

## **Paper for Open Discussions**

### **A Proposal to set up a Research Team on the Study of Referendums**

#### **1. Preamble**

- 1.1. Technically, this proposal requires no blessing or endorsement from any person or organization. In reality, however, the authors of this proposal would like to gather as much feedback as possible from all walks of life.
- 1.2. The purpose of this document is to outline the authors' idea of establishing an independent "Research Team on the Study of Referendums" or "全民投票研究組" in Chinese, the exact name of "the Team" to be ironed out.

#### **2. Objectives**

- 2.1. The objectives of the Team shall be
  - (i) to study and document the development and operation of referendums around the world, and
  - (ii) to study the feasibility of introducing referendums to Hong Kong, whether official or civil, district or territory-wide.
- 2.2. The Team shall operate independently, and all Team members shall serve in their personal capacity. They do not represent any organization, including the universities they are working in. They may or may not share a common stand on specific issues related to the introduction of referendums to Hong Kong. The only material fact is that all of them are committed to conduct the study objectively and scientifically.
- 2.3. The Team expects to complete the study by the end of 2004, and report its findings by means of a paper and on-line report. The title of the report is tentatively fixed as "Referendums Around the World and Lessons for Hong Kong".

#### **3. Composition**

- 3.1. The Team shall comprise independent academics working on a voluntary and unpaid basis. As of 23 November 2004, the Team comprises Drs Robert CHUNG Ting-yiu and Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok, who are authors of this proposal, and who have self-appointed themselves into the Team.

- 3.2. The Team is expected to grow by snowballing, whereby more independent academics would be invited to join the Team in due course. A new member would be admitted into the Team when the majority of incumbent members agreed to his/her admission. An incumbent member can withdraw from the Team at any time he/she wishes. In order to be efficient, the number of Team members is not expected to exceed 8 persons.
- 3.3. The Team may want to appoint officials to represent the team, support staff members and research assistants as the majority of members see fit, in order to accomplish the study.
- 3.4. The Team may also appoint as the majority of members see fit any number of Honorary Advisors to comment on the Team's operation and the methodology of the study.

#### **4. The Study**

- 4.1. The study would probably comprise of the aspects:
  - (i) historical development of referendums all over the world;
  - (ii) different forms, categories, nomenclature of referendums as of today;
  - (iii) theoretical discussions of direct democracy and referendums;
  - (iv) practical considerations for introducing referendums to Hong Kong;
  - (v) suggestions for introducing formal and civil referendums to Hong Kong;
- 4.2. The study is expected to generate the following output:
  - (i) a comprehensive bibliography of on-line and library references;
  - (ii) an online resource centre for policy references and future studies;
  - (iii) information sheets for public education purpose.

#### **5. Resources**

- 5.1. The Team would need a budget of about \$50k to cover the expenditures to be incurred in the hiring of assistants to do the searching, writing, editing, translating, printing work, and so on. The Team would solicit donation and sponsorship, in cash or in kind, from friends and organizations who support the study.
- 5.2. The Team and the study it conducts shall not be affected by the positions and stands of the sponsors who support the study.