



# CONCERNED PARENTS GROUP

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**To the Education Panel**  
**Att: Ms Starry Lee, Chair**

21 June 2011

Dear Ms Lee,

The ESF Board of Governors has proposed that school fees for the 2011-2012 school year be raised by up to 3.3%. I understand that the proposed fee increase has not yet been approved by the Education Bureau, and I have been informed that you, as Chair of Legco's Education Panel, will be involved in deciding whether ESF's application to raise the school fees should be approved. I would be very grateful if you would share the content of this letter with other members of the Education Panel.

I am the Spokesman for the ESF Concerned Parents Group (see more about our work at <http://www.esfconcernedparents.net/>), and for the past three years, we have urged the senior management of the ESF to stop the fee hikes and identify other means for generating revenue for the organization. Unfortunately, they don't listen to parents' views, so we see it as a necessary step to communicate directly with EdB and members of Legco's Education Panel and try to convince them that the constant fee hikes and unjustified and need to be stopped.

More than 1,000 ESF parents have supported our most recent anti-fee-rise campaign (initiated in May 2010), and on behalf of these parents, I urge you and your colleagues on the Education Panel not to approve the application from the ESF to raise the fees. I have listed a number of arguments for not approving the fees below, and I hope you'll consider them very carefully.

1) At the end of last financial year ESF had a general reserve of \$823 million, of which \$314 million was cash. We fail to see any just cause for a fee rise when the organization can boast huge surpluses.

2) The school fees have been increased by nearly 30% in the past 5 years, and if the most recent fee hike is approved at the proposed percentage, we'll see a 34% increase in fees over 6 years. This is not an acceptable increase by any standard. On top of that, from 2011, parents have to pay a HK\$25,000 levy for students entering Years 1 and 7.

3) We have seen no added value to our children's education over the past 5 years, and yet, we pay 30% more than we did in 2005-6. Therefore, the question we are all asking is: where is our money going?

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Most ESF schools are run down, and facilities are outdated, and furthermore, parents also have to cover additional expenses and pay for laptops, calculators, exams, books, and CAS activities, to mention but a few. So it's clear that the extra fees are not spent on improving the quality of our children's education.

4) ESF schools are not international schools, but government-subsidized schools, set up to provide affordable English language education in Hong Kong. We know that 'affordable' is a relative concept, but hundreds of letters and emails we have received from angry, frustrated parents clearly demonstrate that a large proportion of ESF parents cannot afford the fees anymore and are forced to look for other schools for their children.

5) There is no place for non-Chinese speaking children of (lower) middle-class parents, other than the ESF. We cannot afford international schools, and our children cannot access the curriculum in the local schools. Therefore, we are fighting for our right to have access to English language education through the ESF, and if that right is taken away from us, we have nowhere to go.

6) Consequently, many of us are presently taking the necessary steps to leave Hong Kong. The ESF will not inform us of their future plans, and if the fees keep increasing, we cannot be here. It's not employees of big corporations we are concerned about; their fees will usually be covered by the companies they are working for. But the people who are planning to leave are also making a valuable contribution to a range of organizations and local communities in Hong Kong: police officers, NET teachers, university professors (employed after 2004 when the education allowance was abolished), and self-employed people in small and medium-sized companies, to mention but a few.

I hope you will seriously consider the factors outlined above when you assess the application from the ESF for yet another fee increase. Needless to say, the Concerned Parents will be very happy to meet with you, and provide further documentation for the claims I have made above.

I look forward to your reply.

Kind regards,

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the Concerned Parents Group  
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