

Living Island Movement deputation to Panel on Education

14 February 2011

Living Islands Movement is a South Lantau based community organisation that promotes sustainable islands development. We are concerned with creating and maintaining a culturally rich and dynamic community and we work with Lantau residents and government departments to achieve this.

We would like to outline the economic and social case for reopening the MuiWo school:

1. In recent years, we have witnessed a surge of new residents moving to South Lantau, from both the Chinese and non-Chinese communities. They are attracted by the opportunity for a healthier rural life-style at affordable housing prices. The alternative for many is to move to Singapore or Shanghai, thus contributing to the much publicised “brain drain” away from the air pollution and sky-high property prices of Hong Kong’s urban areas.

But, providing the infrastructure to meet the needs of these people, particularly families with young children, is essential to maintaining the momentum, especially in MuiWo. We expect that the much delayed MuiWo Facelift plan will be an important part of this regeneration, but a school must be at the heart of the drive, as it is any vibrant society. We ask the government to recognize and act on this new reality. Failure to do so would be incompatible with Hong Kong’s status as Asia’s world city.

2. We are also observing an increasing commitment to Lantau from the non-Chinese community. A large number of non-Chinese people living on Lantau are long-term residents - Lantau is our permanent home, and we are a voting constituency. The passion and determination that our members exert to create and maintain a culturally rich and dynamic community is testimony to our commitment to Lantau and Hong Kong. It is highly misleading to suggest that we are temporary, short-term transients. And it is discriminatory to ignore the educational needs of the large number of non-Chinese children on Lantau. Indeed, such behaviour could act as a catalyst in making Shanghai or Singapore more attractive options for people like us to choose as their home.
3. Living Islands Movement is at the forefront of fostering cultural and social integration between the Chinese and non-Chinese community in South Lantau. In the last year, we have seen real progress in this area, with a number of cross-cultural initiatives. A school for both Chinese and non-Chinese students would add a further dynamic in promoting this integration, and would produce a healthy and vibrant community of young people who will hopefully become tomorrow’s leaders of our society.

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council and Legislative Council Panel on Education, the reopening of the MuiWo School is a unique opportunity for you to demonstrate your commitment to the regeneration of South Lantau, your belief in fostering a harmonious, multi-cultural community and your investment in preserving Hong Kong as Asia's prime hub for international business.