

**Management of Municipal Solid Waste
Views of the HKGCC to the Legislative Council
May 2005**

Introduction

1. The Chamber is a strong advocate of a comprehensive package of waste management measures, such as landfill charging, incentives for waste reduction at source, recycling, responsibility for packaging, building rehabilitation, alternatives to demolition, and incentives for life cycle costing, a vigorous community education campaign, etc. In that connection, the Chamber has made two previous submissions on waste management policy in 2001 and 2003, and commented on the sustainable development strategy in relation to solid waste management in 2004.

Charging

2. In regard to landfill charging, there are already considerable details on implementation of charging for construction waste. We have consistently held the view that the same principle should be applied to commercial, industrial and municipal waste as well. We believe there has been enough discussion within the community and we should move beyond further discussion to begin to address issues of implementation.

3. Being a business association we appreciate that charging may not be a popular policy. On the other hand, the introduction of charging schemes may help spur new business opportunities for the waste management, recovery and recycling industries.

Reduction of domestic waste

4. The key in reduction of domestic wastes lies in the cooperation and participation of the households. One major barrier in tackling the challenge of waste management is lack of awareness among the general public of the magnitude of the problem. The “polluter pay principle”, though recognised among some sectors of the business community, means little in practice for the general public. The message that waste costs money – not just in the financial sense but also in social and environmental sense – should be more forcefully put across.

5. There should be a renewed effort to raise the general public's awareness on the waste problem and to educate them to reduce, reuse and recycle waste. A plethora of programs by community organisations and green groups have been undertaken, yet we still have not been successful in achieving significant and sustained reduction in the levels of domestic waste avoided or recovered. To pursue the education objective, partnership and collaborations between government, the private sector and the broader community is critical. This should include more awareness of radical solutions such as thermal treatment.

6. To help build waste management practice into everyday life, more innovative ideas should be encouraged, e.g. refillable bottles, redeemable containers, more convenient waste separation such as floor separation bins, etc.

Addressing the need for bulk reduction

7. Even with an aggressive reduction and recycling programme, Hong Kong needs to develop effective large-scale waste management facilities to treat and dispose massive volumes of residual waste. In this regard, thermal waste treatment must be recognized as a possible solution. In recent years, "green" incineration has been extensively used in many countries to achieve the goal of "zero landfill waste", and it has also become a source of energy to supplement conventional and non-renewable fuels. With the advance of modern technology, incinerators with minimal impact to air quality and human health have become a distinct possibility. The Chamber believes that clean and efficient incinerators should be an option to be actively explored, and we urge the government to examine this option carefully and come to a conclusion without delay.

8. Waste management is a long-term policy issue requiring long-term vision; it should not be driven by short-term political agenda. We urge the government and the Legislative Council to work together to muster the political will to adopt concrete actions to deal with the mounting waste problem of Hong Kong, including considering the use of green incinerators. The latter would require substantial investments, and even if we were to plan building thermal waste treatment facilities now, it could still be too late as our landfills might be full by the time they were operational.