

DRAFT

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LEGC QUESTION NO. 3 (Oral Reply)

Date of sitting: 3 July 2002

Asked by: The Hon Emily Lau

Replied by: Secretary for Health
Welfare and Food

Question

The Administration formally implemented the Fixed Penalty (Public Cleanliness Offences) with effect from the 10th of last month, by issuing fixed penalty notices to persons who commit offences such as littering, spitting, unauthorized display of bills and etc. On the first day of enforcement, a law enforcement officer was assaulted and injured by an offender. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) whether it has assessed the specified benefits to public cleanliness brought about by the implementation of the new ordinance;
- (b) of the difficulties currently faced by law enforcement officers, and whether it will consider providing them with more support; and
- (c) of the measures in place to strengthen civic education in order that more residents identify themselves with the importance of keeping Hong Kong clean?

Reply

Madam President,

- (a) The aim of the *Fixed Penalty (Public Cleanliness Offences) Ordinance* is to increase the deterrent effect against common public cleanliness offences, namely littering, spitting, unauthorized display of bills or posters, and fouling of street by dog faeces.

From the observation of the enforcement departments, the Ordinance has brought about general and visible improvement to the cleanliness of Hong Kong.

Since the commencement of enforcement on 10 June 2002 after a two-week grace period, frontline staff have noticed a remarkable decrease in littering in public places, including littering blackspots such as bus stops, street crossings, ferry concourses, public transport interchanges, and on-street markets. The enforcement departments also observed better utilization of litter containers by the public to deposit litter and cigarette butts. With regard to the unauthorized display of bills and posters, enforcement departments also noticed a significant decrease in the number of such activities in blackspots such as Mong Kok, Yau Ma Tei, Wan Chai and Causeway Bay. Media reports also support Government's assessment.

- (b) In general, the feedback from enforcement departments was that the implementation of the new law was generally smooth. For example, between 10 and 23 June, out of total of 619 enforcement actions taken by FEHD, 616 fixed penalty notices were issued and 596 of them were issued without any difficulty. Of the remaining 23 cases, 20 fixed penalty notices were issued after Police assistance was sought to obtain the offenders' proof of identity. One case required the Police to accompany the offender to a Police Station in order to

obtain proof of identity, and two cases involved minor assaults on FEHD officers.

Prior to the implementation of the fixed penalty system, FEHD provided training for enforcement staff of all departments to handle possible difficult situations. For FEHD, officers are provided with telecommunication equipment (portable transceivers or mobile phones) to facilitate them to enlist the support of colleagues patrolling in the vicinity and, if necessary, the assistance of Police Officers. Other enforcement departments also have similar or other support arrangements.

Despite the minor assault cases mentioned above, enforcement officers are in general satisfied with the current support arrangements. We will, nevertheless, continue to explore ways to further enhance support for them.

- (b) Since the launch of the new Clean Hong Kong Programme in December in December 2000, the Government has put great emphasis on public education, which is pivotal in raising public awareness on the need to keep a clean and tidy environment. The Steering Committee on Clean Hong Kong, comprising representatives from different sectors of the community, as well as officials, was set up to coordinate territory-wide Clean Hong Kong initiatives and examine ways to improve Government's efforts in improving environmental hygiene. The Publicity and Public Education Group and the District Promotion Committee of the Steering Committee assist in the formulation of strategies on public education and community involvement.

Another important element in promoting Clean Hong Kong is school education. FEHD and the Education Department have already incorporated Clean Hong Kong information in primary and secondary school curriculum. The two departments have also been organizing a wide range of Clean Hong Kong extra-curricular

activities, such as project learning competitors, interactive school outreach programmes and Community Youth Club activities for secondary students, and school talks for primary schools and kindergartens. These school curriculum messages and extra-curricular activities help foster a keep Hong Kong clean culture among students.

These specific public education efforts are supplemented by publicity and public education items such as television and radio Announcements of Public Interests, posters and banners, video, pamphlets, stickers, website, newspapers supplements, and media interviews.

As regards community involvement, the 18 District Clean Hong Kong Committees, each chaired by the respective District Council Vice-chairmen, have been set up to organize district educational and publicity events, as well as actual cleansing activities to disseminate the Clean Hong Kong message. In 2001, over 160 district activities were held. FEHD also operates a scheme to provide funding assistance to resident and other civic organizations in organizing Clean Hong Kong projects. In this regards, 87 such projects were arranged in 2001 with over 20,000 participants. In addition, FEHD works closely with various non-Government organizations and non-profit making bodies, such as artists' associations, to carry out various kinds of community involvement programmes.