

LCQ6: Municipal Solid Waste Charging

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hok-fung and a reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (January 24):

Question:

The Government will implement Municipal Solid Waste Charging (MSW charging). The policy intent is that it is primarily the responsibility of individual households to bear the charges for designated bags (DBs) and designated labels (DLs), so as to drive behavioural changes for achieving waste reduction. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has assessed if there will be a peak season of waste disposal prior to the implementation of MSW charging; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the corresponding measures in place, for instance, whether it will increase law enforcement manpower, extend the opening hours of facilities provided under GREEN@COMMUNITY, and increase the number of food waste smart recycling bins;

(2) given that both DBs and DLs come with anti-counterfeit features, but recently, rubbish bags purported to be DBs are available for sale on some Mainland shopping websites, whether the Government has gained an understanding if there is a price difference between the two, and whether it has studied if the purchase of this type of rubbish bags by the public and property management companies (PMCs) is in conflict with the intent of MSW charging; if it has studied and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the follow-up actions; and

(3) as there have been criticisms about inadequate publicity on MSW charging although it will be implemented soon, whether the Government has formulated plans to conduct publicity in an overwhelming manner in collaboration with PMCs, owners' corporations as well as District Services and Community Care Teams; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

The practice of waste reduction and recycling has long been deeply rooted in the culture of many advanced cities, and there is a need for Hong Kong to catch up. The implementation of municipal solid waste (MSW) charging and the introduction of new methods to promote waste reduction and recycling are important steps for Hong Kong SAR to cultivate the local practice of waste reduction and recycling, and build our ecological civilisation.

To implement MSW charging successfully, it is critical that the public has thorough understanding of the scheme and actively participates in it. I

have earlier announced that –

1. the statutory commencement date of MSW charging will be revised to August 1, 2024; before which we will spare no time in promoting MSW charging in a more concrete manner to all sectors of the community; and
2. starting from April 1, 2024, the Government will demonstrate the implementation of MSW charging in government departments and some other buildings, which will serve as promotion to and education for the community.

The Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration will lead and co-ordinate the inter-bureaux-departmental collaboration within the Government.

My reply to the questions raised by the Hon Chan Hok-fung is as follows:

(1) In the past, the annual peak period of waste disposal always occurred before the Lunar New Year, and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will be prepared for it. Starting from January 16, the FEHD will launch the annual year-end clean-up campaign across the territory. During the campaign, the FEHD will establish over 200 temporary refuse collection points across all districts for residents to discard oversized household waste, and increase the frequency of refuse and oversized waste collection in all districts.

The FEHD will spare no effort in combating illegal disposal of waste and will adopt a multi-pronged approach to combat fly-tipping activities, including strengthening promotion and education, deploying designated enforcement teams to take enforcement actions, and utilising Internet Protocol cameras to gather evidence to assist in conducting prosecutions and planning for more effective enforcement actions.

As for GREEN@COMMUNITY, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has already requested relevant operators to strengthen their manpower before the Lunar New Year, and extend the operating hours from 7pm to 10pm on the 28th day of the last Lunar month, so as to handle the possible increase in the amount of recyclables. In addition, new Recycling Stores in 50 public rental housing estates will commence operation progressively around April 1, 2024, among which GREEN@KWAI FONG, GREEN@TAI WO HAU and GREEN@KAI YIP have already commenced their services. The public recycling spots over the territory will be progressively increased to more than 220.

For the recycling of food waste, the EPD has been progressively installing smart recycling bins for food waste collection in all public rental housing (PRH) estates in Hong Kong, with the target of completing the installations within 2024. We expect that smart food waste recycling bins will be installed at 100 PRH estates before the Lunar New Year, covering over 710 building blocks and approximately 1.15 million residents, which accounts for about half of the PRH estates in Hong Kong. In addition, the EPD is providing assistance to private residential buildings to install smart recycling bins for collecting food waste through the Recycling Fund and the Environment and Conservation Fund. We anticipate that a total of 30 private

housing estates and three rural villages will be covered by the above funding schemes before the Lunar New Year, with approximately 100 smart food waste recycling bins installed.

(2) To facilitate the implementation of MSW charging, the EPD has authorised supermarkets, convenience stores, pharmacies and online platforms to sell Designated Bags (DBs) and Designated Labels (DLs) at over 3 000 sales points. The details were promulgated on January 15, 2024.

The EPD has recently noticed that some garbage bags which were claimed to be DBs had been put up for sale on a mainland Website. Upon investigation, it was found that the website stated in the question is not an authorised retailer of the EPD, and while the price of the garbage bags claiming to be "DBs" is relatively cheaper, they are not "DBs" as prescribed by the legislation and cannot be used as DBs. We have also reported the incident to the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department (Customs) for follow-up investigation, and would like to remind the public to purchase DBs and DLs only from retail outlets and online platforms with the Authorisation Logo.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362), any person who sells or possesses, for the purpose of selling, counterfeit goods commits an offence, and is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and to imprisonment for five years. The EPD will maintain close communication with the Customs to combat these illegal activities.

(3) To facilitate different stakeholders in better understanding the arrangements of MSW charging, the EPD has been organising operational briefings and specialised trainings for stakeholders from all sectors since August last year. As at December 2023, we have conducted more than 250 physical or online meetings and briefings, reaching out to over 11 000 stakeholders from various trade sectors. Taking the property management and the environmental hygiene trades as examples, the EPD has set up a working group with representatives of the trades and have jointly formulated Best Practice Guides and training videos. In parallel, the EPD is actively conducting briefings and training sections for property management companies and cleansing workers.

We have also been arranging briefings for different building organisations (including the property management trade, cleansing companies and owners' organisations). We have organised 52 briefings so far for over 6 000 participants. We are also collaborating with the Property Management Services Authority to organise continuing professional development seminars on MSW charging for holders of the Property Management Practitioner Licence and representatives of licensed property management companies.

Furthermore, the EPD is now conducting briefings on the policy and implementation details of MSW Charging for District Councils or the relevant subcommittees thereunder and will attend seminars organised by district personalities. We are also liaising with the Home Affairs Department to engage the District Service and Community Care Teams of the 18 districts to assist in publicising MSW charging in their respective districts. Besides EPD

attending briefings arranged by district personalities, the Government will also mobilise all departments to assist in publicising MSW charging.

The overall public education and promotional campaign on MSW charging will be carried out continuously and with greater efforts to enhance the public's understanding on the charging arrangements.

Thank you, President.