

## PRESS RELEASE

**Surigao del Norte commits to pilot test educ programs**

Education stakeholders in Surigao del Norte gave their commitment to Education Secretary Armin Luistro to pilot test new programs of the Department of Education in their province. Led by former DepEd Regional Director and incumbent Surigao del Norte Governor Sol Matugas, stakeholders expressed their commitment to take the lead in implementing education programs during Luistro's recent visit to the province.

"Commit to me, to your LGUs, to your children that you will make a new Surigao," said Luistro when he accepted the offer during his keynote message at the province's first Education Summit at the Surigao del Norte Provincial Convention Center.

"Surigao accepts the secretary's challenge to be pilot of anything relevant to education," said Matugas.

Surigao del Norte is implementing project HEALS or Health, Education & Environment, Agri- and Aquaculture, Livelihood, and Spirituality as its guide to local economic development.

"I accept your commitment to education as a province," Luistro responds. "The way I see it, this is not DepEd pursuing a dream. This is your whole province pursuing a dream. You are not showing a different Surigao but a Surigao as you define it with what you do."

Provincial board members, mayors of the province, parents and students represented by their Division federation presidents, non-government organizations, members of the academe, businesses, private individuals and groups, and teachers are all eager to listen to the direction of the province in terms of education in the next three years as delivered by Matugas.

"I see Surigao (del Norte) as an education province. You are many voices singing one song," observed Luistro.

In her report to the people of Surigao del Norte, Matugas said that her province, of 335 barangays, is considered a second class province and that it is considered a "poor province" due to a "high incidence of poverty, low agricultural and aquacultural output, low participation rate, high malnutrition, insufficient infrastructure, and just because it is frequented by calamities."

"But not anymore," Matugas said. "Now, knowing what is ahead of us and what we can do to meet any obstacle, we can change the way we think about our province."

Matugas showcased several investment opportunities in her province that includes tourist destinations, surfing & game fishing, and mining to which Luistro responded that "we need to align the skills we develop in our public school students to be responsive to these opportunities."

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On his way to Surigao City, Luistro dropped by Emerico Elementary School where the Essential Health Care Program is being launched. He and Matugas led the ribbon cutting ceremony for a new tooth brushing and hand washing trough.

"Preventing drop out is about health and nutrition," Luistro shared with those present. "We should do this in many more schools in the country."

He later asked Matugas to have 100% EHCP participation in Surigao del Norte and the latter nodded in agreement.

During the summit, Luistro witnessed the provincial government sign two agreements. One is for the Barangay Education Strategic Team where partners commit to harness allied efforts at the grassroots level to "enhance the delivery of basic education services and improve performance educators of schools in both elementary and secondary by attaining zero drop-out rate as basic strategy for EFA 2015."

Another agreement is for the four divisions under the province – Surigao del Norte Province, Surigao City, Siargao, and Dinagat – and the local executives of the twenty municipalities of Surigao del Norte to work together to meet the challenge of Luistro to make their province a 100% EHCP implementer.

"The challenge is to look at the province not half empty but half full," encouraged Luistro.

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