly that the ten-year working experience requirement of the “grandfather” exemption should not be relaxed. If we do that, it will be disrespect to the workers who have already passed the trade test and the value of the Registration Scheme will be discredited.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Chan
Secretary General

c.c. Mr. Billy Wong President