

1 Feb. 1989

# 30pc fewer candidates to contest seats

THERE has been a dramatic 30 per cent drop in the number of candidates standing for the March municipal council elections.

Only 54 political aspirants had signed up when the two-week nomination period closed yesterday, compared with 79 candidates who contested the last Urban and Regional council elections in 1986.

The biggest drop in candidates is in the Regional Council. Only 23 candidates are contesting 12 seats compared with 40 candidates in 1986.

In the Urban Council, only 31 political hopefuls are running for the 17 seats compared with 39 in the previous election.

The poor response means seven out of 27 seats have been returned unopposed.

Those returned unopposed are veteran Urban Councillor Mrs Elsie Tu, 75, of Kwun Tong West, Mr Pao Ping-wing of Kowloon City East, Mr Joseph Chan Yeuk-sut of Southern, Mr Chow Wai-keung of Central and Western, Mr Kwong Ping-yau of Islands, Mr Wong Shui-sang of Sai Kung, and a budding liberal, Mr Chow



Reports by ANDY HO, JOHN TANG and KENNETH KO.

Yick-hay of Kwai Chung East.

The smaller field of candidates comes amid suggestions that the public is losing interest in the municipal councils which are responsible for public hygiene, hawk control and environmental improvement.

There is an average of two candidates contesting every seat. The Government had expected an average of three candidates. The ratio was 2½ candidates to each seat in the last poll.

Defending the drop, Deputy Chief Secretary Mr John Chan Cho-chak said it was only noticeable in the Regional Council constituencies and not in the Urban Council constituencies.

Mr Chan said: "It could be due to a number of reasons. One possible reason is

that the number of candidates was very high in the Regional Council election in 1986 because it was new to Hongkong.

"The number has dropped naturally now that it is no longer new. Moreover, some people may have decided not to run for election after assessing their chances of success."

Refuting suggestions it indicated a lack of public interest due to the poor political clout of both bodies, Mr Chan said the councils' functions had remained unchanged since 1986.

"The two councils have executive power in various municipal activities, and they have been seen as a ladder for councillors to climb up to the Legislative Council," Mr Chan said.

Chairman of the Urban Council, Mr Gerry Forsgate, said the voter turnout was a more accurate gauge of public interest in the two councils.

Political commentator Mr Joseph Cheng, however, said the poor response was the result of political apathy.

Mr Cheng, a senior lecturer of the Department of Government and Public Administration at the Chinese University, said the number of candidates dropped because feuding political

camp had compromised on their choice of candidates to prevent internal clashes.

Echoing his view, another Chinese University lecturer, Dr Stephen Tang Lung-wai, said many rural leaders had decided to withdraw from the Regional Council constituencies in the wake of defeats in the district board polls last March.

Many political leaders also refrained from joining the fray after deciding the municipal council elections were not necessarily a dress rehearsal for the Legco direct election in 1991, he said.

Dr Tang said he expected the voter turnout to drop to between 22 and 23 per cent of the 1.6 million registered voters.

## Middle-aged males dominate poll

MOST of the candidates in this year's election are middle-aged, male businessmen and professionals.

Nearly half, or 26, are also incumbent members of the territory's 19 district boards.

The March election, like the last one in 1986, will be dominated by men. Only eight of the 54 hopefuls are women. Only seven of the 79 candidates in the last election were female.

As many as a third of the aspirants are in business or commerce-related fields.

Eight nominees are social workers, while an equal number are either school principals or teachers. Another seven are legal professionals and two are full-time district board members.

The remaining 12 include a housewife, a herbalist, a clergyman and two graduate students.

The Regional Council has attracted younger candidates than the Urban Council. The average age of the 31 candidates contesting the urban constituencies is 46, or nine years older than their 23 counterparts in the New Territories.

The overall average age of all 54 candidates stands at 42.

The youngest is Miss Carman Chan Ka-mun, 25, who is contesting the Kwai Chung West and Tsing Yi seat.

Veteran incumbent Urban Council vice-chairman Mrs Elsie Tu, 75, returned unopposed in Kwun Tong West, is the oldest of the candidates.

Eighteen other sitting councillors are seeking re-election, while 29 are newcomers to the scene. Another six had been defeated in the 1986 elections.

The most keenly contested constituencies are Shau Kei Wan, Shamshuipo East, Yau Tsim, Sha Tin East, Yuen Long, and Wong Tai Sin South and North. Three candidates are contesting each of the seats allotted to these seven constituencies.

The latest candidates to submit their nomination papers before yesterday's deadline were Mr Tony Lock of Sha Tin East, Mr Cheng Chun-ping of Tai Po and Mrs Tse Ling Suk-yin.

Polling is scheduled for March 9.

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**Election candidates**

The following is the full list of candidates for the municipal council elections:

**REGIONAL COUNCIL****Islands District**

Kwong Ping-yau, 68, businessman (unopposed). \*

**Kwai Chung East**

Chow Yick-hay, 30, university employee (unopposed).

**Kwai Chung West and Tsing Yi**

James Wong Man-tai, 33, social worker. \*  
Ms Carmen Chan Ka-mun, 25, company director.

**North District**

Cheung Hon-chung, 30, company director.  
Cheung Kan-kwai, 44, businessman.

**Sai Kung**

Wong Shui-sang, 42, businessman (unopposed). \*

**Sha Tin East**

Tony Kan Chung-nin, 38, lawyer.  
Stanley Sum Yiu-cho, 38, company manager.  
Tony Lock, 35, management consultant.

**Sha Tin West**

Rev Fung Chi-wood, 32, clergyman.  
Lau Kong-wah, 31, student. \*

**Tai Po**

Michael Lai Kam-cheung, 43, social worker. \*  
Cheng Chun-ping, 41, company director.

**Tsuen Wan**

Albert Chan Wai-yip, 33, social worker. \*  
Yeung Fuk-kwong, 36, lawyer.

**Tuen Mun East**

Almon Poon Chin-hung, 32, lawyer.  
Ms Choi Cheung Yuet-lan, 31, District Board member.

**Tuen Mun West**

Ng Ming-yum, 32, teacher. \*  
Wong Kin-hong, 40, District Board member.

**Yuen Long**

Chung Kwai-ping, 33, social worker.  
Ngan Kam-chuen, 41, bank manager.  
Cheng Mui-tin, 52, businessman.

**URBAN COUNCIL****Central and Western**

Chow Wai-keung, 31, social worker (unopposed). \*

**Kowloon City East**

Pao Ping-wing, 40, social worker (unopposed). \*

**Kowloon City West**

Peter Chan Chi-kwan, 52, lawyer. \*  
Chiang Sai-cheong, 33, educationalist.

**Kwun Tong East**

Lam Chak-piu, 48, worker. \*  
Wong Ping-kuen, 45, educator.

**Kwun Tong West**

Mrs Elsie Tu, 75, school supervisor (unopposed). \*

**Mongkok**

Wong Yuen-wei, 59, headmaster.  
Chan Kwok-ming, 41, headmaster.

**North Point**

Man Sai-cheong, 44, lawyer. \*  
Wong Tak-lun, 43, PR officer.

**Shamshuipo East**

Frederick Fung Kin-kee, 35, graduate student. \*

Boton Li Yau-wai, 32, meter reader.  
Ms Tse Ling Shuk-yin, 49, tutor.

**Shamshuipo West**

Ma Lee-wo, 28, social worker.  
Wong Ping-hon, 69, businessman.

**Shau Kei Wan**

Chiu Kin-man, 33, project manager.  
Brook Bernacchi, 67, barrister.  
Ms Wong Ching, 59, businessman.

**Southern**

Joseph Chan Yeuk-sut, 52, headmaster (unopposed). \*

**Wan Chai**

Wong Hon-ching, 36, cost engineer.  
Hilton Cheong-leen, 66, company director. \*

**Wong Tai Sin North**

Ng Ngok-shing, 42, social worker.  
Kan chi-ho, 42, aircraft technician.  
Ms Yeung Lai-yin, 58, headmaster.

**Wong Tai Sin South**

Ms Fok Pui-yea, 38, housewife. \*  
Mok Ying-fan, 38, herbalist.  
Yeung Chiu-ming, 41, PR manager.

**Yau Tsim District**

Wong Kwok-tung, 39, lawyer  
Ms Woo Yan-yue, 47, dancing instructor.  
Gary Ahuja, 45, businessman.

(\* denotes incumbent)