

## SARS and SAR Government

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### 摘要

非典型肺炎事件在本港已造成沉重的負擔。但是特區政府處理事件的手法，比非典型肺炎事件本身，更引人憂慮。特區政府危機感不足和對前線醫護人員的支援不足，都是特區政府必須正視和檢討的。

The development of SARS in the Special Administrative Region since early March 2003 is a subject of great concern to Hong Kong, not only because of the direct impact on people's lives and on the economy, but because it suggests that the SAR government was not up to the job of containing the disease and of setting priorities right.

The Government had been denying that the disease had spread to the community when Professor S. C. Chung from the Chinese University was maintaining that it did. Suppose the Government was right then, it would have been in an excellent position to contain it, and the disease certainly could have been contained. If the Government was actually wrong, and it had erred because of a lack of experience in dealing with a totally new epidemic, then the denial must have resulted in much greater damage, both to the effort to contain the disease, and to the economy and even to the government's own fiscal position.

The fact is, despite early denial, the disease has spread throughout most of east Kowloon, in Shatin, in Taipo, and in scattered areas throughout the territory with the exception of most of Hong Kong Island. As of today over 100 buildings had recorded cases of atypical pneumonia.

Because of the complaints voiced by many of the front line workers, we have reason to believe that the resource support to contain the problem was half-hearted in the beginning. This could reflect the government's poor state of fiscal position, but failing to offer the resource support in a timely manner means that ultimately the price paid becomes much, much higher. The short vision of the government has exacted a high price paid by the entire community, has cost lives, and has damaged the reputation of the government and Hong Kong as a whole.

The entire community is very grateful to the front-line workers who work under intense stress, against great odds, and at great risk to their own lives. The

government needs to give them all the support that they need, and particularly needs to provide them with adequate resources to deal with the problem. We must not worry about the budget deficit for the moment. The government badly needs to win back the hearts of Hong Kong people, and must act decisively to contain the damage.

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