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Clerk to Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting
Legislative Council Secretariat
3/F Citibank Tower
Central
Hong Kong

By Post & Email: mleung@legco.gov.hk

Dear Sir,

RTHK Programme Advisory Panel Focus Group Meeting

Please accept my apologies for not being able to be with you at Legco on Friday 29 June. We have Graduation so my Academy duties have necessarily to take precedence.

I welcome the opportunity to comment on RTHK, its public service broadcasting role and future in Hong Kong, and enhancement of its services to the public. What follows is a revised version of an earlier submission to the Review, made in April 2006.

Firstly, I should like to affirm strong support for the values of public service broadcasting for Hong Kong, for the role RTHK serves in terms of its high-quality programmes, and in promoting the core values of a civil, high quality of life, society.

I would endorse also the recently proposed measures to strengthen its role as Hong Kong's public broadcaster by definition, through its accountability and governance; by stability of funding, unfettered commercially or politically; and by strategizing for a digitized and increasingly fast-paced cultural milieu and international media landscape.

Public scrutiny, political and societal changes have meant there is now greater need to reassert the centrality of the arts and broadcasting media to

everyday experience. Whether or not the policies of arts culture and media have become 'pragmatic politics of justification, RTHK needs to consider its future role and the way in which its resources add value to peoples' lives and to Hong Kong as a whole. Transparency and openness are key. But so too is advocacy. Such a position prompts the need to advocate arts, culture and broadcasting media as central parts of people's lives.

Advocacy *per se* is a central issue. If the arts and broadcasting media really do matter to us, there is still the uncomfortable conundrum of why we need to advocate their centrality to a contemporary society and to most participants in that society.

Pressures of commercialization are substantial. The rationale for a not-commercially driven service, in a strongly commercially driven media environment, is vital. Quality and content are key. An RTHK driven by content informed by context. The Rethian model of the BBC might well be inappropriate for today's contemporary society and digital landscape but it was one where quality was a moral imperative.

As media think-thank Cordelia, says, "This is the landscape we face; the challenge is to build a new way of educating, informing and entertaining that can create a Rethian act for the 21st century."

Pressures of media moguls and transnational conglomerates make it imperative that there are impartial trusted voices for the millions of Hong Kong, Mainland, and overseas people who depend upon them daily.

There is a continuing role for RTHK in terms of its promotion of the media as a creative industry, within the unique creative culture and diverse society of Hong Kong. That role may not in itself require dismantling of the structure, rather a clear view of underlying concerns, receptivity to change, transformation and transparency of public provision.

RTHK must be able to discharge the responsibilities of its remit if it is to continue to be a kite mark of the quality and distinctiveness of Hong Kong cultural, artistic life; a life informed by intelligent programming, an alert and switched-on media, and by intelligent, thoughtful, high quality programming.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Kevin Thompson
Director