

立法會
Legislative Council

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Paper for House Committee Meeting on 3 March 2000

**Measures Adopted in the Former Legislative Council to
Expedite Scrutiny of Bills**

Purpose

This paper details the measures adopted in the former Legislative Council (LegCo) towards the end of the 1995-97 term to speed up the scrutiny of bills.

Background

2. Members will discuss at the next House Committee meeting on 3 March 2000 how the scrutiny of bills can be expedited given the present progress of the work of the 15 Bills Committees in action and the fact that there are 16 Bills Committees on the waiting list. Moreover, 10 more bills are expected to be introduced before mid-March some of which may require Bills Committees.

3. To facilitate discussion, the Chairman of the House Committee has instructed the LegCo Secretariat to prepare a paper detailing the measures adopted by the former LegCo in the last few months of the 1995-97 term to expedite the scrutiny of bills.

Measures Adopted by Former LegCo to Expedite Scrutiny of Bills

Commencing Preparation Work for the Top Four Bills Committees on Waiting List

4. To help speed up the scrutiny of bills, a new procedure was adopted in December 1996 whereby preparatory work would commence for the four Bills Committees on top of the waiting list, even though they had not yet been activated. This included calling for membership, electing the chairman, inviting submissions from organizations concerned, and seeking the Administration's response to the submissions received. Members of the Bills Committee would be given copies of the submissions, the Administration's response and other related reference materials.

5. The experience in the former LegCo was that as the first meeting to elect the chairman involved only 15 to 20 minutes, it was not difficult to arrange such meetings despite Members' heavy schedule. The Secretariat did not received feedback that the submissions and other papers circulated in advance to members of the Bills Committee concerned generated too much work for them.

6. The Secretariat also did not receive negative feedback from any organization which submitted representations, expressing disappointment or dissatisfaction that the Bills Committee in question did not have a specific date as to when committee members would meet the organization to hear its views. The reason could perhaps be that the waiting time was not too long. If the procedure had been applied to more than four Bills Committees on the waiting list, the waiting time for some of the Bills Committees for which preparatory work had already commenced would be much longer.

7. The periodic adjustment of the priority of bills by the Administration had some impact on the procedure in that a newly formed Bills Committee was occasionally placed on top of the waiting list when preparatory work had already commenced for the "original" top four Bills Committees. However the impact was not substantial as the number of Bills Committees involved was small.

Increasing the Quota of Active Bills Committees and Related Arrangements

8. Same as the current practice, the maximum number of Bills Committees in action at any one time in the former LegCo was also limited to 15. When more than 15 Bills Committees were formed, a queuing system would be put in place. To expedite the scrutiny of bills, the quota was increased from 15 to 18 at the end of February 1997.

9. Another means adopted by Members to help expedite the scrutiny of bills was the provision of an additional time slot for meetings during lunch hour with effect from 7 March 1997, making a total of five time slots as follows -

8:30 am to 10:30 am
10:30 am to 12:30 pm
12:30 pm to 2:30 pm
2:30 pm to 4:30 pm
4:30 pm to 6:30 pm

10. In the former LegCo, the following arrangements were also adopted to speed up the scrutiny of bills -

- a. Scheduling the next Bills Committee meeting within two weeks from the date of the last meeting; and

- b. requesting the Administration to respond to Bills Committees' queries and request for information within two weeks' time.

Members' Advice

11. Members are invited to note the measures adopted in the former LegCo in the remaining few months of the 1995-97 term to speed up the scrutiny of bills.

Legislative Council Secretariat

1 March 2000

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