

Transcript of remarks by SEE at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, at a media session after visiting an educational activity of municipal solid waste charging at Yaumati Kaifong Association School today (January 16):

Reporter: Just two English questions, can you just talk about what are the plans for maybe fee exemption or fee reduction, for those lower-income families, or perhaps those with more specific needs for plastic bags, such as those who need to use multiple diapers, are there any plans to reduce their fee, or kind of exempt them from the plastic bag fee? And also how could the situation of the property services company, like using a giant rubbish bag, be reduced, be avoided, like you mentioned that they are just cleaning up the mess for individual households? Is it rather difficult to inspect individual households whether they are using the designated bags?

The Secretary for Environment and Ecology: Each individual of the society should change our habit to use the designated bag to dispose of waste. You mentioned the grass-roots families, some of them are very poor, and charging may hit them severely. If you look at the actual amount of fee collected, each family we are talking about spending \$1.1 or \$1.7 per day. As for per month, we are talking about \$30 or \$40 in addition. For a normal family, the impact should not be very severe. Nonetheless, for the families taking CSSA (Comprehensive Social Security Assistance), the Government will provide a monthly \$10 allowance to each CSSA recipient to alleviate their burden due to the waste charging. You have also mentioned the persons with disabilities, whether there will be some form of help. We are discussing with the Social Welfare Department to see whether the Government will offer some assistance in some form. That is something being discussed now.

And you talked about after the implementation of waste charging, for those who live in the multi-storey buildings, it may not be easy to take law enforcement actions. Nonetheless, the law has empowered the law enforcement officers to enter residential buildings to enforce the law. While it may not be very easy, there are some ways to catch those do not use the designated bags. As I have explained, you should look into the risk and also the cost of being caught. If you do not follow the law, do not use a designated bag, what you can save is about \$1.1 or \$1.7 per day, but in case if you are caught, if you do it every day, sooner or later you will be caught. If you are caught, the penalty is \$1,500 each time. If you are caught one time, the penalty will be sufficient for you to buy the designated bags for two or three years. Therefore, you should not take that risk, because it is not wise for you to take that risk.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)