

The Editor
Letters to the Editor
The Globe and Mail
By Email: letters@globeandmail.com

Dear Editor,

I refer to your editorial "You're free to vote, if you vote our way" published on August 7, 2020.

The decision of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government to postpone the 2020 Legislative Council (LegCo) General Election is made on public health grounds, and to ensure that the elections are held in a fair and open manner.

The decision was made in view of the epidemic situation in Hong Kong which has been extremely severe since another outbreak in early July. The LegCo General Election is massive in scale. It involved 4.4 million voters, 70 seats, 615 polling stations, 34 000 electoral staff, dedicated central counting station and media centre. It will lead to huge infection risks associated with crowd gatherings and human interactions if voters cast their votes on the same day. In the light of the latest epidemic situation, the Electoral Affairs Commission wrote to the Chief Executive of HKSAR on July 28 expressing concerns over the public health risks of conducting the General Election.

The HKSAR Government attaches importance to protecting the constitutional right of Hong Kong residents to participate in elections. With the stringent social distancing measures in place, no meaningful electioneering activities could be conducted. Moreover, the strict boundary control measures make it virtually impossible for voters from the Mainland of China and overseas to return to cast their vote. If the election is held as scheduled, it will be difficult for the election to be a fair and open one.

In fact, many countries also postponed their elections due to the severe epidemic. For instance, to avoid massive gathering for the elections, the provincial government of New Brunswick passed the legislation in mid-March this year to postpone the municipal elections that were planned for May 2020 to not later than May 2021.

Postponing the LegCo General Election, held every four years, is a very difficult decision, but also a necessary one for suppressing COVID-19, safeguarding public safety and protecting public health, and ensuring elections are conducted openly and fairly.

Sincerely,
Emily Mo
Director
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