

**Letterhead of CHIEF SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION'S OFFICE**  
Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

21 April 1999

Dr the Hon Leong Che-hung, JP  
Chairman  
Legislative Council House Committee  
Legislative Council Building  
8 Jackson Road  
Central  
Hong Kong

Dear C. H.,

**Participation by Public Officers**  
**in a Debate Initiated by a Member**

Thank you for your letter of 7 April regarding participation by Government officials in a debate initiated by a Member.

I have considered carefully Members' wish that the official should speak twice, once after the mover of the motion has spoken on the motion and again before the mover of the motion winds up the debate.

As I explained in my letter of 7 November 1998, participation by the Administration in debates initiated by Members at Council meetings is very much 'Motion' led. The role of the official in a debate of the sort is essentially to listen and respond to the views expressed by both the mover of the motion and other Members. The established practice to

have the official speaking after all Members interested in the issue have spoken is therefore not only appropriate but best serves the purpose.

The President has agreed to consider favourably requests of the Administration under Rule 38 of the Council's Rules of Procedure to have an official speak more than once. Clearly we will so request if the situation warrants it. But we do not believe that it is necessary on all occasions for an official to speak twice in a debate. This depends very much on the substance of the motion as demonstrated by recent experience.

As the present arrangements work well, we do not believe that any change is necessary.

(Mrs Anson Chan)  
Chief Secretary for Administration