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Subject: Lantau Residents Demand the Re-opening of the Mui Wo SDSS School

From: Nada Carreiro Holkova

To: Mr. Suen Ming-Yeung, Secretary for Education
c.c. Mr. Tsang Yam-Kuen, Chief Executive,
Ms. Ho Sau Lan, Chairperson of Education Panel, Legislative Council

***** Lantau Residents Demand the Re-opening of the Mui Wo SDSS School *****

I wish to express my strong support for residents of Mui Wo and South Lantau to have the New Territories Heung Yee Kuk Southern District Secondary School (SDSS) re-opened for their children's education. I support their cause of a local school for local students.

Some South Lantau students currently spend up to 4 hours a day travelling to school. Costs aside, this commuting time undermines personal development and family life, and puts students at a major disadvantage educationally.

Demand currently exceeds supply in primary, secondary, government-subsidized and private international education in Lantau: there is proof that the island has adequate student demand to fill SDSS, especially taking into account future plans for significant residential development in Mui Wo and South Lantau.

It appears that the current LegCo debate is reacting to the heat generated by the anti-drug issue and not focusing on clear analysis of what should be the best use of a large school in the centre of a fast-growing community. The debate neglects the educational needs of South Lantau.

There has been a complete lack of due process in recent decision making about the SDSS building and the government has failed to take into account all relevant considerations in their haste to relocate Zheng Sheng College to Mui Wo:

1. South Lantau students have this one and only school, and the residents in this district have never given up their priority entitlement to the use of the school to address local needs.
2. The government has never formally responded to the proposals to re-open SDSS submitted by various educational bodies. This is gross administrative misconduct and should not be excused in any circumstances.
3. If the Government insists on pushing through its own agenda, it will seriously infringe the right of South Lantau students to local school education.
4. The government has an overriding obligation to solve the problem of lack of education provision arising from the closure of SDSS instead of creating more community problems for Mui Wo residents while turning a deaf ear to existing concerns.

Parents of South Lantau have made at least four requests to re-open (or retain) SDSS since 2006, pre-dating its closure in 2007. I hereby reiterate my full support for the call that the SDSS should serve the educational needs of the children of South Lantau.

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