

Product Eco-responsibility Bill

The Administration's Response to Views and Questions Raised at the Bills Committee Meeting on 26 March 2008

Green Procurement

The Administration has long been implementing a green procurement policy. In 2000, the Stores and Procurement Regulations (SPR) were amended to require all bureaux and departments to give consideration to purchase products -

- (a) with improved recyclability, higher recycled content, reduced packaging and greater durability;
- (b) with greater energy efficiency;
- (c) utilising clean technology and/or clean fuels;
- (d) which result in reduced water consumption;
- (e) which emit fewer irritating or toxic substances during installation or use; or
- (f) which result in smaller production of toxic substances, or of less toxic substance, upon disposal.

All bureaux and departments must follow the SPR and the green procurement guidelines therein, when making their procurement decisions.

2. Since then, the Administration has also developed and adopted mandatory "green" specifications for a wide range of commonly used products so as to ensure that they meet certain environmental standards. In 2007, the Administration purchased over \$100 million worth of "green" products, including recycled paper, office stationery, cleansing products, office equipment and environmentally-friendly vehicles. In tandem with the market development, the list of products with mandatory "green" specifications would be reviewed and expanded as and when appropriate. It should, however, be noted that a substantial part of Government's procurement does not have "green" alternatives, such as pharmaceutical products, computer software, chemicals and laboratory equipment.

Recovery Rate of Municipal Solid Waste

3. To address our imminent and serious waste problem in a sustainable manner, the Council for Sustainable Development (SDC)

conducted a public engagement process on waste management in 2004. Having considered the views received, the SDC recommended, amongst others, that a waste recovery rate of 45% and 50% should be achieved by 2009 and 2014 respectively. The Administration subsequently adopted the recommendation of the SDC in the “Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014)”.

4. As reported in LC Paper No. CB(1)1117/07-08(02), the recovery rate of municipal solid waste reached 45% in 2007. With the support and participation of the public, the Administration would strive to achieve the target of 50% recovery rate by 2014.

Collection of Used Plastic Shopping Bags

5. The Administration has been liaising with major supermarket chains to explore possible measures to facilitate the collection of used plastic shopping bags, including the feasibility of providing partial refund of the levy collected to encourage the public to return their used plastic shopping bags for recycling purposes. The initial feedback from the trade is that it would be more convenient for the public to dispose of used plastic shopping bags at the recycling bins in their housing estates. Furthermore, the placement of recycling bins at retail outlets would be subject to physical constraints and could create hygiene problems. As regards the offer of refund, in addition to generating undue administrative burden to the trade, it would unlikely be effective, as suggested by the previous experience of providing 10-cent rebate for not requesting plastic shopping bags. Such refund might also send confusing messages to the public on what is the best for the environment (i.e. reduction at source vis-à-vis recycling).

6. Notwithstanding the above, the trade would be prepared to provide recycling bins at some of their bigger outlets on a trial basis as a *complementary* measure to facilitate the collection of used plastic shopping bags for recycling purposes. The Administration would further discuss with the trade on such basis, with a view to putting the recycling bins in place as soon as practicable.

Environmental Protection Department
April 2008