葉劉淑儀議員辦事處
Office of Hon. IP LAU Suk Yee, Regina

2 March 2009

Mr. Anthony Lau
Executive Director
Hong Kong Tourism Board
9th-11th Floors, Citicorp Centre
18 Whitfield Road
North Point, Hong Kong

Dear Mr Lau,

Marketing Hong Kong

I attach a copy of an article written by me entitled "Marketing Hong Kong" for publication by the SCMP. An edited version will be published in SCMP on 16 March.

My article was inspired by an article in the BusinessWeek Magazine of 26 January 2009, about the increasingly popular use of Apple's iPhone or other similar hand-held computing devices for downloading applications from Apple's App Store. It occurs to me that this would be a cost effective way to promote Hong Kong, if we invite software programmers in Hong Kong to write applications about how to have fun in Hong Kong, or games about Hong Kong, and upload them to Apple's App Store for free download or at nominal cost. As hand-held computing devices are becoming ubiquitous, and downloading of applications is wildly popular in the West, as well as catching on the rest of the world, I believe this would be a highly effective way to promote Hong Kong.
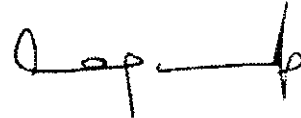
You don't have a large enough budget to promote Hong Kong to foreigners on the big screen or on TV in the way that India or Australia or Malaysia is doing. But inviting Hong Kong's SMEs in the IT sector to write such applications won't cost much, but would generate business for our IT SMEs, as well as good publicity for Hong Kong as a savvy user of technology. I would urge you to consider this proposal.

I have discussed this proposal with Dr. Hon Samson Tam, the legislator representing the

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IT sector, and he agrees this is a good idea well worth pursuing by you.

I look forward to hearing from you how you wish to follow up on this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

IP LAU Suk Yee, Regina (Mrs.)

cc. Mrs. Rita Lau, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development
     Hon. Jeffrey Lam, Chairman, Panel on Economic Development, Legislative Council
     Dr. Hon Samson Tam, Member, Legislative Council

Marketing Hong Kong

How do you market Hong Kong? If your target is Mainland tourists, not much effort would be required other than continuing to badger Mainland public security authorities to allow more well-heeled tourists to visit Hong Kong. Naturally, we need to do our part by making sure that our tourist agents don't gouge them; our shops and restaurants live up to their good name and our most successful, homegrown Ocean Park continue to wow its visitors. Selling Hong Kong to Mainland visitors is relatively easy. Brand Hong Kong means good food and safe products . Keep that up and the Mainlanders will keep coming our way.

Selling Hong Kong to the rest of the world is much more tricky. Not that wowing the world is a priority now or any time soon. In 2008 Mainland visitors made up over 57% of our total arrivals, and grew at a much faster rate than those from the rest of the world. With ongoing relaxation of travel restrictions, Mainland visitors are expected to grow at an even faster rate to fill the slack created by the withering of visitors from the hitherto affluent developed world. Compared to Singapore and many other Asian cities, aren't we lucky that we are part of a gigantic, rising country with waves after waves of cash-rich visitors to export to its special administrative regions?

As an aspiring "world city", however, it would be remiss not to reflect on how best we could sell ourselves to the rest of the world. Those who have lived abroad or watched CNN would be struck by the lack of TV or other screen advertising on Hong Kong. Other countries have been much more aggressive in marketing themselves: India is spectacularly portrayed as "Incredible India"; Australia the land of romantic getaways and endless adventure; Japan as cool, soulful, beautiful and delightful; and Malaysia, the land of culture and heritage, islands and beaches, city wonders and eco-adventure. Ads on Hong Kong are conspicuous by their absence.

It is not hard to explain Hong Kong's yawning screen absence. With a baseline promotional budget of HK$320 million, we can hardly afford to splash on international TV or the silver screen. In the present economic climate, efforts directed at the rest of the world would be an ill-timed waste. But more importantly, for some time Hong Kong has been at a loss in updating our brand because we are unsure about our identity: what we believe in, what we stand for, and what our key messages are.

Should the antiquated junk, the logo of our Tourism Board, continue to be our city logo, or the bauhinia, or the ever-changing skyline of our harbor front? Put that question to our tourism authorities and you find find them tongue-tied to give a credible answer. How about Hong Kong as world financial centre? Now that financial centers have become synonymous with excesses and runaway greed, at this moment, not even the most ardent promoters of Hong Kong as an international financial centre will want to trumpet that.

There is actually a much more cost-effective way to market Hong Kong. Go on-line. Make full use of the latest, hottest IT gadgets at our disposal. Upload videos of Hong Kong at its best or funniest on to YouTube. Upload Hong Kong's stupendous fireworks display at the International Financial Centre on Chinese New Year's Eve, or other interesting aspects of Hong Kong life. Advertise Hong Kong on popular sites like Facebook Above all, make use of the increasingly ubiquitous hand-held devices for downloading fun applications. Get Hong Kong's IT experts to write applications about Hong Kong: the really good restaurants, where to get the best bargains, which country parks or nature trails to explore etc for uploading to Apple's online store. Make it fun and get the cyber crowds to download them on to their iPhones or equivalent for free or a token $1. Create applications that popularize Hong Kong to the growing numbers of users of iPhones or Blackberry who are now hard wired to use their hand-held toys in myriad new ways.

Hong Kong has a reputation for being good at using technology. Let's be creative and ride on the latest IT craze. Make Hong Kong's presence felt in cyberspace. Throw a competition to invite local IT whiz kids to create new applications. Put our critical thinking caps on, and infinite new possibilities will come alive.