

FACT SHEET

"THE FIRST" in Legislative Council History

Since the establishment of the Legislative Council in 1843, there have been "many firsts" throughout the history of the Hong Kong Legislature. The "many firsts" reflect the evolution of the Legislative Council over a period of more than one and a half centuries from being an advisory body to a fully-elected legislature with powers and functions to render checks and balances on the executive authorities.

Year	Event
1843	<p>The Legislative 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 Legislative 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 of the Legislative Council 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 28 February 1844. But, the Ordinance was subsequently disallowed by Queen Victoria, as it was considered that the Imperial Statutes for the abolition of slavery extended by their own proper force and authority to Hong Kong.</p>

Year	Event
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>
1850	<p>The first two Unofficial Members were appointed to broaden community representation in the Hong Kong Legislature. In January 1849, the leading inhabitants of Hong Kong sent a petition to the 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 Legislative Council ceased in 1857.</p> <p>The first Senior Unofficial Member. David Jardine was appointed as Senior Unofficial Member.</p>
1858	<p>The abstract of Proceedings of the Legislative 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 the <i>Gazette</i> dated 27 March 1858, "<i>[i]t 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 unadvisable to give publicity.</i>"</p>

Year	Event
1858 (cont'd)	<p>Government estimates were submitted to the vote of the Legislative Council for the first time. <i>Ordinance No. 15 of 1858</i> 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. This <i>Ordinance</i> marked the beginning of the legislature having the power to control public expenditure.</p> <p>The first admission of members of the public to the sittings of the Legislative Council on the introduction of Members. V&P published in the <i>Gazette</i> of 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>
1867	<p>The first Budget Speech was delivered by the Governor on 30 August 1867. V&P published in the <i>Gazette</i> of 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, 定例局 (Teng Lai Kuk), was published in the <i>Gazette</i> dated 2 January 1875.</p>
1880	<p>The first Chinese Unofficial Member, Ng Choy (伍才) (also known as Wu Ting-fang (伍廷芳)), was appointed.</p>

Year	Event
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 Unofficial Member. In addition, the practice of appointing a representative of Justices of Peace as 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 committees and standing committees.</p>
1888	<p>The Legislative Council with law-making power for the first time. The <i>Letters Patent</i> was amended in 1888 to require the Governor to seek not only the advice but also the consent of the Council in enacting laws.</p>
1890	<p>Hong Kong Hansard known to be first published. According to the academic G.B. Endacott, "[i]t 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>Hong Kong Hansard</i> is the official verbatim report of the proceedings of the Legislative 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>
1946	<p>The Legislative 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.</p>

Year	Event
1963	The creation of the Office of the Unofficial Members of the Executive and Legislative Council ("UMELCO"). 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. UMELCO was renamed OMELCO (Office of Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils) in 1986.
1965	The first female Unofficial Member. Mrs Ellen Li Shu-pui (李樹培夫人/李曹秀群女士) was appointed as Unofficial Member.
1972	Chinese was first used at the meetings of the Legislative 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	First "grassroots" Legislative Council Member. Wong Lam, an employee of the Kowloon Motor Bus Company, was appointed as Unofficial Member. He became the first "grassroots" Legislative Council Member who used Chinese in Council debates.
	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> ¹
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.

¹ See the Report of the Commission of Remuneration for Members of the Legislative Council (1994).

Year	Event
1985 (cont'd)	<p>The first batch of 24 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.</p> <p>The first Female Senior Unofficial Member. Lydia Dunn (鄧蓮如) was appointed as Senior Unofficial Member.</p>
1991	<p>The first batch of Members returned by direct election. Eighteen elected Members were returned by nine geographical constituencies under a one-person-one-vote system. Among the 18 elected Members, Emily Lau Wai-hing (劉慧卿) was the first female Member returned by direct election.</p> <p>An electronic voting system was first used for the purpose of divisions in the Legislative Council.</p>
1993	<p>The first non-civil servant President. John J. Swaine was elected the President of the Legislative Council among Unofficial Members. This ended the Governor's presidency in the Council since 1843, as stipulated in Article 5 of <i>Royal Instructions 1843</i>.</p>
1994	<p>The creation of The Legislative Council Commission was 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.</p> <p>The Legislative Council exercised the power conferred by the <i>Legislative Council (Powers and Privileges) Ordinance</i> to compel witnesses to attend an inquiry, the first time since the enactment of the Ordinance in 1985.</p>

Year	Event
1995	The first fully-elected legislature. Among the 60 Members in the Legislative Council, 30 came from functional constituencies, 20 were returned by direct elections in geographical constituencies, and 10 were elected by the Election Committee constituency. The President was elected from among Members.
1996	The establishment of the Provisional Legislative Council (臨時立法會). On 24 March 1996, the Preparatory Committee for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR") under the National People's Congress decided that a Provisional Legislative Council should be established. The 60 Members in the Provisional Legislative Council were elected on 21 December 1996 by the 400-member Selection Committee for the First Government of the HKSAR.
1997	The first female President. Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai (范徐麗泰) was elected the President of the Provisional Legislative Council at the Council's first meeting held 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.
1998	The Legislative Council of the HKSAR was established under the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the "Basic Law"). Section 3 of Chapter IV of <i>the Basic Law</i> provides the constitutional framework for the Council. The elections for the first term of the Legislative Council of the HKSAR were held on 24 May 1998.
	The first meeting of the Legislative Council of the HKSAR was held on 2 July 1998.
	The first Rules of Procedure of the Legislative Council of the HKSAR was adopted on 2 July 1998 in pursuance of Article 75 of <i>the Basic Law</i> .

Year	Event
2009	<p>The first time that an application for judicial review was filed by witnesses of the Select Committee to Inquire into Matters Relating to the Post-service Work of Mr LEUNG Chin-man against the power of the select committee authorized by the Legislative Council in accordance with the <i>Rules of Procedure</i>.</p> <p>The Court of First Instance subsequently confirmed that the Council had the requisite power of delegation and that the power given to it under Article 73(10) of the <i>Basic Law</i> to summon witnesses could be delegated to its committees.</p>
2010	<p>The first time that a special meeting of the Legislative Council was convened during the recess under Rule 15(2) of the <i>Rules of Procedure</i>. The special meeting was convened on 2 September 2010 to debate the motion on "The incident of a Hong Kong tour group being taken hostage in the Philippines".</p>
2011	<p>The relocation of the Legislative Council to the new Legislative Council Complex at Tamar in October 2011. The Complex is the first purpose-built building to house the Hong Kong Legislature, the construction of which commenced in 2008 and was completed in 2011.</p>
2012	<p>The first time the President of the Legislative Council invoked Rule 92 of the <i>Rules of Procedure</i> at the Council meeting held on 16 May 2012 to end the joint debate at the Committee stage of a bill.</p>

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