



Bills Committee on Air Pollution Control (Amendment) Bill 2013 Meeting on Saturday, 25 May 2013

Written Submission from Civic Exchange

24 May 2013

The need for new Air Quality Objectives and policy goals

1. The current Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) are outdated and unable to protect public health. Hong Kong needs a tighter set of AQOs as soon as possible, and Civic Exchange supports the new AQOs and the inclusion of PM_{2.5} as a step in the right direction.
2. It is also stated in the *Policy Address 2013* and in *A Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong* (the Plan) that reducing air pollution and the associated health risks to people is a policy priority for this administration. Civic Exchange believes the tightened AQOs and a clearly-defined health-based policy goal are essential for policy-making and implementation.

Hong Kong deserves better and more

3. However, the Government and society as a whole must be under no illusion that the setting out of the new AQOs alone is going to deliver clean air and to protect the health of Hong Kong people.
4. First, the new AQOs only set a tighter interim benchmark for air quality management. They still fall short of the World Health Organization's Air Quality Guidelines, which should be considered as the ultimate goal. While Civic Exchange acknowledges that it will take some time to achieve the long-term goal, it is important for the Government to start taking leadership and driving everyone forward. Regular reviews and updates of the AQOs will certainly help, as is a timetable with milestones to measure progress towards that goal. Civic Exchange also demands the Government to set future AQOs based on the aspiration of society, rather than the ability of compliance via best available solutions.

Collaboration is crucial

5. Second, the Government must step up their efforts in cleaning up the major emission sources, such as vessels, road vehicles, and power plants, as identified in Environmental Protection Department's air pollutant emission inventory. A package of measures is deliberated in the Plan to meet emission reduction

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targets. This is a plan that re-focuses Hong Kong's air quality management strategy to both cutting emissions at source and to reducing people's exposure to air pollutants. Civic Exchange calls for all sectors of society to support the Plan, and for the Government to do more, such as promoting low-carbon city planning, transport demand management, non-motorized transport modes, low emission zones, energy efficient buildings, and a stronger inspection and maintenance programme for on-road vehicles. In doing so, the Government must foster cross-bureaux and inter-departmental collaboration in cross-cutting policy areas. This is not easy in any governments, but those who master it will make a huge difference in policy development and will greatly benefit the community.

6. Last, but equally important, Hong Kong cannot achieve its air quality goals without working closely with Guangdong. Under the *Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation* signed in April 2010, Hong Kong and Guangdong are given the blessings to progressively adopt and realise air quality objectives and fuel and emission standards for motorised vehicles and ships which are more advanced than the national standards. Civic Exchange urges the Government to ride on this opportunity and partner with Guangdong in different aspects of regional air quality management, such as fuel and emission standards, cleaner production partnership, an emission control area for ships, air quality monitoring network, environmental governance, and sharing of best practices. The *Regional Cooperation Plan on Building a Quality Living Area* in the Pearl River Delta announced in June 2012 will be a solid and perfect platform to implement some of the innovative ideas in the region.

– End of submission –

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