



香港工程師學會

THE HONG KONG INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS

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Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council Secretariat
3rd Floor, Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road, Central
Hong Kong

Dear Sirs

LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs – Management of Municipal Solid Waste in Hong Kong

Thank you for your letter of 13 May 2005 inviting the Institution to attend the meeting of the captioned subject and to put forth our views on the subject matters.

We are pleased to submit herewith our views on those areas, which are of concern to our members as well as to the community as a whole. The HKIE is in support of the Government's general direction for the waste management strategy. We agree that the three key elements including waste avoidance and minimisation; recovery, recycling and reuse; bulk reduction and disposal of unrecyclable waste are important to combat the problem of municipal solid waste in Hong Kong. Our members' concerns and views are elaborated in the enclosure for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Ir James Y C KWAN JP
President

Encl.

Enclosure

LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

Summary of the HKIE's Views on Management of Municipal Solid Waste in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) concurs with the government's main focus on the three key elements on the waste management strategy as adopted: -

- (a) waste avoidance and minimisation;
- (b) recovery, recycling and reuse; and
- (c) bulk reduction and disposal of unrecyclable waste.

In support of the Government's policy to manage and combat waste production, the HKIE is pleased to put forth our views on areas relating to the key elements.

(a) Waste avoidance and minimisation

While we note that the Government has taken different initiatives to raise the public awareness about the importance of waste avoidance and minimisation, we wish to point out that a sustainable waste management policy together with a comprehensive series of environmental education programmes are fundamental to waste avoidance and minimisation. Taking Japan as an example, the policy on waste management sets out a clear direction for the country to move towards a sound material-cycle society to minimise natural resources consumption and waste disposal. This would be achieved by following the hierarchy of reduction, reuse, material recycling, thermal recycling and lastly landfill disposal. The policy also maps out a major target to be achieved by 2010 to reduce 20% of garbage discharged from households per person per day compared with year 2000.

To heighten awareness of the significance of waste avoidance in Hong Kong, we are of the view that the introduction of a charging scheme for the management of municipal solid waste may be worth considering as an incentive for reuse and recycling. For

example, the Government may consider levying direct and visible charges on households, organizations and business companies based on the volume of waste generated by these entities, so as to give incentive for them to minimise waste disposal. Taipei, in this regard, has successfully arranged for different charging schemes to secure waste avoidance, such as the charging arrangement for the purchase of garbage bags in the city. Japan has also adopted a charging scheme on MSW based on the garbage size to be disposed of. However, we would like to point out that the implementation of new charging policies with significant cost implications should take into account the disadvantaged communities. An assessment scheme should be established to reduce or totally exempt the charge of those who are financially less able or unable to pay. A fair, equitable and transparent arrangement of the scheme should be made to all sectors of the society.

It is also worth mentioning that the producer / consumer responsibility schemes shall help contain the waste disposal problem. We urge the Government to further promote the schemes in various areas to provide incentives for stakeholders to support the waste minimisation.

(b) Recovery, recycling and reuse

We consider that recovery and recycling of waste shall form part of the essential elements in waste management strategy and as a buffer against the rapid decrease of useful life of the existing landfills.

Noting that the development of the recycling industries has not been put on the right track in Hong Kong resulting in some of the sorted recyclables being end up in landfills, we strongly recommend the Government to provide incentives to the industry to encourage private investments in this endeavour. It is also essential for the Government to promote the industry so that the recycling concepts can be better conveyed to the general public.

So much as we are in support of more incentive schemes such as a waste tax as part of the environmental policy to stimulate the recovery and recycling industries, we believe

that the Government should facilitate the development of the recycling industry in terms of loan and land lease as a means of improvement of the natural environment in Hong Kong. The HKIE is ready to provide necessary assistance in this connection.

Whilst we agree that waste separation is of vital importance to effective recovery and recycling of waste, we would like to suggest the Government taking a leading role in educating and promoting the waste separation and also considering the possibility of setting up a central waste separation plant to facilitate its implementation in a long run.

(c) Bulk reduction and disposal of unrecyclable waste

The HKIE is aware of the need to establish alternative waste disposal facilities to reduce the volume of waste before disposal at the landfills. To help prolong the service life of the three existing landfills, we agree that different waste treatment technologies will contribute to waste elimination. With reference to the waste management facilities in Japan and some European countries, thermal treatment facilities can be effective means to serve as one of the waste disposal alternatives. Although modern thermal treatment facilities are generally equipped with effective air pollution control systems, we advise that comprehensive studies on the feasibility of such an alternative should be made so as to ensure that the technology is environmentally safe for the local community.

Moreover, the HKIE is in support of the use of composting to treat putrescible waste including food waste and other biodegradable organic waste, e.g. livestock waste. However, there may be setbacks for making composting technology practical in Hong Kong because of the significant land requirements for the biological process and the limited local market needs for compost.

In conclusion, the HKIE consents to an acknowledged need of the implementation of the MSW disposal charging scheme which it serves as an economic incentive for waste producers (both individuals and business premises) to minimise waste and to facilitate investments and development of a viable waste recovery and recycling industries in Hong Kong.