

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 332/01-02
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by the Administration and cleared
by the Chairman)

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**LegCo Panel on Manpower and
LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Minutes of joint meeting held on
Thursday, 27 September 2001, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Members of the LegCo Panel on Manpower

Hon CHAN Kwok-keung (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS
Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP
* Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP

Members of the LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok

Members absent : Members of the LegCo Panel on Manpower

Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP (Chairman)

Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung

Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo

Hon SZETO Wah

* Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP

* Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung

Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP

Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

Members of the LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon Bernard CHAN

Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP

Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip

Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

(* Also members of the LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs)

Public officers attending : Environment and Food Bureau

Mr Donald TONG

Deputy Secretary

Ms Annie CHOI

Principal Assistant Secretary (B)2

Attendance by invitation : Greenpeace

Ms Miranda YIP

Campaigner

Mr Howard LIU

Campaigner

Oxfam Hong Kong

Ms LAW Yuk-lan

Hong Kong Programme Officer

Mr HUNG Fan-keung

Hong Kong Programme Officer

Industrial Relations Institute

Ms LAM Shui-hum
Centre-in-charge

Ms LAU Yau-chun
Education Officer

Hong Kong Women Workers' Association

Ms WU Mei-lin
Co-ordinator

Fr Anthony CHANG Sang-loi
Organizer

Sham Shui Po Community Association Ltd.

Mr WONG Chor-man
Vice-Chairman

Mr CHU Kong-wai
Labour Executive

Hong Kong General Association of Recycling Business

Mr LEUNG Pui-lun
President

Mr MAK Man-sang
Vice-President

Clerk in attendance : Miss Becky YU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Mrs Mary TANG
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)2

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I Election of Chairman

Mr CHAN Kwok keung was elected Chairman of the joint meeting.

II Promoting waste reduction and recovery of domestic waste and creation of new job opportunities in the recycling industry

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 2103/00-01(03) -- Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat

LC Paper No. CB(1) 2103/00-01(04) -- Submission from the Friends of the Earth referred to the Panels by the Chairman of the Finance Committee

LC Paper No. CB(1) 2103/00-01(05) -- List of projects approved under the Environmental and Conservation Fund

LC Paper No. CB(1) 2103/00-01(06) -- Information paper on promoting waste reduction and recovery of domestic waste provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1) 2103/00-01(07) -- Information paper on creation of new job opportunities in the recycling industry provided by the Administration)

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Secretary for the Environment and Food (DS/EF) highlighted the salient points in the Administration's papers (LC Paper No. CB(1) 2103/00-01(06) and (07)) which set out the Government's new initiatives to further promote prevention and recovery of domestic waste in Hong Kong.

Meeting with deputations

Greenpeace

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 2103/00-01(02) -- Submission from the Green Collar Coalition comprising representatives from the Greenpeace, Oxfam Hong Kong, Industrial Relations Institution, Hong Kong Women Workers' Association and Sham Shui Po Community Association Ltd

LC Paper No. CB(1) 2103/00-01(01) -- Submission from Greenpeace)

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3. Ms Miranda YIP said that Greenpeace was disappointed at the lack of commitment on the part of the Government in promoting waste reduction and recycling. The Administration had not been able to achieve the targets for waste reduction as set out in the Waste Reduction Framework Plan published in 1998. It also failed to review the progress and effectiveness of the Plan nor the reasons for not able to achieve the waste reduction targets. Greenpeace considered that a comprehensive package of measures was required to promote and facilitate waste reduction and recycling. As for resource allocation, Greenpeace noted that a major part of resources was allocated to waste disposal facilities, such as landfills and incinerators, whereas only \$100 million were allocated to support community-based waste prevention and recovery programmes. Ms YIP pointed out that the recent success in the recycling of glass bottles in Taiwan was only made possible through the introduction of financial incentives. She added that more should be done in respect of imposition of producer responsibility as in the case of Germany and Holland. Efforts should also be made to encourage the recycling of used equipment such as computers.

Oxfam Hong Kong

4. Ms LAW Yuk-lan considered it useful for the Environmental Affairs Panel and the Manpower Panel to hold this joint meeting since there was a close correlation between waste recycling and creation of jobs. She said that Oxfam was seriously concerned about the high unemployment rate in Hong Kong and considered that a lot of job opportunities could be created in the recycling industry. In this connection, Oxfam had set up the Green Collar Coalition in association with other district organizations to explore the feasibility of creating more jobs in the recycling industry. She said that apart from injecting fund into the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF), the Administration should provide funding to district organizations to encourage active community involvement in waste prevention and recycling which should start at source. A package of supporting measures should also be worked out to assist the recycling industry.

Industrial Relations Institute (IRI)

5. Ms LAM Shui-hum said that IRI was concerned about the low demand for recyclable materials. For instance, there was no market for the large number of plastic bottles collected. It was therefore necessary to foster a market for the sales of recyclable materials. To this end, the Government should assist the recycling industry in the re-use of recyclable materials. Financial incentives should be introduced to encourage waste recovery and recycling. Ms LAM also shared with members the success of a two-day sale of used products organized by IRI during which many of the products were bought and re-used by new immigrant families. She opined that the Government should try to promote similar activities with a view to preventing waste generation.

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Hong Kong Women Workers' Association

6. Ms WU Mei-lin expressed disappointment at the lack of co-ordination among Government departments in promoting waste separation and recycling. By way of illustration, the reluctance of the Housing Department (HD) to provide adequate space within public housing estates for waste segregation facilities had hampered the segregation of waste at source. The outsourcing of cleansing service to private cleaning companies and the implementation of new environmental initiatives had also affected the livelihood of cleaners. She pointed out that although cleaners were offered meagre wages for their work, they were able to derive additional income from the sale of recyclable products such as aluminum cans and waste papers. However, with the provision of separation bins for different recyclable products, the materials collected would be delivered to the processors or recyclers direct by the cleaning companies according to the terms of their contracts. As a result, the cleaners were deprived of the additional income earned through the sale of recyclable materials. It was also disappointed that the Labour Department had also not been helpful in the creation of jobs and the protection against unreasonable wages for cleaning workers.

Sham Shui Po Community Association (SSPCA)

7. Mr CHU Kong-wai said that SSPCA considered it useful to set up a special committee to promote waste recovery and recycling. While there were huge investments in the provision of landfills and incinerators, not much had been invested in the segregation of domestic waste, apart from some educational programmes. He hoped that through the concerted efforts of different government departments, more could be done in encouraging district support and developing producer responsibility for the segregation and recycling of waste.

Hong Kong General Association of Recycling Business (HKGARB)
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 2115/00-01(01) -- Submission from HKGARB)

8. Mr LEUNG Pui-lun stressed that there was a price to pay for the protection of the environment, and that efforts should be made to promote the recycling of waste. With the provision of land for waste recovery operations, HKGARB was able to recycle 10% of the total waste paper generated within its limited resources. However, the fluctuation in the price of waste paper, coupled with the additional operating cost incurred from fines for illegal parking and overloading had adversely affected the recycling industry. While appreciating the proposed establishment of a Recovery Park in Tuen Mun, the industry was worried that the centralized operation would result in increased transportation costs. As such, a distributed network with waterfront access to facilitate export of processed materials to re-manufacturers was preferred. The Administration should also ensure that the business was viable, and that there was a market for the recycled products. He added that as the recycling industry was providing sources of income for elderlies, it was hoped that the Administration would continue to assist the industry.

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Meeting with the Administration

9. With the consent of the Chairman, DS/EF and the Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment and Food(B)2 (PAS/EF(B)2) took the opportunity to respond to the views put forward by the deputations.

10. On *the role of the Government in waste reduction*, DS/EF advised that the Environment and Food Bureau (EFB), together with the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), assumed a co-ordinating role in the promotion of waste reduction and recovery. They worked together with other departments and organizations in implementing waste reduction policies and programmes. He also clarified that at present, waste incineration was not adopted as a means of disposal in Hong Kong. Miss CHOY So-yuk remarked that the Administration was overly conservative in setting the waste reduction targets, which were much lower as compared to cities in the United States. She opined that a higher target aiming at zero waste, and that a more proactive approach, apart from reliance on public education and community involvement, should be adopted. Miss CHAN Yuen-han echoed that positive Government intervention was necessary for deserving causes, including environmental protection.

11. On *the injection of \$100 million into ECF*, DS/EF said that the Administration recognized the importance of community involvement and waste segregation at source. With the proposed injection of \$100 million into ECF, more funding could be made available to community organizations and green groups to carry out community-based waste prevention programmes. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan opined that it would be more cost-effective to use the money to employ waste collectors and recyclers. PAS/EF(B)2 said that the proposal injection would be subject to the approval by the Finance Committee (FC). The fund was open to application by community groups and green groups etc to carry out waste reduction projects, and hiring of workers to collect recyclables would be fundable items in these projects. All applications for funding would be carefully scrutinized.

12. Referring to the submission from the Friends of the Earth (FOE) circulated vide LC Paper No CB(1)2103/00-01(04) regarding the proposed injection of \$100 million into ECF, Ms Emily LAU agreed that there should be greater transparency in the funding allocation process to ensure impartiality. In reply, DS/EF pointed out that FOE had made a number of inaccurate assumptions and had a misconception that the fund, if managed by Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC), would only be used for publicity programmes. In fact, ECC approved funding for both educational and community programmes. PAS/EF(B)2 added that the ECF was a statutory fund with established criteria in funding allocation. Green groups, including FOE, were represented at ECC. The Administration would provide detailed information on the management and proposed criteria for funding when approval was sought from FC.

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13. Mr Henry WU declared interest as a member of the ECC and the Convenor of the Project Vetting Committee of ECC which comprised members from District Councils, green groups and professional sectors. He said that it had all along been the ECC's practice to carefully examine the merits of each application before deciding on funding allocation.

14. On *supporting the recycling industry*, PAS/EF(B)2 said that apart from the proposed Recovery Park, the Administration had also leased eight sites through short-term tenancies for use by waste processing and recovery operations. It would continue to identify suitable sites for this purpose. She added that the Administration was well aware of the difficulties faced by the industry. For instance, in regard to the high transportation costs associated with the collection of plastic bottles, a trial scheme for collecting plastic bottles had been put in place. Together with a voluntary agency, another trial scheme for collecting and compressing plastic bottles was launched in Tin Shui Wai. If these trial schemes were successful, the Administration would expand their coverage to more districts.

15. Miss CHOY So-yuk asked if the Administration would consider providing financial assistance to the recycling industry, which could be derived from savings achieved as a result of reduction of waste to be disposed of at landfills. DS/EF advised that this would have to be examined carefully having regard to the Government's prudent financial management principles. Nevertheless, the Administration would take into account the views put forward and continue to explore new initiatives such as the recycling of tyres. In response to Ms CHAN Yuen-han's question on the timetable for implementing the new initiatives, DS/EF undertook to provide regular reports to the Legislative Council.

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16. Ms LI Fung-ying enquired about the supporting facilities and incentives which the Administration would provide to encourage the recycling trades to relocate their operations to the Recovery Park in Tuen Mun. DS/EF explained that the site at the Recovery Park was zoned for long-term use by the recycling industry. It would make available more land for the industry and encourage long-term investment by recyclers. PAS/EF(B)2 added that the site would have its own waterfront access to facilitate the export of processed materials to re-manufacturers. As regards Ms Emily LAU's enquiry about the progress of implementation of supporting facilities to foster recycling, PAS/EF(B)2 advised that the supporting services and facilities would be in place soon after the tendering process had been completed.

17. On *waste separation and recycling*, PAS/EF(B)2 advised that the results of a recent survey indicated that people would be more willing to separate waste if there were more waste separation bins at convenient locations. Ms LI Fung-ying however noted that despite the provision of separation bins, the current recovery rate for domestic waste was only 8%. DS/EF said that at present, separation bins were available in over 800 private developments and all public housing estates. To further enhance waste separation, the Administration planned to provide separation bins on a trial basis on every floor of two public housing estates. It would also work closely with the Housing Authority (HA) and the Housing Society on measures to reduce waste. As

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regards the alleged non-provision of space for waste separation in public housing estates, PAS/EF(B)2 said that HA had been supportive of waste reduction and separation. However there could be site constraints in individual estate. Nevertheless, she undertook to follow up the issue with HA.

18. PAS/EF(B)2 stressed that the provision of additional separation bins was only one of the measures to facilitate waste recovery. Other trial schemes and waste recovery programmes would be put in place to further reduce waste. The Administration would also provide funding for implementing community-based waste separation programmes such that special programmes could be designed to meet the needs of individual districts. Ms Emily LAU opined that as recycling activities formed an integral part of the Government's waste reduction plan, they should not be treated as normal business activities but should be given the necessary support. PAS/EF(B)2 reiterated that funding would be available for recycling activities. However, in vetting funding application, it would still be necessary to assess their expenditure items and cost-effectiveness.

19. Mr Tommy CHEUNG opined that the Administration should provide assistance to the restaurant trade for recycling plastic bottles and cooking oil. Ms Cyd HO remarked that there was a limited number of recyclers for cooking oil. She agreed that assistance should be given to these recyclers since otherwise the used oil would ultimately be disposed of at landfills. Ms CHOY So-yuk echoed that more should be done to facilitate the recycling of organic waste from restaurants. PAS/EF(B)2 noted members' views and said that EPD could provide advice on the collection arrangements for recyclable materials. Together with EPD, the hotel industry had set up its own waste recycling programme to collect recyclable waste from hotels. The same arrangement could be worked out by the restaurant trade. Meanwhile, a hotel and a restaurant chain were considering to experiment using electrical composters to recycle organic waste. Separately, the Administration had set aside a site at Ngau Tam Mei, Yuen Long for use as a composting plant and arrangements for the tendering process were underway. The plant would be operational in 2002. However, measures would have to be worked out to minimize the environmental nuisance arising from the operation of the factory.

20. Ms LI Fung-ying asked if the Administration would consider introducing mandatory measures for recycling of materials which could be re-used. DS/EF said that it might not be the right time to introduce any mandatory measures at this stage when more supporting facilities for waste separation and reduction had yet to be provided.

21. On *recycling special wastes*, DS/EF said that the Administration had to examine the outlets for these wastes, such as used computers and cellular batteries. It would have to bear in mind the viability of recycling these products and the recycling costs which might have to be transferred to consumers. In fact, some importers were working on the feasibility of recycling printer cartridges and cellular batteries. Ms Cyd HO opined that the Administration should adopt a total management concept for waste recycling. In other words, apart from facilitating the collection, separation and

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re-manufacturing of waste, efforts should be made to encourage the procurement of the final recycled products. She was disappointed that government departments had not taken the lead in the use of recycled products manufactured locally.

22. In response, PAS/EF(B)2 said that EFB was working closely with the Government Supplies Department (GSD) on the procurement of recycled products. In 2000, 37% of the paper purchased by government departments were recycled paper. However, the Government could not confine its procurement to products manufactured locally given its obligations to ensure fair competition under the World Trade Organization Agreement on Government Procurement. As regards Ms HO's concern about the use of recycled materials in the construction of roads, PAS/EF(B)2 explained that field tests had to be conducted to ensure that the safety standards were not compromised. DS/EF added that recyclers who wished to research and develop new recycled products could seek funding support from the Innovation and Technology Fund.

23. On *producer responsibility schemes*, DS/EF said that this was being examined but due regard would have to be given to the likely difficulties faced by producers and importers in meeting environmental objectives during the current economic downturn. Although the Administration would not rule out the possibility of stepping up actions in waste reduction in line with overseas practices, it would first consult the affected parties with a view to resolving their difficulties. He assured members that in addition to implementing the announced initiatives, the Administration would continue to review its waste reduction policies and was prepared to consider the views put forward.

24. On *creation of employment*, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suggested that instead of providing fund for waste disposal at landfills, consideration should be given to using the fund to provide a one-line service which included collection, transportation and recycling of waste. This would not only be environmental friendly but would create a lot of job opportunities as waste recycling was a labour-intensive industry. He also considered it necessary for the Administration to be more specific about the number of jobs which would be created as a result of its waste prevention programmes. His views were shared by Ms Cyd HO who agreed to the need for creation of job opportunities through the funding of waste prevention programmes. DS/EF said that the creation of job opportunities could be one of the criteria for assessing the eligibility for funding. At the request of the Chairman, the Administration undertook to provide a breakdown on the number of jobs arising from the eight community-based waste prevention programmes funded by ECF.

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Way forward

25. PAS/EF(B)2 said that the Administration would submit the proposal on the injection of \$100 million into ECF to FC in early 2002. Subject to the approval of FC, the fund would be available for application by 1 April 2002. The Administration would regularly report to the Environmental Affairs Panel on the latest development of the initiatives to reduce waste. The Chairman said that the Manpower Panel and the

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Environmental Affairs Panel would keep in view the progress of development and decide on the need for a further meeting. He thanked representatives of the trade for attending the meeting, adding that they were welcomed to submit their further views in writing.

III Any other business

26. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 5:05 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

16 November 2001