

LCQ17: Promoting waste reduction and recycling

Following is a question by the Hon Dennis Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (February 28):

Question:

Regarding promoting waste reduction and recycling, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has plans for extending the service hours of Recycling Stores of the community recycling network GREEN@COMMUNITY to 8pm across the board, and for Recycling Stations, Recycling Stores and Recycling Spots of GREEN@COMMUNITY to open on all public holidays in order to facilitate delivery of waste for recycling by members of the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) prior to the implementation of Municipal Solid Waste Charging in August this year, whether it has plans to increase the number of Recycling Stations, Recycling Stores and Recycling Spots of GREEN@COMMUNITY; if so, of their numbers;
- (3) as it is learnt that waste plastics recycling bins for recycling, among others, "other plastics" (such as plastic bags, polyfoam products and plastic utensils) are provided in some public and private residential buildings registered under the pilot scheme on waste plastics collection and recycling, of the respective numbers of public rental housing (PRH) estates and private housing courts provided with such recycling bins as at December 31 last year, as well as the number of recycling bins involved; whether EPD has plans to provide more of such recycling bins at PRH estates and private housing courts by August this year; if so, of the respective numbers of relevant PRH estates and private housing courts, as well as the number of recycling bins involved; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (4) of the number of public refuse collection points (RCPs) in rural villages provided with waste plastics recycling bins for recycling other plastics as at December 31 last year, as well as the number of recycling bins involved; whether the EPD has plans to provide more of such recycling bins at RCPs in rural villages by August this year; if so, of the respective numbers of RCPs and recycling bins involved; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Currently, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has rolled out

a number of waste reduction and recycling schemes to improve the recycling network progressively, thereby helping the public practise waste reduction at source. For example, the Programme on Source Separation of Waste provides waste separation bins for free to over 2 700 housing estates/residential buildings and 1 200 commercial and industrial buildings, as well as providing about 1 100 sets of roadside recycling bins to rural areas to assist the public in recycling plastics, waste paper and metals. Besides, the EPD is continuously expanding GREEN@COMMUNITY, which is a community recycling network covering over 180 public collection points to specifically support residents living in the clusters of residential buildings (including single-block residential buildings and "three-nil" buildings) that are lacking the space for setting up recycling facilities on their own to participate in separation at source and clean recycling. The EPD is also setting up 50 small-scale Recycling Stores in public rental housing (PRH) estates progressively and a total of 76 sets of smart recycling bins have been installed at various application points for trial use by the public under the Pilot Programme on Smart Recycling Systems. The recycling network comprising the above schemes has already covered over 80 per cent of the population in various districts of Hong Kong. The reply to the question raised by the Hon Dennis Leung is as follows:

(1) Currently, all Recycling Stores are basically open from 9am to 7pm or from 10am to 8pm all year round, including Sundays and public holidays (except for the Christmas holidays, the Lunar New Year (LNY) holidays and on their eves, as well as the New Year's Eve, the Mid-Autumn Festival and the Winter Solstice, which are subject to separate arrangements). In response to the service demand of the public, the EPD has also adjusted the operating hours of most of the Recycling Stores in PRH estates to until 8pm. The opening hours of Recycling Stations are from 8am to 8pm. The EPD will make special service arrangements for GREEN@COMMUNITY from time to time as necessary. For example, during the weekend preceding the last LNY holidays, the operators of individual Recycling Stations and Recycling Stores set up a total of about 20 add-on Recycling Spots. All Recycling Stores also extended their service hours by three hours (i.e. operating from 9am to 10pm) on the 28th day of the last lunar month (February 7) and opened for six hours (from 11am to 5pm) from the second to fourth days of the LNY holidays (from February 11 to 13). These arrangements enabled the public to recycle the recyclables generated from the clean-up activities before the LNY.

(2) As at mid-February 2024, a total of 11 Recycling Stations, 40 Recycling Stores and over 130 Recycling Spots have been set up throughout the 18 districts in Hong Kong under GREEN@COMMUNITY for the collection of nine common types of recyclables including plastics, glass containers, small electrical appliances, regulated electrical equipment, fluorescent lamps/tubes, rechargeable batteries, beverage cartons, waste paper and metals. The first Recycling Store in an MTR station, GREEN@TSING YI, has just been put into service in February 2024, and the twelfth Recycling Station, GREEN@WONG TAI SIN, is also expected to commence services in the fourth quarter of 2024 gradually. The EPD is setting up small-scale Recycling Stores in 50 PRH estates progressively in order to enable residents living in the PRH estates and nearby to participate in clean recycling. Eight of the small-

scale Recycling Stores have already commenced operation, and the remaining Recycling Stores will commence operation gradually around April 1 this year. We will also enhance recycling services by increasing the number of Recycling Spots in the vicinity of "three-nil buildings" and in public markets.

The EPD will keep reviewing the operation of all community recycling facilities and the specific needs of individual districts for recycling facilities, and will proactively explore various measures such as increasing the number of Recycling Spots and extending their service hours, etc. We anticipate that the number of public collection points in Hong Kong will increase to about 500 in August this year to cope with the possible increase in the amount of recyclables and to improve the services of the community recycling network.

(3) At present, GREEN@COMMUNITY provides collection-at-door service to a total of about 200 PRH estates and over 1 800 private housing estates/single-block buildings/villages, etc for collection of nine common types of recyclables, including plastic bottles and other plastics. The contractors of EPD have provided about 2 300 designated recycling bins for "other plastics" for 99 PRH estates and about 350 private housing estates/residential buildings. Some housing estates/residential buildings have also set up their own recycling bins for "other plastics". We do not have statistical data on the numbers of these recycling bins.

In addition, the EPD is implementing the Pilot Programme on Smart Recycling Systems to enhance the operational efficiency of GREEN@COMMUNITY and provide the public with new recycling experience. At the present stage, a total of about 50 sets of smart recycling bins which can collect "other plastics" have been distributed to different application points (including PRH estates, private housing estates, villages, shopping malls, universities and government venues, etc) and have already been put into service.

(4) As at mid-February 2024, the EPD has set up about 1 100 sets of roadside recycling bins in public places in the rural areas, among which about 600 sets are placed outside the refuse collection points managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to enable residents in rural areas to recycle the most common types of recyclables, including paper, plastic bottles and metals. In case "other plastics" are received by the roadside recycling bins for plastic bottles, the service contractors of EPD will collect and deliver them to the workshops altogether for sorting before delivering to the approved recyclers for proper treatment. We will review the usage of roadside recycling bins in rural areas and change the labels of "plastic bottles" to "plastics" progressively in order to clearly indicate that the recycling bins concerned can receive any type of waste plastics.

LCQ4: Recovery of waste textiles

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (February 28):

Question:

According to the waste statistics for 2021 published by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), the quantity of waste textiles disposed of at landfills was 404 tonnes on average per day, accounting for 3.6 per cent of the total quantity of municipal solid waste (MSW), and the quantity of textiles accounted for less than 1 per cent of the quantity of recyclables recovered from MSW. On the other hand, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) has since 2006 implemented the Community Used Clothes Recycling Bank Scheme (the Scheme), which aims at facilitating members of the public to make use of the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks to donate used clothes in support of environmental protection and for charitable purposes. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the quantity of waste textiles recovered through the Scheme in the past three years, and its percentage in the total quantity of waste textiles recovered;
- (2) whether it has compiled statistics on the quantity of waste textiles recovered from the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks in the 18 districts in Hong Kong; if so, of the details;
- (3) as there are views pointing out that the rise of "fast fashion" has led to a decline in the quality of clothing, resulting in nearly 70 per cent of the used clothes recovered at present being waste, of the corresponding measures put in place by EPD to recover and recycle used clothes;
- (4) of the total number of clothing recovery and recycling contractors in Hong Kong at present; whether it knows the main recycling methods adopted by these contractors;
- (5) whether EPD has set targets for the quantity of waste textiles reduced, their recovery rate and recycling rate; if so, whether it will put in place new measures to encourage community-wide participation in the recovery of waste textiles; and
- (6) whether HAD has considered enhancing the Scheme by, for example, installing smart devices in the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks, so that the quantity of clothing recovered in the recycling banks can be displayed in real time on a one-stop website, with a view to making it more convenient for members of the public to use the recycling banks?

Reply:

President,

The policy of the Government is to promote waste reduction and recycling in the most cost-effective way, thereby alleviating the burden on landfills and promoting the development of circular economy. According to market principles, the recycling trade has been proactively collecting and recycling recyclables with stable market value (such as metals). The priority of Government's measures will be accorded to the treatment of two types of wastes, including (a) wastes of relatively large quantities but with low recycling value and high recycling costs (such as waste plastics and food waste), and (b) wastes containing hazardous substances, posing hazards to the environment and human health (such as waste electrical and electronic equipment). When considering options for specific measures, we will, at the same time, also consider converting waste into energy, instead of remanufacturing, to enhance the cost-effectiveness of recycling.

Among the municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Hong Kong, food waste, waste plastics and waste paper account for over 70 per cent of the total quantity, while waste textiles account for about 3 per cent. Based on the above policy principle, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) provides central collection services for waste plastics, waste paper, waste glass containers and food waste. In addition, GREEN@COMMUNITY, the community recycling network under the EPD, collects nine common types of recyclables which are more difficult to reuse, including plastics, waste paper, metals, glass containers, small electrical appliances, regulated electrical equipment, fluorescent lamps/tubes, rechargeable batteries and beverage cartons, and delivers them to downstream recyclers for proper treatment, export or local recycling.

For waste textiles, there are various non-profit making organisations, social enterprises and commercial organisations in the community collecting waste textiles for resale or export. The Home Affairs Department (HAD) has launched the Community Used Clothes Recycling Bank Scheme (the Scheme) since 2006. The participating non-governmental organisations operate the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks to collect used clothes donated by the public regularly. At present, the four Scheme Managers of the Scheme are Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong), Christian Action, the Salvation Army and the Conservancy Association. A total of 187 Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks are placed at appropriate locations in all districts across the territory. All of the used clothes collected and the revenue generated from their sale have to be used for charitable purposes.

In consultation with the HAD, the reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Yung is as follows:

(1) and (2) The four Scheme Managers of the Scheme (namely Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong), Christian Action, the Salvation Army and the Conservancy Association) operate and manage the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks at designated districts respectively. In the past three years, the quantities of used clothes collected in the different districts by the Scheme Managers are

tabulated below:

Scheme Manager	District	Quantity of used clothes collected (in tonnes)		
		2021	2022	2023
Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong)	Central & Western Eastern Wan Chai Southern Islands	246.96	237.13	292.89
Christian Action	Sham Shui Po Kwun Tong Kowloon City Yau Tsim Mong Wong Tai Sin	283.77	234.88	267.88
The Salvation Army	Tsuen Wan Kwai Tsing Yuen Long Tuen Mun	60.84	64.25	65.05
The Conservancy Association	Sai Kung North Tai Po Sha Tin	54.08	60	85.83
	Quantity per year (in tonnes)	645.65	596.26	711.66

According to the waste statistics compiled by the EPD, the recycling rate of waste textiles collected by different non-profit making organisations, social enterprises, commercial organisations and the Scheme has increased from about 4 per cent in 2018 to nearly 11 per cent in 2022. The total quantity of waste textiles recycled in 2022 was about 17 000 tonnes, among which the used clothes collected by the Scheme accounted for about 3 per cent.

(3), (4) and (5) Given the wide variety of clothing materials, recycling used clothing involves technical and cost-effectiveness issues at present. Therefore, there are organisations in the community providing different kinds of clothing recycling services, including consignment service in second-hand clothing stores, online auctions and bartering, etc. In recent years, there are also some large-scale fashion stores offering shopping discounts for used clothes recycling, and reprocessing the collected used clothes into fabrics or other products. We do not collect the data from these organisations or enterprises, and do not set any recycling target for used clothes.

The Government has all along been promoting the environmentally friendly culture of "Use Less, Waste Less" and enabling green living to take root in the community. Before disposing of those relatively durable items or items with reusable value, such as clothing, we encourage the public to consider

how to better utilise them first, such as reusing these items through "swapping", resale or donation to charitable organisations, etc. The Recycling Stations of GREEN@COMMUNITY organise different types of environmental education activities from time to time, such as organising workshops to teach the public how to properly use or upcycle waste items, including clothing, and arranging "swapping" events, etc. In addition, the EPD makes use of the GREEN\$ mobile app and the Waste Reduction Website (www.wastereduction.gov.hk) to provide the public with the locations of the used clothes recycling points managed by the Scheme and other organisations.

For the time being, reuse of used clothes, such as allowing non-profit making organisations participating in the Scheme to donate them to people/organisations in need, or making use of the revenue generated from the sale of used clothes for charitable purposes, is the most cost-effective way of handling. With the development of recycling technologies, there may be other cost-effective ways to recycle used clothes in the future.

(6) To facilitate and encourage the public to donate used clothes, the HAD disseminates information relating to the Scheme, including the locations of the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks and details of the Scheme Managers, etc. on its website (www.had.gov.hk/en/public_services/community_used_clothes_recycling_bank_scheme/). The HAD will closely monitor the development of relevant technologies, including the application of smart recycling devices, with a view to providing the public with a more convenient service to recycle used clothes.

Extension of first registration tax concession arrangement for electric vehicles for two years and relevant new arrangements

The 2024-25 Budget announced today (February 28) that the first registration tax (FRT) concession arrangement for electric vehicles (EVs) will be extended for two years to March 31, 2026. The relevant new FRT concession arrangements for various types of EVs are as follows:

From April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2026:

(a) Electric private cars (e-PCs)

(i) Except for eligible e-PC owners (see paragraph (a)(ii)), the FRT concession cap for e-PCs in general will be adjusted from \$97,500 to \$58,500.

(ii) For vehicle owners who register a new e-PC for the first time after arranging for the scrapping and cancellation of the registration of their eligible old private car (PC) (PC with an internal combustion engine or e-PC) under the "One-for-One Replacement" Scheme, the FRT concession cap granted will be adjusted from \$287,500 to \$172,500.

(iii) e-PCs with a taxable value (i.e. vehicle price before tax) of over \$500,000 will no longer be entitled to the FRT concession.

(b) The FRT for other types of EVs (including electric commercial vehicles, electric motorcycles and electric motor tricycles) will continue to be waived in full.

The prevailing vehicle first registration procedures remain unchanged. The above new arrangements are applicable to "One-for-One Replacement" Scheme applications or EV first registration applications submitted on or after April 1, 2024 (subject to receipt of the completed application form and required documents by the Transport Department (TD)). The Government will implement a one-off arrangement. For e-PCs that have been ordered on or before February 28, 2024, or have been arranged by the vehicle owners to be shipped to Hong Kong for their own use, even if the e-PCs have not been first registered before April 1, 2024, they are still entitled to the FRT concession before adjustment, provided that the relevant local registered distributors/registered importers/vehicle owners have submitted the supporting documents required to the TD and have applied for paying motor vehicles FRT based on the concession before adjustment, and that the relevant application is verified and approved by the TD. However, local registered distributors/registered importers/vehicle owners must submit the application on or before February 27, 2025, so that they can pay the motor vehicles FRT at the concession before adjustment under the aforementioned one-off arrangement.

For enquiries, members of the public can call 1823 or the TD's Hong Kong Licensing Office at 2804 2637.

Postal services to Greece subject to delay

â€‹Hongkong Post announced today (February 28) that, as advised by the postal administration of Greece, due to a local strike at the destination, mail delivery services to Greece are subject to delay.

SME Financing Guarantee Scheme extends application period

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Financial Secretary announced in the 2024-25 Budget that the application period of the 80% Guarantee Product and the 90% Guarantee Product of the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme (SFGS) be extended for two years to end-March 2026.

Enterprises wishing to apply for loans may approach the lending institutions. Details including the list of participating lenders are available on the SFGS webpage: www.hkmc.com.hk/sfgs. For public enquiries, please call the SFGS Hotline at 2536 0392.