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By E-MAIL

Attn: Miss Mandy Poon
Clerk to the Subcommittee

Dear ,

March 5th Legislative Council Subcommittee Meeting:
Green Council Submission Regarding the Product Eco-responsibility
[Plastic Shopping Bags] Regulation

Thank you to the Subcommittee Chairman for inviting Green Council officials to further contribute to the development and advancement of the Product Eco-responsibility (Plastic Shopping Bags) Regulation (herein after the “Regulation”), specifically at the upcoming Meeting. For the Subcommittee’s consideration, I am pleased to submit the following pre-meeting comments and recommendations:

General

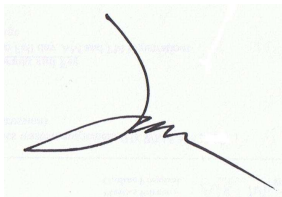
- (a) The indiscriminate use of plastic shopping bags (PSBs) is a prominent problem in Hong Kong. Green Council officials applaud and support the HKSAR Government’s advancement and implementation of the Regulation. We recognize the Regulation as an important piece of legislation, related to the adoption and application of the appropriate environmental consideration and management concept of “producer responsibility”. Further, we are pleased to see government officials devising and launching legislative measures that advocate and facilitate environmentally responsible consumption of plastic bags along with waste avoidance and reduction.

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- (b) However, being officials of the preeminent Hong Kong organization advocating and directing “green purchasing” in combination with the identification, design, provision and certification of environmentally preferable products, Green Council officials contend that broader and complementary Government initiatives are required. A detailed timetable and work plan for the second phase should be prepared and announced soon after the evaluation report of the first phase (e.g. perhaps three months after the initial levy implementation).
- (c) The “prescribed retailers” are an ideal preliminary target group for implementing the Regulation (first phase), with raised public awareness and engagement on the plastic bags issue certain to occur to some extent. Nevertheless, in the longer term, there is a need to expand the assigned scope of the term -- “prescribed retailers” – to include additional organizations and individuals like those providing customers with bags for newspapers and bread, etc. It will only be through such broader and more comprehensive application that the indiscriminate use of plastic bags in our daily lives can be fully and thoroughly addressed and corrected.
- (d) The money collected from the environmental levy scheme should be accumulated and allocated as a “green fund” for future environmental initiatives (e.g. promotion and public awareness programmes on environmental protection).
- (e) Not only manufacturers, but recycling businesses should also be encouraged and guided to play a role in reducing the adverse environmental impacts of plastic bags. For manufacturers, the development, production and offering of less environmentally harmful plastic bags should be encouraged and supported. At the same time, and in terms of ongoing waste management, Government officials should direct and encourage corresponding local recycling activities to reduce landfill volumes and practices. Major actions and initiatives must be planned and taken to address the present circumstances in which most local recyclers are reluctant and elect not to handle the low-valued plastic “wastes” through their operations.
- (f) Further, composting plants should be established and activated in line with the promotion of the use of biodegradable plastic bags as a desirable and preferable green alternative to conventional non-biodegradable bags.
- (g) Lessons and expectations can be drawn from preceding levy applications in Ireland and Taiwan [and elsewhere]. In those two jurisdictions, the implementation and enforcement of levies have dramatically reduced the use of plastic bags by 90% and 98%, respectively. Given these and other successful examples, the Hong Kong environmental levy scheme should be expected to significantly reduce and avoid future landfill burdens. However, as recognized in other jurisdictions, stringent and sustained enforcement and regulation monitoring of the effectiveness of the scheme are critical and must be properly devised and effectively implemented.

The above summarizes the Green Council position on the desirable focus and implementation of the Regulation and related matters. On behalf of, and as CEO of the Green Council, I look forward to the opportunity to personally present, elaborate upon, and discuss this submission and/or consider and react to any other relevant issues at the upcoming Meeting.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light green background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Linda W P Ho'. There is some faint, illegible text in the background of the signature area.

Linda W P Ho
Chief Executive Officer