



香港工程師學會

THE HONG KONG INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS

香港銅鑼灣記利佐治街1號金百利9字樓
9/F Island Beverley, No 1 Great George St, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong
電話 Tel +852 2895 4446 傳真 Fax +852 2577 7791
hkie-sec@hkie.org.hk www.hkie.org.hk

會長 黃耀新工程師
President Ir Peter Y WONG
BSc LLB LLM FHKIE R.P.E.
CEng FIET FCIBSE
president@hkie.org.hk
pyswong@member.hkie.org.hk

By mail and by fax at 2869 6794

CB(1) 616/08-09(01)

15 January 2009

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

(Attn: Mrs Mary TANG)

Dear Mrs TANG,

LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

Views on the Administration's proposal to ban idling vehicles with running engines

Thank you for your letter of 17 December 2008 inviting the Institution to put forth our views on the Administration's proposal to ban idling vehicles with running engines.

Environment concern is always on the top on our Institution's list, yet we do not find it justified and equitable to examine the captioned proposition with the view in passing it as a law.

To combat adversities arising from the impending climate change, we agree the Administration and all citizens of Hong Kong should be prepared to look at changing some of their life styles, and just to stall the worsening effect if not more. But that must not be pursued with sacrifice in health consideration and causing unwanted nuisance. Unless the Administration could come up with a macro planning on the overall approach, piece meal introduction as the captioned, similar to the earlier promulgation of the levy on plastic bag, serves no real purposes to tackle the crust of the matter save being an entry of a resume.

We note further consultation has been conducted with transport trades to address their concerns on operational needs resulting yet a further batch of exemptions. The legislature now becomes a panel in scrutinising operation details instead of debating the overall merit of a law and its associated cost and effect. We wonder what is effectively left when there is a difficulty to distinguish a turbo operated diesel from the rest and the introduction of a 3 minutes period concession on certain types of vehicles. It is not that we did not agree with such amendments, on the contrary we thought they were more than appropriate, but we just wish to submit such realisations are actually standing witnesses to the inherent structural fault of the original proposal. Now talks begin on how to count and record the 3 minutes period. By a stop watch? Taken on a note pack? Chalk mark on the tire, like in Japan? Is Wanchai North a different destination from Wanchai South? North Point Middle? Do we allow the mini bus drivers to change destination tags whilst waiting?

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- 2 -

15 January 2009
Mrs Mary TANG

We emphasise that there is a need for the health consideration of running a cool car before elderly, infant or pets getting on board. There is also a safety reason to keep the windows from fogging up in humid weather. A hybrid car idles to charge the battery. Nonetheless an engine must be running before it is pulled away but we note an “idling vehicle” carries a different connotation in English than in the Chinese. The *en bloc* ban for the sake of simplicity in enforcement adds the queue to the Magistrates. Or another hasty round of amendment? Exemption? Concession? We attach again a copy of our views and arguments submitted to the Panel dated 7 January 2008 for ease of reference.

The Institution opines we have to clearly identify the objectives of this legislature. If it were the polluting engines we need to address, look at the engine types. If it were cars polluting whilst not moving in traffic, this is a traffic problem. If there were areas in town suffering extreme noise and pollution from vehicles nearby, ban vehicles in those isolated areas. The captioned proposal could not effectively address to these larger and a lot worse problems. But if it were the few putting their feet up whilst parking along the curbside with air-con in full blast, get them, but not using the misdeavour of these few and turn it into a moral high ground to hassle the rest.

While we had come so far, if this law is to be enacted, it is necessary either to amend it to a summarily ban at certain locations and at certain hours only or to follow the model of UK with a 2 limps approach.

As said, HKIE welcomes measures to improve air quality and if needed by imposing statutory enactment. But we trust our repeated objections on the captioned are adequate enough to demonstrate our concern of a good policy again fallen victim to operational ridicule and extremely costly for marginal returns. Very marginal.

Please be informed that the HKIE will not have any representative in attending today's Panel meeting as it clashed with our Council's regular meeting.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



Ir Peter Y WONG
President

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