

FACT SHEET

"THE FIRST" in Legislative Council History

Year	Event
1843	<p>The Legislative Council of Hong Kong (the Council) was established in June 1843 under the <i>Charter of the Colony of Hong Kong</i>, which stated <i>"The Governor...with the advice of the said Legislative Council, shall have full power and authority to make and enact all such laws and Ordinances...for the Peace, Order, and good Government of the said Colony of Hong Kong."</i></p> <p>The appointment of Official Members to the Council was announced by Governor Henry Pottinger in August 1843. The three Official Members were A.R. Johnston (a former Administrator of Hong Kong), J.R. Morrison (Chinese Secretary and Interpreter to the Superintendent of Trade) and William Caine (Chief Magistrate).</p>
1844	<p>The first meeting was held on 11 January 1844. Owing to J.R. Morrison's death and A.R. Johnston's return to England because of sick leave, the Council remained in abeyance in 1843. The Council held its first meeting with the Governor Henry Pottinger as the President and two Official Members, namely William Caine and Major General G.C. D'Aguilar (General Officer commanding the garrison and Lieutenant-Governor).</p> <p>The first Hong Kong Ordinance, Ordinance No. 1 of 1844, relating to slavery was passed on 26 February 1844. <i>"But, the Ordinance was subsequently disallowed by Her Majesty, as it was considered that the Imperial Statutes for the abolition of slavery extended by their own proper force and authority to Hong Kong."</i></p>
1845	<p>The first Standing Rules and Orders for the Legislative Council of Hong Kong was adopted on 7 March 1845 in pursuance of Article 6 of <i>Royal Instructions 1843</i> which <i>"direct[s] the Governor to frame Standing Rules and Orders as may be necessary... for ensuring punctuality of attendance of the Members... prevention of Meetings being holden without convenient notice to the several Members...and maintaining order and method in the despatch of business and in the conduct of all debates."</i> Articles 4 to 23 of <i>Royal Instructions 1843</i> stipulated rules on quorum, officers of the Council, preservation of meeting records, law making and voting.</p>

Year	Event
1850	<p>Appointment of Unofficial Members. In January 1849, the leading inhabitants of Hong Kong sent a petition to British Parliament, pointing out that "<i>[they had] no share in the Legislature either by elective representatives or nominees selected by the Governor...</i>" With the approval of the British government, two nominated representatives of Justices of Peace, David Jardine of Jardine, Matheson & Co. and J.F. Edger of Jamieson, How & Co., took their seats as Unofficial Members on 14 June 1850. The conventional practice of nominating representatives of Justices of Peace to the Council ceased in 1857.</p> <p>The first Senior Unofficial Member. David Jardine was appointed as the Senior Unofficial Member.</p>
1858	<p>The abstract of Proceedings of the Council was first published in <i>The Hong Kong Government Gazette (Gazette)</i> in January 1858. According to <i>The Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (V&P)</i> published in <i>Gazette</i> 27 March 1858, "<i>It was unanimously resolved, that the Votes and Proceedings of the Council should henceforward be published in the same shape as recorded in the Journal kept by the Clerk of Councils, -- the Governor reserving to himself the power of withholding from such publication any matters to which it might appear to him inadvisable to give publicity.</i>"</p> <p>Government estimates were submitted to the vote of the Council for the first time. Ordinance No. 15 of 1858 titled "<i>An Ordinance to apply a Sum not exceeding Seventy-six Thousand Pounds to the Public Service of the Year, 1859</i>" was passed on 8 December 1858.</p> <p>The first admission of members of the public to the sittings of the Council on the introduction of Members. V&P published in <i>Gazette</i> 12 June 1858 recorded that:</p> <p><i>"Read Resolution of Council of 11th January, 1858, -- 'That it is the opinion of this Council, that each Member should be authorized to introduce a stranger, by order under his hand, to the Sittings of this Council; and that the Governor should be authorized to introduce strangers without any such limit.'</i></p> <p><i>Read Despatch No. 14, of 9th April, 1858, from The Right Honourable Lord Stanley, concurring in the views of the Council, -- That the Public be admitted to the Sittings of the Legislative Council, on the conditions expressed in the said Resolution."</i></p>

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1867	<p>The first Budget Speech was delivered by the Governor on 30 August 1867. V&P published in <i>Gazette</i> 14 September 1867 recorded that:</p> <p><i>"1. I now lay the Draught bill for Appropriation of Revenue of 1868, before the Council, and as there are many unusual and perplexing circumstances connected with the figures in that Draught Bill, I propose to give such general explanations as may render intelligible to the Council their position in reference to the sums, which I invite them to vote..."</i></p>
1875	<p>The first Chinese name of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong 定例局 (Teng Lai Kuk) was published in <i>Gazette</i> 2 January 1875.</p>
1880	<p>The first Chinese Unofficial Member, Ng Choy (伍才) [also known as Wu Ting-fan (伍廷芳)], was appointed.</p>
1882	<p>The first legislative session opened with a Governor's Address. The Governor's Address, which presented a review of the situation of Hong Kong in 1881, was delivered on 7 February 1882.</p>
1884	<p>A representative of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, Thomas Jackson of Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, was first appointed as an Unofficial Member. In addition, the practice of appointing a representative of Justices of Peace as an Unofficial Member was resumed. Both constitutional conventions were abolished in 1973.</p> <p>The committee system was first stipulated in the <i>Standing Orders and Rules of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong 1884</i>. There were two types of committees: Special and Standing Committees. There were three Standing Committees, namely a Finance Committee, a Law Committee and a Public Works Committee.</p>
1890	<p>Hong Kong Hansard known to be first published. According to G.B. Endacott, <i>"It is not known when Hong Kong Hansard was first published but copies exist from 1890 onwards and are noted on the title page as being 'reprinted from the Hong Kong Daily Press, revised by Members.'"</i> <i>Hong Kong Hansard</i> is the official verbatim report of the proceedings of the Council meetings. The name Hansard was adopted after Luke Hansard (1752-1828) who was the printer of the House of Commons Journal of the British Parliament.</p>

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1946	The Council resumed its first post-war sitting on 1 May 1946 after the surrender of Japan. On 13 November 1941, the Council held its last sitting before Japanese occupation of Hong Kong.
1963	The creation of the Office of the Unofficial Members of the Executive and Legislative Council (UMELCO). <i>"The purpose of establishing the office was to promote closer relationships between the Unofficial Members of the two Councils and members of the public, who were invited to call at the office to put forward their views on any matter of public interest or to lodge individual complaints against Government departments."</i> UMELCO was renamed OMELCO (Office of Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils) in 1985.
1965	The first female Unofficial Member. Mrs Ellen Li Shu-pui (李樹培夫人/李曹秀群) was appointed as an Unofficial Member.
1972	Chinese was first used at meetings of the Council. Based on the recommendation of the Chinese Language Committee, Chinese, other than English, could be used at Council meetings, with simultaneous interpretation first provided on 18 October 1972.
1976	The introduction of a remuneration system for Members. The rationale of the remuneration system is: <i>"Whilst preserving the element of public service, the allowance was intended as a partial compensation for any pecuniary loss arising from holding office as LegCo Members."</i>
1985	The first Legislative Council Building. The former Supreme Court building, opened in 1912, was converted into the home of the Council. The style of the building was based on the building designs of ancient Rome and Greece and integrated with Chinese as well as Colonial architectural attributes. Before 1985, the Council met at the Council Chamber in the Main Wing of the Central Government Offices.
	The first batch of Members returned by indirect election. Twelve elected Members were returned by 12 Electoral College constituencies, consisting of Members of District Boards, the Urban Council and the Provisional Regional Council. Another 12 elected Members were returned by functional constituencies which were made up of members of various professions.
	The first Female Senior Unofficial Member. Miss Lydia Dunn (鄧蓮如) was appointed as a Senior Unofficial Member.

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1991	The first batch of Members returned by direct election. Eighteen elected Members were returned by nine geographical constituencies under a one-man-one-vote system.
	An electronic voting system was first used for the purpose of divisions in the Council.
1993	The first non-civil servant President. John J. Swaine was elected the President of the Council among non-official Members. This ended the Governor's presidency in the Council since 1843, as stipulated in Article 5 of Royal Instructions 1843.
1994	The creation of The Legislative Council Commission was <i>"to integrate the administrative support and services to the Council, provided originally by the Office of the Clerk to the Legislative Council, which was part of the Administration, and the Office of Members of the Legislative Council, a company incorporated under the Companies Ordinance."</i>
1995	The first fully-elected legislature. According to the <i>Legislative Council Annual Report 1995-1996</i> , <i>"The legislature which was returned in October 1995 is a milestone in politics, being the first fully-elected legislature in the history of Hong Kong."</i>
1997	The establishment of The Provisional Legislative Council (臨時立法會). On 24 March 1996, the Preparatory Committee for the HKSAR under the National People's Congress decided that a Provisional Legislative Council should be established.
	The first female President. Mrs Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai (范徐麗泰) was elected the President of The Provisional Legislative Council at the Council's first meeting on 25 January 1997 in Shenzhen, thereby becoming the first female President of the Hong Kong legislature. <i>The Rules of Procedure of the Provisional Legislative Council</i> was adopted on 12 April 1997.

Year	Event
1998	The Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (立法會) was established under <i>The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region</i>. Section 3 of Chapter IV of The Basic Law provides the constitutional framework for the Council.
	The first meeting of the Council was held on 2 July 1998.
	The first <i>Rules of Procedure of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region</i> was adopted on 2 July 1998 in pursuance of Article 75 of The Basic Law.

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