

## LCQ4: Electric vehicle charging services in government car parks

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

Fee-paying electric vehicle (EV) charging services (fee-paying charging services) in government car parks have been implemented progressively since December last year, with charging fees ranging from \$19 to \$21 per hour. However, there are views that the fees payable for fee-paying charging services are excessively high while the charging efficiency is unsatisfactory, and the arrangement of charging the fees on a time basis is also unreasonable. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the implementation timetable of fee-paying charging services in various government car parks that have yet to implement the services;

(2) of the monthly utilization rate of the EV charging facilities in government car parks having implemented the fee-paying charging services since December last year;

(3) of the following information on the EV charging facilities in government car parks at present:

- (i) the types and numbers of chargers of different charging speeds; and
- (ii) the monthly basic operating expenses of each EV charging facility; and

(4) as there are views pointing out that the fees charged by EV charging stations in the market vary according to the power output of different chargers and are mostly calculated on the basis of power consumption while the fees charged by EV charging facilities in government car parks are based on the charging time, which are excessively high as a result, of the Government's pricing mechanism for fee-paying charging services; whether the Government will, by drawing reference from the market practice, consider adopting the mode of charging the fees based on the chargers' power output and power consumption; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government launched the Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in 2021, setting out the target to marketise the EV charging services by starting to impose a fee on the EV charging services provided in government carparks from around 2025, with a view to promoting

the sustainable development of the services in the long run. To expedite the process of marketisation, the Government has advanced the completion of the tendering and progressively proceeded with the marketisation of EV charging services in government carparks starting from the end of 2023.

My reply to the question raised by Hon Luk Chung-hung is as follows:

(1) Currently, various government departments (including the Environmental Protection Department (EPD)) are responsible for the management and operation of a total of 2 550 public EV chargers. Starting from the end of 2023, the EPD has progressively implemented fee-paying EV charging services for its over 1 600 medium chargers of seven kilowatt (kW) (involving 74 government carparks). As at the end of March 2024, the fee-paying EV charging services have been implemented in 54 government carparks, covering over 1 000 EV chargers. It is anticipated that the plan to marketise EV charging services in the remaining 20 government carparks will be completed by mid-2024.

Other relevant government departments are responsible for the management and operation of over 900 public EV chargers, and are in the process of or considering marketising their EV charging services progressively.

(2) The utilisation rates of chargers in government carparks are affected by various factors, such as the location and occupancy of carparks, the number of EVs, and the fee levels, etc. According to the data from the charging service operators, as in March 2024, the average utilisation rate of EV chargers in those government carparks where fee-paying EV charging services have been implemented is about seven per cent. As the marketisation of the EV charging services has just commenced, some of the government carparks have yet to implement fee-charging for their EV charging services. Together with the fact that the EV drivers are still adapting to the changes brought about by the marketisation of the EV charging services, the data collected at this stage merely reflects the short-term utilisation rates of the relevant charging facilities. The actual usage can only be reflected numerically after the implementation of the fee-paying EV charging services for a period of time.

(3)(i) Currently, various government departments (including the EPD) are responsible for the management and operation of a total of 2 550 public EV chargers, including 560 standard chargers, 1 986 medium chargers and four quick chargers.

(ii) The major operating expenditure incurred by the public EV chargers provided by the Government is electricity tariff. In 2023, over 1 600 EV public chargers were operated by the EPD, and their total electricity tariff of the year was around \$21.7 million. The average monthly electricity tariff per each EV charger was around \$1,100.

(4) Currently, commercially operated EV charging stations in the markets have adopted different modes of charging based on their own business considerations, including time-based charging and energy-based charging. The fee-charging level also varies depending on factors such as the location and

the time period of using the charging services, etc.

The marketisation of EV charging services in the government carparks has commenced since the end of 2023. Currently, a time-based charging is being adopted with the hourly rates ranging from \$19 to \$21, which were determined by the operators taking into account the prevailing market rates of EV medium charging services in the same district. If the operators propose other charging modes in the future taking into account their business considerations and actual operations, the EPD will remain open to discuss with them the feasible modes of charging.

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## LCQ21: Manpower of Traffic Wardens

Following is a question by the Hon Dennis Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

Some trade unions have relayed that there has been a persistent shortage of Traffic Wardens (TWs) and the wastage rate of new recruits is high. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (a) the staff establishment and (b) the strength of (i) Senior Traffic Wardens (STWs) and (ii) TWs in each year from 2019 to 2024 (set out in Table 1);

Table 1

Rank	Manpower	Year (based on the figures as at December 31 each year)					
		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (as at March 31)
(i)	(a)						
	(b)						
(ii)	(a)						
	(b)						

(2) of (i) the target number of recruits, (ii) the number of applicants and (iii) the number of people recruited in the TW recruitment exercises conducted in 2021 and 2023 (set out in Table 2);

Table 2

Year of recruitment exercise	(i)	(ii)	(iii)
2021			
2023			

(3) whether it has plans to launch a new round of TW recruitment exercise; if so, when it will be conducted, and of the target number of recruits of (i) STWs and (ii) TWs (set out in Table 3);

Table 3

Rank	Target number of recruits
(i)	
(ii)	

(4) of the number of (i) STWs and (ii) TWs who left the service in each year from 2019 to 2024 (set out in Table 4), and the reasons for their departure;

Table 4

Year (based on the figures as at December 31 each year)	Number of departures	
	(i)	(ii)
2019		
.....		
2024 (as at March 31)		

(5) whether it has estimated the number of (i) STWs and (ii) TWs who will reach their retirement age in each year from 2024 to 2026 (set out in Table 5); and

Table 5

Rank	Year		
	2024	2025	2026
(i)			
(ii)			

(6) of (a) the lower quartile, (b) the median and (c) the upper quartile of the length of service of (i) STWs and (ii) TWs in each year from 2019 to 2024 (set out in Table 6)?

Table 6

Year	Length of service					
	(a)		(b)		(c)	
	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)
2019						
.....						

2024 (as at March 31)						
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Reply:

President,

Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) have been monitoring the manpower situation of Traffic Wardens (TWs) and recruiting TWs as and when necessary. Having consulted the HKPF in respect of the Hon Dennis Leung's questions on the establishment, recruitment and the turnover situation of TWs, my reply is as follows:

(1) The establishment and strength of Senior Traffic Wardens (STWs) and TWs from 2019 to end of March 2024

Rank	Manpower	Year (based on the figures as at December 31 each year)					
		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (as at March 31)
STWs	Establishment	44	44	45	45	45	45
	Strength	43	44	44	45	44	44
TWs	Establishment	311	318	319	322	316	316
	Strength	287	287	279	299	262	254

(2) TW recruitment exercises conducted in 2021 and 2023

Year of recruitment exercise	Target number of recruits	Number of applicants	Number of TW recruited
2021	55	7 741	88*
2023	43	3 426	Internal vetting in progress; new hire onboarding process will commence as soon as possible afterwards

\*Note: Including the number of vacancy to be filled and waiting list.

(3) The 2023 TW recruitment exercise will be completed soon. The HKPF has no plan for another TW recruitment exercise at this moment. If there are vacancies to be filled in the near future, HKPF will recruit suitable candidates from the waiting list of previous recruitment exercise. Besides, STW is a promotional rank for TW and vacancies will be filled by promotion.

(4) Number of STWs and TWs who left the service from 2019 to end of March

2024

Year (based on the figures as at December 31 each year)	Number of departures	
	STWs	TWs
2019	1 (retired)	5 (retired) + 9 (change of job#)
2020	3 (retired)	9 (retired) + 12 (change of job#)
2021	4 (retired)	10 (retired) + 10 (change of job#)
2022	2 (retired)	11 (retired) + 10 (change of job#)
2023	5 (retired)	12 (retired) + 18 (change of job#)
2024 (as at March 31)	0	6 (change of job #)

#Note: Including those who were transferred to other government departments or resigned.

(5) Number of STWs and TWs who will reach their retirement age in each year from 2024 to 2026

Rank	Year		
	2024	2025	2026
STWs	5	3	2
TWs	6	7	6

(6) Length of service of STWs and TWs in each year from 2019 to 2024

Year (based on the figures as at December 31 each year)	Length of service					
	Lower quartile		Median		Upper quartile	
	STWs	TWs	STWs	TWs	STWs	TWs
2019	24	1	25	4	28	24
2020	24	1	26	4	29	24
2021	25	2	27	4	29	25
2022	26	2	27	5	29	13
2023	25	3	28	5	29	12
2024 (as at March 31)	25	3	28	5.5	30	12.5

## LCQ17: Food waste recycling

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

The Government will implement the Municipal Solid Waste Charging (MSW charging) on August 1 this year. However, some members of the catering industry have indicated that the current food waste recycling supporting facilities for eateries are still insufficient. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current average daily quantity of food waste recovered in each of the 18 districts across the territory;
- (2) of the current number of the following premises participating in the Pilot Scheme on Food Waste Collection in Hong Kong: (i) food processing factories, (ii) public markets, (iii) cooked food centres, (iv) wholesale markets, (v) hospitals, (vi) government facilities, (vii) tertiary institutions, (viii) hotels, (ix) club houses, (x) restaurants, (xi) public housing estates, and (xii) private housing courts (with a tabulated breakdown by District Council district);
- (3) of the current average daily quantity of food waste recovered at (i) each food waste recycling point at refuse collection points and (ii) each food waste recycling spot in Hong Kong, with a tabulated breakdown by District Council district;
- (4) of the maximum handling capacity of each food waste treatment facility of the Government; the total quantity of food waste from the industrial and commercial sectors recovered by each food waste treatment facility in each of the past three years, and the percentage of such quantity in the maximum handling capacity of the facilities;
- (5) whether it has assessed if the quantity of food waste to be recovered will increase after the implementation of MSW charging; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, whether it has assessed if the current food waste treatment facilities of the Government can cope with the increasing quantity of food waste to be recovered; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the negative, of the corresponding measures to be put in place;
- (6) of the authorities' specific means to further encourage the industrial and commercial sectors to reduce food waste at source, such as whether they will consider subsidising the catering industry to set up sorting and recycling facilities, or encouraging the industry to participate in food recovery and donation activities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(7) whether the authorities will introduce measures to facilitate the development of the downstream food waste recycling industry, so as to improve the food waste recycling industry chain; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Currently, about 11 100 tonnes of municipal solid waste are generated in Hong Kong per day, of which around 30 per cent is food waste. The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is actively implementing various food waste collection initiatives, including support to the collection of food waste from commercial and industrial (C&I) sectors and households, so as to encourage the whole community and the general public to participate in food waste recycling. The reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Hoi-yan is as follows:

(1) to (3) The EPD extended the Pilot Scheme on Food Waste Collection in 2021 to progressively provide point-to-point food waste collection services for public and private premises which generate larger quantities of food waste. Currently, there are approximately 900 collection points across the territory, such as food processing factories, public markets, cooked food centres, wholesale markets, hospitals, government facilities, tertiary institutions, school lunchbox suppliers, hotels and shopping malls, etc. From the current term of the Government on, the EPD is expanding the food waste recycling services to all public rental housing (PRH) estates at full steam with an aim to completing the installation of more than 700 food waste smart recycling bins (FWSRBs) in all of the 213 PRH estates (a total of approximately 1 500 blocks) across the territory by August this year, covering about one-third of the population in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, we have subsidised the installation of FWSRBs in private residential buildings and rural villages through the Recycling Fund and the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF), and in collaboration with the Environmental Campaign Committee. At present, the amount of food waste recovered from various local sources is gradually increasing, with an average daily collection of around 230 tonnes in March this year.

To promote the participation of restaurants in food waste recycling, the EPD has set up food waste collection points at 71 refuse collection points (RCPs) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, and the number will increase to nearly 100 in July this year. Nearby restaurants and residents can also use these food waste collection points. The EPD has also proactively approached restaurants in the vicinity of the food waste collection points and provided relevant information and appropriate assistance to them. At present, a total of around 500 restaurants have registered in this scheme, and the average daily food waste collected at the aforementioned 71 food waste collection points is around 3.2 tonnes. In addition, the EPD has progressively set up Food Waste Recycling Spots, using mobile booths or trucks, at "food and beverage (F&B) clusters" concentrated



with restaurants in Tai Po, Yuen Long, Tuen Mun and Sha Tin to collect food waste since April 2023 and has extended the services to Hong Kong Island and Kowloon during March and April this year. We have also set up 76 Food Waste Recycling Spots in 15 districts for collecting food waste from restaurants, with an average daily collection of around 2.1 tonnes.

The daily average quantity of food waste recovered in various districts, the number of venues participating in food waste recycling, and the locations of food waste collection points at RCPs and Food Waste Recycling Spots, along with their respective daily average quantity of food waste recovered, are tabulated in Table 1 to Table 4 of the Annex respectively.

(4) and (5) From 2021 to 2022, the total treatment capacity of food waste treatment facilities was 250 tonnes per day, including 200 tonnes per day of Organic Resources Recovery Centre Phase 1 (Oâ€\$PARK1) and 50 tonnes per day of the Food Waste, Sewage Sludge Anaerobic Co-digestion Trial Scheme at Tai Po Sewage Treatment Works. With the commencement of operation of the Food Waste, Sewage Sludge Anaerobic Co-digestion Trial Scheme at Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works in November 2023, the total treatment capacity of food waste treatment facilities increased from 250 tonnes per day to 300 tonnes per day. With the commencement of food waste reception at Organic Resources Recovery Centre Phase 2 (Oâ€\$PARK2) in March this year, the total treatment capacity has further increased to 600 tonnes per day at present. The quantities of food waste recovered from public and C&I premises over the past three years and their respective percentages of the highest treatment capacity of that year are tabulated below:

Year	Quantity of food waste recovered from public and C&I premises	
	Annual total volume (tonnes per year)	Percentage of the highest treatment capacity of the year (%)
2021	48 986	54
2022	48 648	53
2023	58 260	53

With the launch of various facilitation measures, promotional and educational campaigns, as well as GREEN\$ Electronic Participation Incentive Scheme to proactively encourage public participation in food waste recycling, we expect that the quantity of food waste recovered will increase progressively. The existing food waste treatment facilities in operation have a total daily food waste treatment capacity of 600 tonnes, which is sufficient to meet the food waste treatment needs. We will closely monitor changes in the quantity of food waste recovered and level of public participation in food waste recycling, and review the planning and development of food waste treatment facilities in a timely manner.

(6) To encourage restaurants to participate in food waste recycling, the EPD

will visit restaurants in the vicinity of the collection points to distribute promotional leaflets and invite them to register for the abovementioned food waste collection points which are set up at RCPs and F&B clusters. We will explain the arrangements for food waste recycling to the restaurants and provide them with transparent plastic bags and small containers free of charge to facilitate their temporary storage of recyclable food waste.

To promote food waste reduction at source, the Food Wise Hong Kong Campaign has been promoting a "Food Wise and Waste Less" culture and encouraging behavioural change to reduce food waste at source in the community through various schemes and activities since its launch in 2013. The Government has also been supporting non-governmental organisations through the ECF to collect surplus food from the commercial sector and donate them to the needy in the society in order to achieve the goals of caring for society and reducing food waste.

(7) To promote the sustainable development of the recycling industry, the Recycling Fund set up by the Government has assisted the local recycling industry in enhancing its overall operational capabilities and productivity, and helped enterprises to upgrade and expand their recycling operation through various funding programmes. On food waste recycling, the Recycling Fund launched a scheme on Supporting Residential Buildings in Adopting Smart Bins Technology in Food Waste under the Industry Support Programme in 2020, specifically supporting and subsidising private residential buildings to collect food waste using smart recycling bins so as to encourage members of the public and housing estates to participate in domestic food waste recycling. The Enterprise Support Programme (ESP) under the Recycling Fund also provides project-based matching funds for individual food waste recycling enterprises to enhance and expand their recycling operations. Enterprises can also implement standard projects through simplified application procedures in the Standard Project under the ESP, including purchase and installation of relevant equipment for handling food waste.

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## **LCQ9: Student Activities Support Fund**

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

The Government established in early 2019 a \$2.5 billion Student Activities Support Fund (the Fund) to support primary and secondary students with financial needs to participate in school-organised or recognised out-of-classroom life-wide learning activities, so as to foster their whole-person development. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the annual and cumulative (i) amounts of revenue and expenditure of and (ii) numbers of school and student beneficiaries as well as activities organised (together with the types and natures of the activities) under the Fund since its establishment;

(2) whether there are schools which have never or scarcely applied for subsidy under the Fund; if so, whether the authorities know the reasons for that, and whether assistance has been provided to such schools to ensure that all students with financial needs are given the opportunity to participate in life-wide learning activities;

(3) as it is reported that situations such as low birth rate, decline in the number of school-age children and the addiction of many students to online activities arise in Hong Kong, whether the authorities will encourage schools to make use of the subsidy granted under the Fund to organise more life-wide learning activities conducted in groups and physical settings;

(4) whether the authorities have received complaints on or identified problems in the operation of the Fund since its establishment; if so, of the follow-up actions; and

(5) whether the authorities have assessed if the operation of the Fund since its establishment can achieve its intended objectives; whether a comprehensive review of the overall operation of the Fund will be conducted in the light of the experience gained in the operation of the Fund, feedback of stakeholders, development of society, changes in students' needs, etc.?

Reply:

President,

The Education Bureau (EDB) has been providing resources for schools to organise a wide range of learning activities and schools may deploy such resources flexibly to support student learning and offer after-school student activities to foster students' whole-person development. Starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB has been providing a recurrent Life-wide Learning Grant (LWL Grant) with an annual provision of about \$900 million to support public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools in taking forward life-wide learning based on the present foundation. The LWL Grant aims to help students develop lifelong learning capabilities and foster their whole-person development through the knowledge, skills and positive values and attitudes acquired in experiential learning. At the same time, the Government set up the Student Activities Support Fund (SAS Fund) in 2018-19 with an allocation of \$2.5 billion, and the investment return of the SAS Fund has been used to provide the Student Activities Support Grant (SAS Grant) for public sector and DSS schools to support students with financial needs to participate in out-of-classroom life-wide learning activities organised or recognised by schools. While the SAS Grant is supplementary in nature, schools should make good use of the LWL Grant and the SAS Grant, having regard to their own development contexts and students' needs.

Our consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Tony Tse is as follows:

(1) and (2) The SAS Grant has been available for schools' application since the 2019/20 school year. The amount to be disbursed to a school is calculated based on the number of students of the school in receipt of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or the full-grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme (STAS full-grant) in that school year (based on the number in December of the school year). The rate for each primary student is \$350 and that for each secondary student is \$650. Noting that some families may be in need of support but are not in receipt of the CSSA or STAS full-grant for various reasons, so besides providing support for students receiving the CSSA or STAS full-grant, schools are given the flexibility to, at their discretion, deploy up to 25 per cent of the total provision of the SAS Grant for the school year to support students who are identified as needy according to the school-based criteria (e.g. students receiving the STAS half-grant) to participate in out-of-classroom experiential learning activities. Since the 2019/20 school year, nearly 95 per cent of schools have applied for the SAS Grant. For the schools which have not submitted any application, the main reason is that their numbers of students with financial needs are relatively small and they have flexibly deployed the LWL Grant and other resources to support student learning.

From the 2019/20 to 2023/24 school years, the incomes and expenditures of the SAS Fund, the numbers of beneficiary schools and the numbers of students are set out in the table below:

School year	Income (\$ million)	Expenditure (\$ million)	Number of beneficiary schools	Number of students
2019/20	86	37#	942	160 930
2020/21	111	32#	935#	165 090
2021/22	136	45#	928#	161 540
2022/23 (Provisional figures)	116	46#	929#	151 720
2023/24 (Estimate)	102	72	932	140 570

\* The numbers of students are rounded to the nearest ten. The figures show the numbers of students in receipt of either the CSSA or STAS full-grant in the beneficiary primary and secondary schools, which are used for calculating the provision of the SAS Grant.

# Due to the epidemic, life-wide learning activities were generally reduced during the suspension of face-to-face classes. Consequently, the usage rates of the SAS Grant were lower than expected and the numbers of school applications were also slightly affected.

(3) to (5) Schools are required to formulate school-based criteria according to the learning needs of their students. They have to ensure that the SAS

Grant is deployed in a fair and impartial manner to support students with financial needs to participate in out-of-classroom learning activities, including visits, training, competitions, exploration and exchange activities, and procurement of necessary materials, uniforms or equipment for participation in life-wide learning activities, with a view to enriching intellectual development, values education, community service, physical and aesthetic development, and career-related experiences for students. The EDB has uploaded relevant guidelines, together with examples of life-wide learning activities of different areas and themes, to its website ([www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/curriculum-area/life-wide-learning/index.html](http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/curriculum-area/life-wide-learning/index.html)) for the reference of schools.

Under the principle of school-based management, schools should evaluate the utilisation of the SAS Grant (including the number, area and expenditure of the activities) on a regular basis, and include the report on the use of the SAS Grant in the School Report of the respective school year for endorsement by the School Management Committee/Incorporated Management Committee before uploading such report to the school website. The EDB does not keep statistics on the total number, type or nature of activities related to the SAS Grant.

The EDB learns about schools' utilisation of the SAS Grant through daily contacts (including school visits) and provides professional advice in a timely manner. The EDB will continue to seek the views of the school sector and review schools' utilisation of grants in supporting students with financial needs to participate in life-wide learning activities, so as to ensure that schools have sufficient resources and that resources are used properly to enable all students to gain life-wide learning experiences. The SAS Fund has been operating smoothly since its launch in 2019, and is able to meet the expenditure of the SAS Grant with its investment return. So far, the EDB has not received any complaints. On the whole, schools have flexibly deployed the SAS Grant, the LWL Grant and other resources to support all students, regardless of their socio-economic status, to participate in diversified life-wide learning activities, including those in group and face-to-face mode.

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## **LCQ22: Non-plastic disposable tableware**

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Siu-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

It has been reported that the findings of a multinational survey on the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in food packaging materials published by a global environmental group at the end of last year indicated that of the 119 samples tested, 64 were found to contain these substances. The food packaging materials concerned include plant fibre food containers, cardboard boxes for greasy food and grease-resistant paper bags, etc. These substances are difficult to excrete, and their accumulation in the human body may even lead to health problems such as liver damage, infertility and cancer. Regarding non-plastic disposable tableware, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that at present, tableware suppliers wishing to enrol their non-plastic disposable tableware on the Green Tableware Platform under the Environmental Protection Department are only required to demonstrate the compliance of the tableware with the relevant non-plastic requirements when submitting their applications, whether the authorities will, in the light of the aforesaid survey findings, consider requiring suppliers to also provide the relevant safety test reports in respect of their non-plastic disposable tableware when submitting applications via the Green Tableware Platform; if not, whether the authorities will take the initiative to test the safety of such tableware;

(2) as the Government indicated in its paper submitted to the Panel on Environmental Affairs of this Council in February this year that it will continue to, through different channels (such as supporting community programmes that offer reusable meal box lending services), promote various "plastic-free" campaigns which aim at reducing the use of disposable plastic tableware and encouraging the use of reusable ones, of the details of the relevant support programmes; whether the Government has plans to develop centralised meal box lending services in the future; and

(3) as it has been reported that some restaurants consider biodegradable disposable plastic tableware more environmentally-friendly and choose to use it as an alternative for disposable plastic tableware, but biodegradable disposable plastic tableware requires a specific environment to degrade and cannot be recycled and processed with other plastics, and the catering industry can still provide biodegradable disposable plastic cups and plastic food containers to takeaway customers during the first phase of implementation of the relevant legislation on regulating disposable plastic tableware, whether the authorities have studied how to reduce the amount of biodegradable disposable plastic tableware being sent to landfills before the second phase of implementation of the relevant legislation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To minimise micro-plastic pollution brought about by the difficulty of decomposing plastics in the natural environment, as well as its threat and harm posed to ecological environment and human health, "plastic reduction"

and "plastic-free" have become an international consensus in recent years. Different places around the world have implemented measures to regulate disposable plastic products one after another. In Hong Kong, the regulation of disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products has been implemented since April 22 this year (Earth Day) to regulate disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products at source and from their supply.

The reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Siu-hung is as follows:

(1) Establishing the Green Tableware Platform (the Platform) ([www.greentableware.hk](http://www.greentableware.hk)) aims to provide the trade with information on alternatives that meet the requirements of the new legislation on the regulation of disposable plastic products, with a view to assisting the trade in the early adoption of more environmental-friendly non-plastic tableware. At present, the secretariat of the Platform (Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency) has not required suppliers to submit information on per- and polyfluoro alkyl substances (PFAS). We notice that there are many public concerns about the quality and safety of non-plastic tableware in the market. To provide better services to the public and the trade, the Government will consider inviting suppliers to voluntarily submit relevant certificates or documents, and listing out non-plastic tableware with these certificates or documents for reference.

As regards the health risks of PFAS, PFAS is a general term for a large group of chemically synthetic substances that are widely found in a wide range of artificial products, especially those with surface coatings, such as clothes, food packaging materials, cooking utensils and various plastic products, etc. According to information from international scientific research and regulatory organisations, although some products contain a small amount of PFAS, the risk to human health associated with exposure from these products is very low. It has been recently reported that a research team from the Universiteit Antwerpen in Belgium conducted a study on the PFAS content in straws made of different materials, and its findings showed that PFAS was detected in paper, bamboo, plastic and glass straws available in the Belgian market, and yet there was no statistically significant difference in the total PFAS content in these paper, bamboo, plastic and glass straws. Based on the data in the report, it is projected that the public would need to consume a significant amount of all PFAS contents in straws for a continuous period (about 300 straws per person per week) to exceed the tolerable intake level of PFAS set by the European Food Safety Authority. Under normal circumstances, hence, there is no need to be worried.

(2) To motivate the public to reduce waste at source and go "plastic-free", the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has been encouraging the trade and the public to use reusable tableware through various means, including promoting rental schemes for reusable containers or cutlery, encouraging eateries to accept customers to use their own containers when ordering takeaways, cultivating the habit of bringing their own containers and cutlery, and encouraging the public to make use of the "Plastic-Free Rewards" mobile application to collect stamps and redeem reusable tableware.

In collaboration with the Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC), the EPD has launched the "Reusable Tableware Lending Programme for Large-scale Events" since December 2018 to provide free-of-charge reusable tableware lending services for organisers of large-scale events, including delivery, collection and cleaning services of reusable tableware. The EPD and the ECC also launched a free meal container lending programme in two phases in 2021 and 2022 respectively, with the pilot scheme of the second phase covering seven local universities. By lending meal containers to the public in a convenient way, the objective of the pilot scheme is to encourage the public to build a good habit of bringing their own reusable meal containers when ordering takeaways. Meanwhile, it also serves as a demonstration for organisations such as private companies and schools.

Furthermore, the Government is supporting community waste reduction projects on the reusable tableware rentals through the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF). Starting from October 2022, the ECF has provided funding support for a green group to collaborate with a takeaway platform to launch a two-phased 22-month reusable food container rental scheme with restaurant partners in various districts on Hong Kong Island, thereby promoting the culture of reusable tableware rental in a more extensive manner. Since the commissioning of the scheme, positive responses have been received with a total reduction of more than 25 000 disposable food containers.

To further encourage the public to bring their own containers when ordering takeaways, the EPD launched the Bring Your Own Containers (BYOC) Eateries Scheme in September 2023. Eateries participating in the scheme are required to accept customers to use their own containers (i.e. food containers or beverage cups) when ordering takeaways, or provide customers with reusable container lending services. The relevant eateries will be given the BYOC Eateries stickers for easy identification by customers. Currently, over 470 eateries have joined the scheme.

The EPD also collaborated with the catering industry to organise the third "Plastic-free Takeaway, Use Reusable Tableware" large-scale publicity and public education campaign. The campaign started from November 2023 and will be extended until October this year. Members of the public can collect stamps and redeem rewards through the "Plastic-Free Rewards" mobile application by opting out disposable tableware or containers when ordering takeaways from more than 750 participating eateries. During May 5 to June 5 this year, a time-limited promotion has been launched on the "Plastic-Free Rewards" mobile application under which users who have collected three stamps will be able to redeem a set of reusable tableware.

Establishment of a centralised food container lending programme would require consideration of various factors including market demand and supply, habits of the public, operational feasibility, and cost-effectiveness, etc. The Government has no plan to develop a centralised food container lending services programme at present. We will continue to promote "plastic-free" practices and environmental awareness on reuse in the community through the various channels mentioned above.



(3) The regulation of disposable plastic tableware for takeaway is closely related to people's daily lives, and the actual situation in Hong Kong is of utmost importance. Taking into account the supply, availability and affordability of alternatives to plastic cups and food containers commonly used by the public for takeaways, the first phase of the regulation only prohibits the use of expanded polystyrene cups and food containers but not other disposable plastic cups and food containers, so as to avoid causing excessive impact on their daily lives. As we are adopting a progressive regulatory approach, there are no specific requirements to reduce the use of biodegradable disposable plastic tableware at this stage. At the same time, we have been proactively encouraging the reduction of the use of disposable tableware at source through "plastic-free" measures. At present, many citizens begin to opt out disposable cutlery when ordering takeaways. By doing so, a healthy "plastic-free" culture will soon be developed.

The second phase of the regulation covers plastic cups and food containers commonly used for takeaways. We will introduce the second phase only after giving due consideration to the availability and affordability of the relevant non-plastic alternatives, as well as both the trade and the public's adaptation to the first phase regulation. There is no implementation timetable at present.