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8 December 2009

Clerk to Panel on Security
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
(Attn: Mr Raymond Lam)

Dear Mr Lam,

Panel on Security
Follow-up to meeting on 3 November 2009

At the meeting of the Panel on Security on 3 November 2009, Members considered LC Paper No. CB(2)146/09-10(03) and requested the Administration to provide the following information after the meeting -

- (a) the specific performance targets expected of the person who would be holding the proposed new Administrative Office Staff Grade C (AOSGC) post; and
- (b) a written response explaining the reasons behind the decision of advancing the voluntary trial scheme on school drug testing and deferring the public consultation exercise on the proposal to carry out compulsory drug testing in Hong Kong.

The information is provided below.

Performance targets expected of the holder of the proposed AOSGC post

The proposed supernumerary AOSGC post, to be designated as Principal Assistant Secretary (Narcotics) Special Duties (PAS(N)SD), will underpin the Commissioner for Narcotics. The post-holder will focus on anti-drug work relating to drug testing, treatment and rehabilitation. They will all involve extensive and intricate planning, consultation and coordination work which needs to be undertaken by a dedicated officer at the directorate level. The performance targets expected to be delivered by PAS(N)SD during the three-year period are set out in **Annex A**.

Reasons for changing timetables of trial scheme on school drug testing and public consultation exercise on compulsory drug testing

The number of reported young drug abusers below the age of 21 saw a significant rise of 57% in the past four years, from 2 186 to 3 430. Indeed the percentage of young drug abusers (below 21) in the entire drug abuse population rose from 14% in 2003 to 24% in 2008. We have seen an even worsening situation in 2009.

Statistics for the first half of 2009 compared with the same period in 2008 show that the problem of drug abuse among young people has continued to worsen –

- school as a locality of drug abuse by those aged below 21 saw a sharp increase of 135%;
- the reported number of student drug abusers saw a rise of 12% to 639¹;
- the reported number of drug abusers below 21 increased by 3.3% to 2 175;

¹ According to the 2004 results of a periodic survey of drug use among students, about 3.4% (i.e. 17 300) of the secondary students had abused drugs in their lifetime, including some 0.8% (i.e. 4 300) who had abused drugs in the 30 days prior to the survey. The current round of the survey is underway and the results will be available in early 2010. Given the rapidly worsening trend of drug abuse among youngsters since 2004, it is likely that we will see a more worrying situation.

- the number of newly reported female abusers under 21 saw a sharp increase of 19.3% to 488;
- the number of newly reported drug abusers aged below 16 increased by 20.8% to 401; and
- the number of youngsters arrested for major drug offences increased by 8.2% to 617.

Surveys conducted by various organisations and parties on the youth drug abuse problem also reflected the deteriorating trend. For example, a survey done by two residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centres revealed that the youngsters were distributed across over 100 schools in Hong Kong, and that half of them had abused drugs at school. The deteriorating problem was corroborated by a number of drug abuse incidents attracting widespread concerns. A majority of them involved young students. A media summary of these incidents is at **Annex B**.

In response, different quarters of the community have been urging the Administration over the past months since early 2009 to speed up and enhance efforts to curb the proliferation of drug abuse among students. Both parent and teacher associations have realised the seriousness of the problem and are looking to the Administration for enhanced measures and support. Frontline anti-drug workers have also reiterated their concerns about the growing problem and the urgent need for provision of more drug treatment and support services for young drug abusers.

Against the above background, it is incumbent upon the Administration to further reinvigorate efforts to tackle the youth drug problem on all fronts.

On voluntary school-based drug testing, the original plan was to carry out a research study in 2009-10 to examine the pertinent issues and conduct a pilot scheme in five schools in 2010-11. We have critically reviewed the priorities and come to the view that school-based drug testing should be tried out as soon as possible.

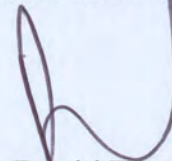
As regards compulsory drug testing, the original plan was to first formulate a concrete scheme involving stakeholders within and outside the Government and then launch a formal public consultation exercise with details set out in a public consultation paper before end 2009. The consultation exercise will be a challenge, given the likely controversies over human rights and privacy issues

versus the need to protect the interests and welfare of the younger generation and the fabric of society and the likely diverse views of different stakeholders in the community.

This consultation plan, however, has to be adjusted given the expedited voluntary school drug testing trial scheme in Tai Po which is due to be launched in December 2009. Starting a public consultation exercise on a compulsory scheme at the same time as the voluntary school trial scheme may cause confusion in the minds of the public.

It is therefore necessary for ND to review and consolidate its internal resources, and map out the strategy ahead. Our current plan is to engage stakeholders in discussions on the compulsory scheme to address the complex legal, human rights, enforcement and other issues involved, and to launch a public consultation exercise in 2010. Over 100 consultation meetings are expected to be held. Depending on public views, we intend to embark on a legislative exercise in 2011-12.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'David Wong', written in a cursive style.

(David Wong)

for Secretary for Security

**Specific Performance Targets of the
Holder of the Proposed Supernumerary Post of
Principal Assistant Secretary (Narcotics) Special Duties
Effective from 17 February 2010**

- Completion of a pilot scheme on school drug testing in Tai Po District and an evaluation research of the scheme, followed by a review and refinement of the scheme. To roll out school drug testing to all secondary schools by phases.
- Conducting research and formulation of a proposal on compulsory drug testing, conducting wide public consultation and, subject to public views, taking the package through the legislative process.
- Introduction of hair testing service in Hong Kong, and transferring the technology to industry for general community use.
- Encouragement of new and effective modes of treatment and rehabilitation to meet the needs of drug abusers. Selection and implementation of suitable proposals.
- Enhancement of a cross-sector and integrated approach among schools, Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers, Substance Abuse Clinics and Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres (DTRCs) to ensure a continuum of services and more effective service provision from prevention, identification, counselling, treatment to rehabilitation.
- Assisting existing DTRCs running under Certificates of Exemption to upgrade their services to the standards required under the Drug Dependent Persons Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres (Licensing) Ordinance. This includes in-situ upgrading or relocation to new sites and premises, conducting local consultation, etc.
- Working with the Education Bureau to improve the provision of education in residential treatment and rehabilitation centres for school-aged youngsters.
- Completion of a pilot scheme in selected magistracies by providing more focused, structured and intensive treatment programmes under close supervision of Probation Officers to enhance probation services for convicted drug offenders and evaluation of results to decide on the way forward.

**Media Summary of Incidents of Drug Abuse
Attracting Widespread Public Concern since
Publication of the Report of
Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse on
11 November 2008**

Date	Media Summary
Nov 14, 2008	Ten youngsters aged 15 to 21 were arrested for possession of dangerous drugs in a flat in Fu Tai Estate, Tuen Mun in which 60 grams of ketamine were seized. It was suspected that a drug party was held in the flat.
Dec 12, 2008	Ten Form 4 students of a secondary school in Tsz Wan Shan who were suspected to have taken drugs felt unwell in school. Of them, two boys aged 15 and 16 were detained for enquiries by Police.
Feb 11, 2009	The hands of a 17-year-old man were seriously injured after he took ketamine and manufactured a bomb at his flat in Tin Yiu Estate, Tin Shui Wai.
Feb 27, 2009	Five girls aged 13 to 14 were arrested for taking ketamine in a secondary school in Sheung Shui. They felt unwell after taking the drug. Another two 15-year-old boys were arrested for trafficking in dangerous drugs.
Mar 3, 2009	Two artistes were arrested for possession of dangerous drugs in Japan. One was detained until Mar 28 and another was charged with possession of dangerous drugs by the Japanese authorities.
Apr 30, 2009	An 18-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman chopped each other after taking ice in a unit in Yau Oi Estate, Tuen Mun. The woman later died and the man was seriously injured and in a critical condition.
Jun 2, 2009	Four students from a school on Hong Kong Island were found dazed after taking ketamine in the campus at lunchtime. The school has contacted the police liaison officer, but no formal report was made since no drugs were found on the girls and they did not become ill. The four students were suspended from schooling for two weeks and were given demerits.

/Jun 4

Date	Media Summary
Jun 4, 2009	Three students from a secondary school in Yuen Long were found unconscious in a park after taking ketamine. A schoolmate was arrested for alleged sale of drugs to them.
Jun 6, 2009	Three young girls were found dazed at Hong Kong Gold Coast, Tuen Mun. One of them was charged with drug possession and sent to a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre.
Jun 17, 2009	A Form 1 student from a school in Tin Shui Wai was found collapsed on the rooftop of a carpark in Tuen Mun after abusing ketamine. Three more students from the school were arrested on suspicion of using or selling drugs.
Jul 4, 2009	119 Hong Kong people were arrested in two entertainment venues in Shenzhen for taking drugs. They were detained after they had failed in drug testing. They were released on July 20 after 15 days of administrative detention.
Oct 6, 2009	Three teenage boys were arrested after taking ketamine and being found in a dazed stage in Tsuen Fung Centre, Tsuen Wan. Two of them came from a secondary school in Kwai Chung.