

THE SENIOR NON-EXPATRIATE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION (SNEOA)

Room G13, East Wing, Central Government Offices
Lower Albrt Road, Central
Hong Kong

GPO BOX 1007
Tel 2522 4267
Fax 2523 3319

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Your ref.

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Mr. Joseph W.P. Wong
Secretary for the Civil Service
Central Government Offices
West Wing
Lower Albert Road
Hong Kong

Dear

Re-Engineering of the Architectural Services Department

The SNEOA has recently discussed the ArchSD Re-engineering Plan with the staff of the Architectural Services Department. We have been following quite closely the developments of this matter because firstly ArchSD employs a large number of professional officers who are our members, and secondly, how the Administration handles this matter is a direct reflection of its attitude towards all service-wide reforms, outsourcing and down-sizing plans in the pipeline.

We are very concerned that the Administration presupposes that outsourcing is a better alternative to retaining civil servants on their jobs. This is not true for the majority of the civil service in Hong Kong. This is certainly not true for ArchSD. When Pricewaterhouse Coopers, the Administration's own consultant, published a report proving that it was more cost effective for ArchSD projects to be undertaken in-house, the Administration chose to sweep aside the report. When the LegCo Joint Panel unanimously filed a request on 22 February 2002 for the outsourcing plan to be shelved pending full consultation with ArchSD staff, the Administration chose to ignore the request.

This destroys the Administration's promise to the public and the civil servants that it is prepared to follow objective surveys and standards in dealing with civil service matters and likewise, the partnership approach that the Administration has been advocating.

So far, the Administration has been evasive about ArchSD staff's and LegCo councilors' request for basic information on cost-effectiveness of the outsourcing proposal. It has offered no plan for dealing with the large surplus of staff that is bound to arise from the very aggressive outsourcing plan. In view of the clear findings in Pricewaterhouse Coopers' report, and what were put before the LegCo Joint Panel on 22 February 2002, we see no justification whatsoever for increasing the level of

outsourcing at ArchSD. Even if any change is justified, a proper plan should be engineered around the existing and future ArchSD staffing level with complete openness, fairness and transparency.

The Administration owes the public an explanation as to why it should spend more money, as evident in Pricewaterhouse Coopers's report, in turning ArchSD's work over to the private sector. It owes the staff a clear plan for their job security and future, much less the rewards that the staff deserved for their loyalty and proven good work at ArchSD in all the past years.

I do not think it serves the Administration any good by simply turning a deaf ear to the LegCo Joint Panel, which had spent more than two hours deliberating the issue before filing a unanimous request on 22 February 2002 for shelving the outsourcing plan. I should be grateful if you would personally look into the matter and correct forthwith the mistake that has seriously undermined the Administration's credibility and destroyed its relationship with the civil servants before the matter is to be escalated further.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

(Pang Tat-choi, Paul)
Chairman, Senior Non-Expatriate
Officers' Association

Encl. – Chinese translation of the letter

c.c. The Hon. Tam Yiu-chung, Chairman, LegCo Panel on Public Service
Secretary and Members of LegCo Panel on Public Service
Secretary and Members of LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works
Mr. C. Sankey, Head, Efficiency Unit
Mr. S.S. Lee, Secretary for Works
Mr. S.H. Pau, Director of Architectural Services
Staff Associations and Representatives, Architectural Services Department