



[LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs: Special meeting on 6.10.09]

**The Views of the Association of Engineering Professionals in Society (AES)
on the “Review of Air Quality Objectives”**

1. Hong Kong is claimed to be an international city equivalent to the London and New York of China. It is necessary to show to others that we are keen to take the lead on environmental issues so as to set a good example in the region. Looking after the health of the people and maintaining competitiveness of Hong Kong, and the government must show determination to completely revise without delay the existing outdated air quality objectives (AQOs), which have been adopted since 1987. It is imperative that Hong Kong should adopt the highest international AQO standards. We agree with the proposed progressive and forward-looking approach of moving from our existing AQOs, to the latest international standards.
2. The Administration needs to present a well-defined time-table to show commitment to achieve the interim and long-term targets. Hong Kong Engineers are willing to take an active role in implementing additional emission control measures and help accelerate the clean air programme.
3. New technology is the key to the success of the emission control. With stringent AQOs proposed, the government should actively support the environmental industry on business and technology development through tax concession and other incentives. This is one of the six new economic niche pillars identified by the CE's Task Force on Economic Challenges.
4. On the issue of cost sharing by the community, the Administration has downplayed the financial benefits of maintaining good air quality in the overall consideration, such as reduced medical expenses, better working conditions, improving productivity, attracting foreign investment, etc. Government will eventually cut down the total expenditure and generate more income, thereby able to balance out the cost for implementing the new emission control measures. Hence, the cost for putting in place the new measures should firstly be shared by the government and those enterprises producing emissions, finally the community, but with major apportionment to the former 2 parties. The estimated 20% increase in electricity tariffs and 15% rise in bus fares upon implementation of the emission control measures are alarming, based only on the simple “user-pays” principle. They must be revised downward to affordable levels to gain community support.
5. We live under the same air shed with the Pearl River Delta Region. We are concerned that even though we have implemented all our proposed measures, there might not be much room for improvement in air quality. The government should proactively join hands with the Guangdong Province to review the AQOs and to implement their emission control measures. The government should also accelerate scientific research on regional air pollution and climate change, the research results should be made available for sharing with our counterparts, enterprises and the public.
6. Many of the 19 proposed emission control measures are not new ideas and have not been implemented satisfactorily over the years. Most of them require strategic planning, effective prioritization and integrated coordination of policy areas under the jurisdiction of various bureaus.
7. As the proposed measures are absolutely good for the environment, there is no need to wait for the review result. The government should go ahead immediately to implement some proposed measures such as wider use of hybrid/electric vehicles, replacement of diesel vehicles, tree planting/rooftop greening, etc. and set a role model for stakeholders to follow. The government should share this valuable experience with the public to pave the way for implementation by the stakeholders at a later stage.
8. For early environmental benefit, the government should enforce the early retirement of aged/heavy polluting vehicles by legislation and earlier replacement of Euro III (and earlier models) commercial diesel vehicles with a one-off grant financial scheme.

**ASSOCIATION OF ENGINEERING PROFESSIONALS IN SOCIETY LTD
SEPTEMBER 2009**