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GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT

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Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council on Home Affairs
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn : Ms Flora TAI)

Dear Ms TAI,

At the LegCo Home Affairs Panel meeting held on 14 December 2007, members asked for an explanation of why the Administration did not accept the offer of Cable TV for the free provision of a television channel for cultural and arts programmes.

Our past records reveal that Cable TV has never offered the free provision of a TV channel for cultural and arts programmes to the Home Affairs Bureau. In 2003-04, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) approached a number of carriers to operate a cultural channel, for the purpose of making the arts more accessible to the public through greater media exposure. Cable TV was amongst those approached and had quoted a carriage fee which was at the time considered too high by the Council.

During that exercise, HKADC had extended an invitation to Internet service providers and television carriers to set up the channel so as to test the market with a pilot run on both the Internet platform and the pay-television platform. After initial discussions with four carriers, only one made positive response to HKADC's request for detailed information. HKADC then proceeded with detailed negotiation with this particular carrier in late 2003 to mid 2004.

In July 2004, HKADC formally invited a submission of proposals from content providers on the platform of this one carrier. Two content providers responded. One proposal was considered too flimsy by the Council. The other which proposed a production of only 204 hours of programming a year fell short of the Council's plan for 400 hours of programming. Since HKADC could not find a suitable content provider which met with their expectations, negotiation with the carrier was discontinued. The plan for a cultural channel was postponed by the HKADC after this exercise.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms Pandora LAM)
for Secretary for Home Affairs