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\$100m bonus for cable TV

THE granting of Hongkong's first cable television network operator the same status as a public utility could cost the Government tens of millions of dollars annually in lost revenue.

Tuesday's decision by the Executive Council to exempt the cable television licensee from paying fees for using Government land to lay its cable network would mean a

saving of \$100 million a year to the cable television operator.

The Executive Council said the cable television licensee would be afforded the same privileges as public utilities.

It said this decision would lead to a more viable operation for the successful bidder.

Hutchison CableVision and Hongkong Cable Communications, the two lead-

ing contenders in the bid to run the territory's first cable television network, praised the Government's decision but said it had been expected.

A Government spokesman said yesterday that based on a standard charge of \$6 a year for every metre of cable laid, the annual revenue to the Government when the full network was deployed would have been about \$100 million.