

Transcript of SJ's remarks

Following is the transcript (English portion) of remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, SC, at a media session after attending an anti-drug seminar for secondary teachers this morning (August 18):

Reporter: Mr Wong, society has been very polarised by the drug test issue. Do you think that the Government should bear the responsibility for rolling out something not comprehensive enough? Is it being rolled out too rapidly?

Secretary for Justice: What I have emphasised is that the scheme now being proposed among schools in Tai Po is a trial run of a proposal put forward. We believe that the most effective way to test out something is actually to experiment with it. Of course there is research in other jurisdictions on the effectiveness of the drug test in different context. We fully acknowledge that. The research also shows that it is important to look at what is being proposed, the detailed provisions and the importance to actually test out the scheme proposed in order to find out the most effective way to implement a particular proposal. We believe that it will be useful. Now that we've got the support of schools in Tai Po to start a trial run, we will of course be critically reviewing the effect of the scheme once it is on foot. But even before that, we are collecting views expressed by different sectors of the community as to how we can further improve the conditions and terms of this particular trial scheme to ensure that it will comply with the law and also have a positive effect. So it is important to put things in context and realise that for something like this to be introduced, there are bound to be different views. The community will have different views on this. There will be opposition for one reason or other. There will be concerns on its effectiveness or whether there will be side effects not contemplated. I think all these are important and constructive, and we should take them constructively and positively. It is the Government's responsibility in tackling such a serious problem and not to be afraid of criticism but to actually go out to see what we believe to be a way to reduce the problem and to actually involve the community to thrash it out.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Ends/Tuesday, August 18, 2009