



PWK NG/LEGCO
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To Angela SY LAM/LEGCO, &CS[1]2, &CA[1]1
cc
bcc
Subject submission regarding idling engine bill



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To sylam@legco.gov.hk
cc
Subject submission regarding idling engine bill

Dear Sir/Madame,

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I have lived in Hong Kong since 12 years and consider-this metropolitan town-my home now.

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The first time I called up the environmental department regarding idling engines the then vice director of the department told me that there-was a law " in the making ". This was in 1999!

At that time I was working at the HK Jockey club in Happy Valley and got frustrated that most of the drivers waiting around the club (e.g Shan Kwong road) would be resting/sleeping in the car with the engine running, no matter summer or winter. The same was often the case just opposite the Happy Valley police station in Kwai Fong street. Drivers of taxis, cars, mini-vans and private buses would come there regularly to eat/rest/sleep in the vehicle with the engine on.

Sometimes I informed the police, since-the-officers encouraged me to do so.-Unfortunately the police-was not empowered to act and is still not empowered to act. All they-can do up-to-this moment is to give a lame so-called "recommendation" to the drivers!

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The same idling situation I have experienced over the years time and again all over Hong Kong. Especially on Bowen road (many taxi drivers use it to take a nap with running engine), around Victoria park and Happy Valley stadium.

Not even to talk about Repulse Bay beach road. - It's packed every single day with one tour bus after another. While the tourists are visiting the beach/monastery the drivers sit/sleep in-empty-buses with the engine running full speed!

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What is absolutely shocking for me as-stemming from a traditionally environmentally concerned-European-country is the ignorant attitude and-lack of knowledge of many people in Hong Kong about pollution. If I confront drivers and ask them in a polite way to switch off their engine I would estimate around 80% either start swearing at me in Chinese, simply close the window and pretend that they don't speak English, give me an offensive-hand sign to go away or drive off to probably idle at another place instead.-A-couple of times-I was threatened physically,-including-being-followed to my-building-and taped by video camera.- Only rarely-I have experienced a-sense of gratitude-from people-for-making them-aware-of-a bad habit and trying to increase everybody's health.

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In my opinion there-is up to now simply a huge lack of education and knowledge about the health-effects of air quality in Hong Kong.

An idling engine ban is a necessary milestone to improve awareness! Awareness-of the fact that-the energy source we put into our-body by inhaling is at least as essential (or as many scientists argue more important) as the one we take in by way of eating. Unhealthy air-is a path-to sickness just the same way as unhealthy diet is.

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I work as a-tennis coach and am therefore-exposed to-the outside all day long.-In 2002 I developed the first asthma symptoms, now I have constant flame and often have to use steroid inhalers to suppress coughing and wheezing.

During March 18 and 25 (when the API reading reached the 500 maximum limit) I-faced the first ever cancellations of tennis lessons due to pollution. My students simply did not want to exercise in the hazardous Hong Kong air.-Many sports coaches experienced the same situation at that time and lost part or all of there income!

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A great number of my colleagues and students, especially children,-complain about constant sore throat, burning eyes, shortness of-breath-and asthma.

In the 12 years I have lived in Hong Kong the air quality has deteriorated steadily. One doesn't even have to look up the statistics - There are simply no clear blue skies to be found anymore in the dry winter season, it's at the best grey-blue with a constant haze.

Visitors from-abroad are usually amazed about the-severity of pollution-in Hong Kong. Often they go up on the Peak on a sunny day but still can't see the skyline because of thick dust clouds.

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I am contemplating-about-leaving-Hong Kong now-and teaching tennis somewhere else because of the sickening level of air pollution. And I know from personal experience that not only many expats-have the same-concerns but also-a great number of-people who were born and-raised in this town.

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I urge the lawmakers to pass this-idling engine ban as soon as possible and without further amendments and exceptions! The proposed-exceptions-are fully sufficient to make the transport industry-function-in an orderly manner.

This bill is an absolutely necessary step-to-tackle Hong Kong's huge-air pollution problem!-Not just-because of it's emission reduction value but also because of its-awareness value!-

Once-there-is an-idling engine ban in place-it-can be-easier-followed by strict emission controls of ICEs (internal combustion engines) and taking all those-outdated fuming buses of the road, which are an absolut shame for a city claiming-"world city" status.

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I urge the lawmakers not to give in to the interests of the transport unions!

The great majority of-HK residents supports this bill and should-therefore be granted its-soonest implementation!-

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Kind regards,

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Markus Wohlgenannt