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**By Fax (2840 0569)**  
9 April 2008

Mr John TSANG Chun Wah, JP  
Financial Secretary  
5/F, Main Wing  
Central Government Offices  
Lower Albert Road  
Central  
Hong Kong

Dear Mr TSANG,

**Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of  
Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment  
Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs**

**Education for non-Chinese-speaking children  
with special educational needs**

I write on behalf of the Subcommittee concerning the provision of education for non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) children with special educational needs (SEN).

The Subcommittee received the views of 13 organizations and six individuals on the subject at its meeting on 3 April 2008. These organizations and individuals have pointed out that the special educational needs of Chinese-speaking children are catered for through 62 aided special schools and 641 special education classes in the mainstream schools. However, the only Government subvented English-speaking school which admits NCS children with SEN is The Jockey Club Sarah Roe School with 60 places operated by The English Schools Foundation (ESF). ESF also provides 126 places in the learning support classes in its mainstream schools. Currently, 103 children are on the waiting list for the limited places in ESF's learning support classes and The Jockey Club Sarah Roe School. The average waiting time is 24 to 36 months. Altogether, the subvented school places available to NCS children with SEN are less than 200. As independent international schools are reluctant to admit NCS children with SEN on resources consideration, many NCS children with SEN are given no choice but to enrol in public sector mainstream schools adopting Chinese as the medium of instruction. These children are struggling hard to learn in a language that is not conducive to the realization of their full potential.

Members are gravely concerned about the inadequate provision of education opportunities for NCS children with SEN to learn in English or their mother-tongue. Apparently, there is a lack of parity between the services provided for Chinese speaking and NCS children with SEN. NCS children with SEN are in dire need of equal opportunities in education to maximize their chances in life. Members are given to understand that some expatriates have left Hong Kong solely because of the lack of appropriate education services for their children with SEN. Members consider that without the provision of sufficient and affordable education services for NCS children with SEN, Hong Kong can hardly attract or retain talents from all over the world to maintain its competitiveness.

Members are of the view that the responsibility for providing education for NCS children with SEN falls squarely on the Administration. Increased funding to ESF to enable its provision of more learning support classes in its mainstream schools and more places in The Jockey Club Sarah Roe School is urgently needed. The provision of appropriate Government support for independent international schools is necessary to encourage their sharing of the responsibility for providing education for NCS children with SEN. Members call on the Administration to critically and expeditiously review its policy on the provision of education for NCS children with SEN and the allocation of resources for that purpose. They have asked me to convey to you their requests for an increase of resources for the provision of equal opportunities in education for NCS children with SEN and a review of the Government policy in that regard.

As the Subcommittee is winding up its work, I should be grateful for your response **by the end of April 2008**.

Yours sincerely,

(Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung)  
Chairman of Subcommittee

c.c. Secretary for Education  
Secretary for Labour and Welfare