

Legislative Council Meeting of 8 February 2006

Motion Debate on “Improving the notification mechanism for contamination of potable water supply to Hong Kong and enhancing coordination in the supply of potable water to Hong Kong”

Progress Report

INTRODUCTION

This paper sets out the progress of actions taken by the Administration in response to the captioned motion which was carried at the Legislative Council meeting of 8 February 2006.

THE MOTION

2. The following motion moved by Hon Albert Jinghan CHENG, as amended by Hon WONG Ting-kwong and further amended by Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, was carried -

“That this Council urges the HKSAR Government, in discussing the finalization of the specific details of a new water supply agreement, to improve jointly with the Guangdong Provincial Government the existing notification mechanism for contamination of potable water supply to Hong Kong, including imposing a time limit for notification; to formulate a contingency mechanism jointly operated by Guangdong and Hong Kong for dealing with unexpected incidents of water supply; to discuss ways to enhance coordination in the supply of potable water to Hong Kong and allow flexibility in determining the supply quantity, so as to avoid drawing unneeded water when there was overflow from local reservoirs and hence resulting in wastage; and to discuss the further upgrading of the quality standard of potable water supply to Hong Kong; the Guangdong Provincial Government and the HKSAR Government should be allowed to review the water supply quantity according to needs on a monthly basis; in addition, the HKSAR Government should also examine expanding the existing reservoirs or further perfecting the interconnection of reservoirs, so as to increase the water storage capacity of local reservoirs.”

THE ADMINISTRATION'S FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

Emergency notification mechanism for Dongjiang water supply

3. In partnership with the Guangdong authorities, we have already jointly established an emergency notification mechanism for supply of Dongjiang water. If there is any major pollution incident occurring upstream of the Dongjiang water intake or in the vicinity of the Dongshen Water Supply System affecting the quality of water supply to Hong Kong, the Guangdong side will inform the Water Supplies Department (WSD) of the HKSAR Government by telephone or fax. WSD will collaborate with the Guangdong side to take suitable control measures and follow-up actions to safeguard the quality of water supply. In this regard, both governments have appointed responsible contact persons to ensure that communication is direct, swift and precise.

4. Under the Dongjiang Water Supply System, raw water is delivered from Dongjiang via a dedicated aqueduct system to the Shenzhen Reservoir where it may take a few days before entering Hong Kong. Therefore, should any major pollution incident occur upstream of the Dongjiang water intake or in the vicinity of Dongshen Water Supply System, there will be ample time for triggering the emergency notification mechanism and for initiating necessary contingency measures aiming to protect the quality of water supply to Hong Kong against possible contamination. Nevertheless, we will continue exploring with the Guangdong side on the practicality of setting a time frame for notification.

Contingency measures

5. WSD has drawn up a series of contingency measures to cope with the situation where emergency incidents have impacted on the quality of Dongjiang water supply to Hong Kong. Major measures include immediately stepping up monitoring and control of water quality; discharging Dongjiang water received at Muk Wu Pumping Station as necessary; maintaining close liaison with the Guangdong side with a view to reducing or suspending the supply of Dongjiang water to Hong Kong; and/or replacing Dongjiang water supplied to water treatment works with local water sources.

Flexibility and monthly review of supply quantities

6. On 12 April 2006, we have reached an agreement with the Guangdong side on the water supply arrangements for the period up to 2008, which allow greater flexibility in the daily supply rate to tie in with the seasonal fluctuations in the local yield. We will inform the Guangdong side on a monthly basis our demand for Dongjiang water according to actual needs. This will enable us to have better control of the storage level in Hong Kong, thus minimizing the rare occasions of overflow at some reservoirs after heavy rainstorms and saving pumping costs.

Dongjiang water quality

7. Since commissioning of the designated aqueduct system in mid-2003, the ingress of pollution during the transfer of Dongjiang water to Shenzhen Reservoir has been eliminated resulting in remarkable improvement in the quality of raw water delivered to Hong Kong. Under the new water supply arrangements, the Guangdong side will strive to further upgrade the water quality in compliance with the latest national Type II Standard of GB 3838-2002. We will benefit from reduced expenses in water treatment due to the enhanced quality of Dongjiang water. We will co-ordinate closely with the Guangdong side which are committed to continually improving the water environment of Dongjiang.

Expansion of existing reservoir system

8. WSD had carried out a feasibility study on the proposal to expand the existing reservoir system. The study concluded that increasing the existing storage capacities of reservoirs could have adverse implications on the environment and would not be cost-effective when compared to other feasible methods in providing additional water resources, such as desalination.

9. On expansion of water resources, we have embarked upon various research projects comprising the pilot scheme at Ngong Ping on the use of reclaimed water, which has formally commenced operation in March 2006, and also the pilot study on desalination by reverse osmosis technology scheduled for completion in about a year's time. In addition, we are making preparations for

implementing a demonstration scheme in Shek Wu Hui on wider use of reclaimed water later this year. Based on the data and experience accumulated from these research projects, we will aim at formulating in late 2007 the long-term strategy and implementation plan for the total water management programme.

Further improvement to reservoir network

10. WSD is planning an Inter-reservoir Transfer Scheme which will be designed to transfer the overflow from the Kowloon Group Reservoirs to Lower Shing Mun Reservoir, thereby reducing the discharge into the drainage system in Lai Chi Kok area and at the same time, transforming the overflow into potable water resources. We will continue to look into other practical options with a view to further improving the reservoir network, subject to their technical feasibility and cost effectiveness.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
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