

2003.6.18

**Speech by the Hon Mrs Selina Chow Liang Shuk-ye,
GBS, JP**
**Motion Debate on Revitalizing Tourism and
Encouraging Spending, 18 June 2003**



Selina Chow:

Madam President, I move that Dr LAW Chi-kwong's amendment be amended as printed on the Agenda.

Madam President, first of all, I wish to make a declaration of interests, because at this moment, I am responsible for the administration of "We Love Hong Kong", being the convenor of the Consumption Coalition which forms part of the whole campaign. Although I do not thus derive any personal gains, I still think that it is still safer for me to make a declaration of interests beforehand.

Mr Howard YOUNG has told us in detail how he initiated "We Love Hong Kong". Actually, the main reason was that there was a sudden stagnancy, for practically no tourists came here during the "golden week". This scared the tourism industry, so a coalition was formed in the hope that the people of Hong Kong would not hide away in their home all the time any more. What Dr LAW Chi-kwong has said is certainly right. Everybody would spend money according to his own ability. Hong Kong people are very clever about things like this; they will not spend any money if they do not have the means. That will not happen to the people of Hong Kong, and everybody will spend money according to his means. The most important point is that at that time, there was a widespread panic, and no one dared to go out and spend any money, or everybody just wanted to spend money outside Hong Kong. In all fairness, the aim of "We Love Hong Kong" is not so much of asking everybody to spend money regardless of his ability; rather, it aims to restore people's confidence to go out for consumption, to live a normal life again, in the hope of revitalizing the economy and showing foreigners that we the people of Hong Kong have regained our confidence. This will produce positive effects both on our economy and on how foreigners look at Hong Kong. Foreigners will have a greater desire to come here.

One point I wish to add is that as a campaign initiated by the people themselves, the achievements of "We Love Hong Kong" have been quite admirable so far. In May, we already heard that many people tried to redeem air tickets. In this month alone, more than 28 000 air tickets with a total worth of \$35 million were redeemed. This was a very good result, bearing in mind that one could only redeem an air ticket after spending

\$1,000. So, as a matter of fact, the campaign has already boosted people's general consumption desire and confidence. This is undeniably a big booster to our tourism sector, and not only this, the campaign has also served as a "feel good" factor. I mean, the people of Hong Kong have thus felt better, instead of simply staying home all the time, feeling scared.

In June, in a bid to induce foreigners to visit Hong Kong or to organize tours to Hong Kong, the retail sector pooled its resources for the promotion of "We Love Hong Kong". As at today, there are more than 194 Award Merchants from various services sectors, and those from the retail sector are engaged in a wide range of businesses, including the sale of electrical appliances, telecommunications services and equipment, electronics products, fashion and ornaments, emporium goods, watches and jewellery, beauty products and cosmetics, Chinese medicine, ginseng, preserved deer horns, preserved seafood, home furniture, household goods, footwear and garments. All these merchants have come together with one heart to bring back vitality to our market conditions.

It is quite beyond our expectation that since the establishment of our website in May, there have been over 600 000 hits. I am sure that this is quite a very admirable achievement. I am sure that this was not wrong. Besides, people's responses have also been very favourable, because the largest number of telephone enquiries per day we have recorded is some 1 400. Frankly speaking, people's support has nothing to do with the offers or anything else. The only reason is their genuine intention in helping Hong Kong ease its general despondency and improving its appalling market conditions. Members may have heard all sorts of stories, such as the one that a restaurant may only have one table of customers, or even none at all, for the whole day.

We now hope that "We Love Hong Kong" can last through June. In July, the catering industry can take over and assume the administration until the end of the month. Many large-scale promotion functions will then be launched. Members have all learnt that the Government will allocate \$1 billion, and \$400 million of this amount will be allocated to the tourism sector for overseas promotion. I am sure Mr Howard YOUNG must be very delighted, and so too must be the various sectors of society, because visitors will keep pouring into Hong Kong. But I must say that there will be lots of work waiting for us to do.

I very much support Dr LAW Chi-kwong's amendment today. We have long since said that it is most important to give assurance to our visitors, to make them realize that their health and safety are adequately protected here. We need not have any worries in this respect, for we have in fact done a very good job, or have even carried the whole thing to excess. One day, a CCTV reporter told me that after getting off his plane, he did not hear any welcome message, but was instead told where to measure

his body temperature. I immediately told the airport that this was wrong. And, I told them that before broadcasting any warning messages, they must first say "Welcome to Hong Kong" to all visitors.

I am sure we will launch various publicity activities one by one in the days to come. I very much agree that we should do so, but why do I still want to move an amendment? Because apart from arousing the attention required, it is equally important to make corresponding arrangements in terms of manpower and clearance counters. Our aim should be to enable visitors to enter Hong Kong without spending too much time on all these formalities. That is why I want to move an amendment. Thank you, Madam President.