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Dear Sir/Madam,

Secondary School Provision in South Lantau

Document references are to the Education Bureau (EDB)'s discussion paper for 14 February 2011 (ref LC Paper CB (2) 974/10-11(03))

As a long term resident of Lantau from the non-Chinese community, a parent and a Hong Kong taxpayer, I was dismayed to learn that the Government appears not to have included all non-Chinese children in its assessment of who might attend a reopened secondary school in Mui Wo.

- 1) Government policy as stated in the above-named document is “to provide sufficient public sector places for all eligible school-age children” (para. 2). But it then states that “The Education Department does not have the figure for school-age children in South Lantau who have not been enrolled in schools” (para. 12). By its own admission, therefore, the figures on which it is basing a decision critical to the South Lantau community are incomplete. **No allowance is made for the South Lantau children who have to travel each day to international schools on Hong Kong Island and Discovery Bay.**
- 2) The Government commits itself to “closely monitor the demand and supply of school places in the Islands District to ensure that there is an adequate provision of public sector school places” (para 12). But:
 - a. **External evidence shows non-Chinese children are not adequately catered for and that this will undermine Hong Kong’s business competitiveness.** Both yesterday and today, the **Italian Chamber of Commerce** issued circulars warning of serious difficulties in procuring international school places. They implied that those relocating to Hong Kong with children should reconsider coming to Hong Kong. Please refer to the attachment where the second circular states:” We have also learned of cases where families with young kids have already left Hong Kong because of the uncertainty surrounding the subject...It looks like the situation in the Discovery Bay area is especially difficult”.
 - b. **The international schools in Tung Chung and Discovery Bay are full** and have extremely long waiting lists. Discovery College does not have a smaller number of secondary students due to lack of demand but because it is a new school being built up from a primary base.
 - c. **International school fees and associated costs are on an upward trend and each year, more non-Chinese children risk being excluded from ESF schools,** (traditionally the lower-cost option) with the introduction of hefty debentures and minimal concessions to families with two or more children. Is the EDB aware, for instance, that Discovery College stipulates that every child from P6 and above must purchase an Apple Mac laptop computer and specified software at a cost of around HKD13,000 with no cheaper alternatives permitted?

3) The Education Bureau has been quoted as stating in an earlier meeting that the population of international schools and the expatriate population in general are too transient to be worth taking into consideration. This not only contradicts its own statement above; it ignores the fact that **most expatriates moving to South Lantau do so because they want to put down roots and be part of a real community**. The government has not, I believe, analysed how many expatriates in South Lantau hold permanent residence but it is likely to be a high proportion. The EDB should be aware, moreover, that an early condition for Discovery College was that it should aim to have 70% of permanent residents among its parent body – hardly a sign of transience in this international school.

I believe that the EDB should conduct a fresh and transparent assessment of the true educational needs of South Lantau.

I would conclude with a reminder that last March on his visit to Hong Kong, no less a person than Premier Wen Jiabao called on the Hong Kong government to “enhance education” as a step to resolving what he saw as the “deep-rooted conflicts” in our society. Education is not a just numbers game: the children of South Lantau deserve equal opportunities and they have their part to play in the future of Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,



Amanda Whitmore Snow

Attached: letter from the Italian Chamber of Commerce (1 page)

From: ICC [mailto:icc@icc.org.hk]
Sent: Friday, February 11, 2011 4:49 PM
To: Amanda Whitmore Snow
Subject: ICC: International Schools Support



Dear Members and Friends of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong and Macao,

I refer to my message of February 9, 2011 on the above matter. We have in the meantime received confirmation of a large number of cases where Italian families have not been able to secure school places for their children for the school year starting in the summer of 2011. We have also learned of cases where families with young kids have already left Hong Kong because of the uncertainty surrounding the subject.

We are at the moment evaluating the best possible way to tackle the issue. It looks like the situation in the Discovery Bay area is especially difficult.

One interesting point I would like to make is that, in particular for families leaving on the Hong Kong island, we have been confirmed by the Chairman of the Korean Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong that the International Section of the Korean International School still has a few places available for Primary School kids. The school is in the Quarry Bay area, and enjoys splendid facilities. It might be worth sending an e-mail to the Principal of the English Section (please find here below the school website)
http://www.kis.edu.hk/english/01_english/01_01_about_kis/01_01_01_welcome.htm

Rest re-assured that, in co-operation with the Italian Consulate General, we shall do our best to help the families in need.

Best regards,
Fabio De Rosa, President

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