Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2009-10

Director of Bureau : Secretary for the Environment
Session No. : 12

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Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2009-10

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

Reply Serial No.

S-ENB01

Question Serial No.

S045

Head: 22 Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department Subhead:

Programme: (2) Nature Conservation and Country Parks

Controlling Officer: Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Director of Bureau: Secretary for the Environment

Question:

According to Reply Serial No. ENB016, the provision for the protection of precious species over the past two years was $31.8 million and $33.5 million respectively. Please give details on how the provision was spent.

Asked by: Hon. IP Wai-ming

Reply:

The provisions of $31.8 million and $33.5 million in the past two years cover staff cost and expenses for hiring of security services, vehicles and equipment for the protection of country parks, including patrolling, law enforcement etc.

Our law enforcement and protection work in country parks has effectively contributed to the conservation and protection of wild animals and plants in Hong Kong. According to our territory-wide ecological surveys, Hong Kong enjoys a rich biodiversity. For instance, we have recorded over 3 100 species of vascular plants, some 50 species of mammals, 80 species of reptiles, over 20 species of amphibians, more than 230 species of butterflies and 110 species of dragonflies. Among these over 98% of the native species, including rare (precious) species are well represented in protected areas, including country parks.

Signature _____

Name in block letters MISS CHEUNG SIU HING

Post Title Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Date 27 March 2009

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2009-10

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

Reply Serial No.

S-ENB02

Question Serial No.

S048

Head : 44 Environmental Protection Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme : (1) Waste

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection

Director of Bureau : Secretary for the Environment

Question : Would the Administration please advise:

(1) After implementing the landfill development plans, when will the landfills in Hong Kong be filled up?

(2) If incineration is adopted as the core technology for the management of waste, when will the incinerators be put into operation?

(3) Are there any policy objectives for the treatment of waste by recycling? What is percentage for recycling in such objectives?

(4) What are the land resource and capital input for implementing the above three ways of waste management and what is the number of jobs to be so created? Please compare the three ways of waste management by cost-effectiveness.

Asked by : Hon. Ho Sau-lan, Cyd

Reply :

(1) The capacity of the three existing landfills in Hong Kong would be fully exhausted one by one during the period from early to mid 2010s. With the development of the proposed extensions to these three landfills and the continuation of various waste reduction and recovery measures, the life span of the extended landfills will range from about 6 to 15 years.

(2) The first phase of the Integrated Waste Management Facilities (IWMF), which will adopt advanced incineration as the core technology, is planned to be commissioned in the middle of next decade. The IWMF will substantially reduce the volume of municipal solid waste by some 90%, thereby extending the life span of the existing landfills and their extension.

(3) The targets as set out in "A Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) (2005-2014)" are-

(a) Through waste avoidance and minimization, to reduce the amount of MSW generated by 1% per annum up to the year 2014, based on 2003 levels;

(b) Through reuse, recovery and recycling, to increase the recovery rate of MSW to 45% by 2009 and 50% by 2014;

(c) Through state-of-the-art treatment of unavoidable waste, to reduce the total MSW disposed of in landfills to less than 25% by 2014.

(4) While waste reduction and recycling will always be accorded with top priority, it is also inappropriate to assume that with more waste reduction and recycling, we would not need any more landfills or IWMF. Overseas countries with very good waste recovery rates (e.g. Japan, Singapore, European Union countries) still need incineration and landfilling as essential components of their sustainable waste management strategy. It is therefore inappropriate to compare these three waste management tools on a cost-effective basis alone.

The land resource, capital input and estimated number of jobs to be created in relation to the above three ways of waste management are listed below-

	Land resource	Capital input	Estimated number of jobs (existing/to be created)
Landfill Extensions (Note 1)	About 330 hectares (Note 2)	(Note 3)	1 300 jobs and 300 jobs to be created during construction and operation respectively.
IWMF	About 10 hectares	(Note 4)	1 000 jobs and 100 jobs to be created during construction and operation respectively.
Waste Recycling-			
(a) Waste separation, recovery and recycling programmes	(Note 5)	(Note 6)	(Note 5)
(b) Short Term Tenancy (STT) land for the recycling trade	About 7 hectares for 35 Government STT sites which are leased exclusively for recycling use	Not available	210 jobs (Note 7)
(c) EcoPark	About 20 hectares	$257 million	750 jobs upon full commissioning of the EcoPark recycling operations

Note 1: The proposed extension to the three existing landfills will provide additional capacity (i.e. void space) of about 110 million cubic metres.

Note 2: This excludes 30 hectares in the existing Southeast New Territories Landfill that will continue to be used during the operation of the extension.

Note 3: The cost estimates are being finalized.

Note 4: The cost estimates are being worked out in the light of the ongoing engineering and environmental impact assessment studies for two potential sites in 2010.

Note 5: Such information is not available as waste recovery may take place in many public areas, housing estates, commercial and industrial buildings as well as institutional buildings etc.

Note 6: We have spent or will spend $11.2 million and $10.7 million in 2008-09 and 2009-10 respectively for promoting waste separation, recovery and recycling. In addition, Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) has allocated $8 million and $9 million to the Environmental Campaign Committee in 2008-09 and 2009-10 respectively for producing 3-colour bins for waste separation. Moreover, 12 applications with a total amount of $0.4 million were approved in 2008-09 under the ECF for installing waste separation facilities on building floors.

Note 7: Together with the recycling operations carried out by recyclers on private land, it is estimated that some 4 500 workers are employed directly by the recycling trade at present. There are cleansing workers and scavengers who participate on a part-time basis in recycling activities but there is no established basis to estimate their size.

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Name in block letters ANISSA WONG

Post Title Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection

Date 30 March 2009

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2009-10

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

Reply Serial No.

S-ENB03

Question Serial No.

SV021

Head : 44 Environmental Protection Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme : (2) Air

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection

Director of Bureau : Secretary for the Environment

Question : Would the Administration please advise:

(a) The means to assess the effectiveness of the one-off grant scheme to assist owners of pre-Euro diesel heavy vehicles to retrofit their vehicles with particulate removal devices; and

(b) The measures taken to strengthen cross-boundary cooperation with a view to improving regional air quality.

(follow-up to reply serial no. ENB134)

Asked by : Hon. LAU Kin-yee, Miriam

Reply :

(a) The particulate removal devices are capable of reducing the particulate emissions of pre-Euro diesel heavy vehicles by about 30%. Their reduction efficiency is supported by the test reports of independent third party laboratories accredited to international standards such as EN 45001 or equivalent. The installation contracts also require the contractors to sample certain vehicles installed with their devices for testing during their five-year warranty period to ascertain the durability of these devices. The findings have confirmed that the warranty terms have been met.

Our air quality monitoring data have also provided solid evidence of the substantial reduction in roadside particulate levels following implementation of a basket of vehicle emission reduction measures since 1999 including this one. In 1999, the average PM2.5 concentration at the roadside was about 20ug/m^3 higher than the general ambient level. The main contributor to the higher PM2.5 level at the roadside is vehicle exhaust emissions. Because of the vehicle emission reduction measures, the excess PM2.5 level at the roadside over the general ambient level was reduced to about 5ug/m^3 by end 2008. As compared with 1999, the excess PM2.5 level at the roadside was reduced by about 75%. This could also be an indication of the effectiveness of the basket of measures in reducing the particulate emissions of vehicles.

(b) To improve regional air quality, we reached a consensus with the Guangdong Provincial Government in April 2002 to reduce, on a best endeavour basis, the emissions of four major air pollutants, namely sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, respirable suspended particulates and volatile organic compounds by 40%, 20%, 55% and 55% respectively in the region by 2010, using 1997 as the base year. To achieve the emission reduction targets, both sides have been actively implementing emission reduction measures under the Regional Air Quality Management Plan, with particular focus on power plants, vehicles and the more polluting industrial processes. In addition, we launched a five-year Cleaner Production Partnership Programme in conjunction with the Economic and Trade Commission of Guangdong Province last year with a view to assisting Hong Kong-owned factories in the Pearl River Delta region in improving their environmental as well as energy efficiency performance. In respect of the post-2010 arrangement for improving regional air quality, both sides have agreed to work on an air pollutant reduction arrangement with a view to continuously improving the regional air quality. Both sides will hold further in-depth discussions on this area.

Signature _____

Name in block letters ANISSA WONG

Post Title Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection

Date 27 March 2009

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2009-10

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

Reply Serial No.

S-ENB04

Question Serial No.

SV020

Head : 44 Environmental Protection Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme : (1) Waste

Controlling Officer : Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection

Director of Bureau : Secretary for the Environment

Question : Would the Administration please advise the number of existing jobs in the recycling industries as well as the number of new jobs which would be created by the newly developed recycling industries including those at the EcoPark?

Asked by : Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply :

According to the estimates of the recycling companies, some 4 500 workers are employed directly by these companies. About 750 jobs are estimated to be created upon full commissioning of the recycling operations in EcoPark Phase I and II. We have not estimated the number of jobs to be created as a result of the new Short Term Tenancy sites that will be made available to the recycling trade in the next few months as it would depend on how the sites are to be used.

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Name in block letters ANISSA WONG

Post Title Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection

Date 27 March 2009

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2009-10

Reply Serial No.

S-ENB05

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

Question Serial No.

S044

Head: 100 – Marine Department Subhead:

Programme: (2) Port Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Marine

Director of Bureau: Secretary for the Environment

Question: (a) Since the outsourcing of marine cleansing services by the Marine Department (MD) (i.e. from 2005 to present), has there been any sub-contractor or sub-contracting involved in providing the services? If yes, how many people are currently engaged in providing marine cleansing services? What is their average wage or their minimum wage as stipulated in their contracts?

(b) As government vessels have been used in providing marine cleansing services before and after the outsourcing (i.e. from 2004 to present), what are the changes in the wages of the workers on board?

Asked by: Hon. IP Wai-ming

Reply:

(a) No sub-contractor or sub-contracting has been involved in providing marine refuse cleansing services since the introduction of the reformed outsourcing arrangement in 2005. All marine refuse cleansing workers are directly employed by the contractors of MD.

(b) Before the reformed outsourcing on 1 July 2005, the government vessels deployed for marine refuse cleansing were manned by civil servants, with ranks having a mid-point salary ranging from $11,170 to $18,915 per month as at June 2005. Under the reformed outsourcing arrangement, the government vessels were chartered to the contractors and manned by their employees. According to our contractors, the current wages of these workers range from $14,000 to $18,000 per month.

Signature _____

Name in block letters ROGER TUPPER

Post Title Director of Marine

Date 27 March 2009