



Chairman and Members
Panel on Development
The Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong.

May 22, 2008

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 SWIRE PROPERTIES

Dear Chairman and Panel Members,

Re: Provision of Public Facilities in Private Development

Shakespeare4All is a registered charity that promotes fluency in English and enhances self confidence in students through adapted Shakespearean drama for Primary to Junior Secondary students.

It has come to our attention in recent press coverage that there is considerable debate on the use of “public” space on private development. Swire Properties is our Founding Sponsor and this letter has not been written at their behest.

Since our establishment in 2003, we have had support from our Founding Sponsor in many senses of the word, both in partial funding and pro bono in-kind support. Each year, they have also assisted us in running introductory seminars at their Pacific Place venue gratis. Our students have also had the opportunity to be presented in performance at Cityplaza.

At their Quarry Bay site in Taikoo Place, while we have not performed there, it is the home to a diverse range of high quality artwork. These artworks are there for public enjoyment and for education purpose. (Swire also annually sponsors the Viva Vivace! Chinese Radio Drama



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Competition in which participating school teams are tutored on the artworks and their significance and which are then used in inspiring young writers to creatively create their scripts).

A property developer like Swire does not only make contributions to one organisation like ours - and in more ways than simply through the provision of space - they are probably the most visible corporate contributor to public art in Hong Kong in both the performing and visual arts.

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As one of the many arts groups in Hong Kong who are part and parcel of a concerted effort to promote Hong Kong's art and culture as Asia's World City and the region's cultural hub, we are seriously concerned about any across-the-board rules and regulations that might in the end undermine past and hamper present and future artistic contributions.

As one of the recipients of the Venue Partnership Scheme, we would like to inform Members that the Government, through the Home Affairs Bureau and the Leisure & Cultural Services Department, expects arts groups to initiate partnerships with corporations. We are expected to cultivate non-Government sponsorship and support to alleviate the pressures on the public purse. In this Scheme, and generally for all subvented arts in Hong Kong, groups are asked to develop external corporate relationships. Many arts organisations currently seek support of one kind or another from property developers. It does, therefore, seem to be an act of miscalculation and retrogression if one Government Bureau decides to undermine relationships - intentionally or otherwise -- between corporations (developers) and the arts community, while another Bureau puts forward proposals and schemes to wean artists from public funding and to encourage greater financial independence. Sending mixed signals to the public is possibly one of the most detrimental



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strategies. Hong Kong will look better if there is inter-Bureau co-ordination.

In the Panel's deliberation on the captioned item, may we urge you to seriously consider each step to balance diverse interests for the benefit of Hong Kong as an international city. A small Government should also be a flexible Government. The quality of leadership comes not through one hard-nose policy but careful contemplation of individual and/or categories of cases.

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Yours truly,

Lynn Yau
Chief Administrator/Producer