

Thank you for this invitation to speak to this panel.

I am Mrs. Gail Maidment the Executive Director of Generations Christian Education, a not for profit organization. We currently provide two international schools in Hong Kong. Small World Christian Kindergarten, an international pre-primary (kindergarten) in Mid-levels and Norwegian International School with both a kindergarten pre-primary and primary campus in Tai Po. Currently we are waiting for the provisional registration for our third school, in Western District Hong Kong Island that will provide additional international primary places.

Our understanding from our review of current affairs and reports from various Chambers of Commerce and government bodies like Invest Hong Kong, our city is growing and vibrant. Experiencing not only business growth but also a growth in families moving here to take advantage of the many opportunities Hong Kong provides to an entire family - both young and mature members.

I have also observed that the New Territories is also positioned for growth, with the development of the Innovation Centres at Science Park over the next four years. With these expansions there will also likely be an increasing demand for quality pre-primary and primary international school spaces in the Taipo area/New Territories as well.

We have all experienced the unique cultural nature of Hong Kong, as we have many families that come from various countries, or who are from ethnically mixed backgrounds. The open and welcoming nature of Hong Kong has caused many families to choose to make Hong Kong their permanent homes. This diversity is one of our core strengths as a country; making it attractive to businesses and families alike.

In view of this steady growth and the overall desire to maintain cultural and business strength, the need for the provision of all services that cater to the needs of families seems to be of paramount importance! Incoming and current families require quality affordable, international pre-primary and primary establishing homes here. The business sector is expanding, medical services are being improved, housing issues are being addressed, however the timely development of sufficient international school spaces to meet the ever-growing market demand seems to be lagging behind.

Currently, international school providers must seek approval and support across five separate government agencies: education, lands, transport, building and fire. The process at times is ill-defined and cumbersome.

We would recommend that Education, Lands, Buildings, Fire and Transport departments have strategic approaches to working together with defined time-lines with international providers so that development of school places are made possible in the most efficient timing. A well defined process would keep all parties accountable to requirements and timelines, in this manner there would be a comprehensive and over-arching strategic approach for the development of Pre-primary and primary school places.

Hong Kong has an amazing potential to attract more international families that in turn would contribute to the continued economic growth of this city and the surrounding regions.

In light of this potential, we view an investment of time, professional effort and resources into International Education as very valuable. Let's all work together to make it a priority.

Thank you for your attention.