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Chairman of the House Committee
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
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Proposed Priority in the Scrutiny of Bills by Members

I am writing to suggest that priority be accorded by Members to the scrutiny of two bills, in the following order –

- (a) Village Representative Election Bill; and
- (b) the Electoral Provisions (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002.

These two bills were introduced into the Legislative Council on 9 October 2002.

Village Representative Election Bill

The Court of Final Appeal ruled in December 2000 that the electoral arrangements adopted in the village representative election of two villages were inconsistent with the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. The Village Representative Election Bill seeks to rectify this inconsistency. The Bill proposes the establishment of the office of Indigenous Inhabitant Representative and the office of Resident Representative. The Bill also provides for the election of these Representatives.

The term of office of the incumbent village representatives will expire in March 2003. To allow sufficient lead-time for voter registration, which takes more than two months, it is essential for the Bill to be passed into law as soon as possible. In light of this timeframe, we suggest that first priority be allocated to this Bill, so that the Bills Committee may commence scrutiny of the Bill as soon as possible.

Electoral Provisions (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002

The primary objective of the Bill is to increase the number of elected seats for the District Councils of Islands, Sai Kung and Yuen Long for the coming District Councils elections to be held in November 2003. Only upon enactment of the Bill would we have the legislative basis to proceed with the pre-election preparations, involving the delineation of constituency boundaries, formulation of subsidiary legislation, allocation of voters to constituencies and publication of voter registers, etc. Taking into account the election timetable, and given the long planning lead-time required for the pre-election preparatory work, we suggest that Members accord priority to the Bill to facilitate its early enactment.

I should be grateful if you would put forward the above suggestions for Members' consideration at the coming House Committee meeting on 11 October 2002.

(Andrew H Y Wong)
Director of Administration