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To: bc_09_12@legco.gov.hk
Date: 10/06/2013 16:24
Subject: Extension of the Eco-Responsibility Bill

CB(1)1291/12-13(07)

Dear LegCo

I applaud you on your decision to extend the Product Eco-Responsibility (Amendment) on Plastic Shopping Bags. It is certainly a step in the right direction to managing some of HK's waste.

Having spent thousands of hours over the years cleaning trash from beaches I have noticed that the plastic bags we most commonly see now are not those covered by the PSB levy. So this expansion of the levy will be noticeable & very welcome I am sure.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to 5 other significant sources of plastic pollution currently blighting our city & potentially harming citizens which I am recommending you consider including in the Product Eco-responsibility Bill.

Polystyrene food containers, lunch boxes and cups and bowls.

Polystyrene is a completely non-biodegradable material, floats easily and persists in the environment for many many decades. Lunch boxes and food ware cannot be recycled easily because it often contains food waste and residue. This means that every single item of polystyrene used will end up in either the overfull landfills or thrown into the sea. If I have read the Government's waste statistics correctly then polystyrene makes up 30% of landfill VOLUME. This is easily solvable. Alternatives do exist, other Asian countries and cities have implemented bans on this type of packaging.

Polystyrene boxes (used for seafood and food)

Regulation on the use of these highly polluting products should be implemented - perhaps with a similar levy as the PSB. The boxes are easily broken and breakdown potentially into millions of pieces. They are frequently lost at sea by fishermen. The polystyrene is accumulating on beaches and is being trapped in vegetation lines where it is being trapped within the vegetation and remaining in the coastal ecosystem.

Plastic beverage containers

Plastic beverage bottles are one of the most commonly found objects on beaches. The recycling rate of this highly valuable plastic is very low compared to the amount that is disposed of in landfills each day. To implement a levy onto these bottles under the Product Eco-responsibility Bill will increase collection for recycling considerably and decrease landfill mass by a significant amount. Many millions of bottles are disposed of in landfills everyday needlessly. A bottle refund scheme is already successfully used in other countries around the world such as South Australia where recycling rates are as high as 80%.

Plastic Cutlery

Plastic cutlery given out for free should also be included in a levy. It is easy to carry a reusable spoon for example. A levy would reduce the amount of waste particularly Chinese style spoons and forks which are common litter items. Food stalls and restaurants should be encouraged where possible to use reusable chopsticks and cutlery to minimise single use disposable waste.

Plastic micro-beads in skin care products

These tiny plastic micro beads are being used indiscriminately in facial and body scrubs as exfoliants instead of a biodegradable alternative. There is no way they can be removed from the waste water treatment effectively because of their size so in a way they are designed to pollute our waterways - made to be used in the shower or over a sink and be flushed down drains. There is an international campaign to put pressure on companies to find an alternative which is having some success but putting in place legislation to prohibit their use and to help protect our waterways would be a strong move from the government. Plastic micro beads are known to accumulate toxic chemicals at high concentrations and are also known to be consumed by filter feeding marine life that are readily consumed by humans. For more reading (& scientific research) please click on the link <http://www.plasticfreeseas.org/microbeads.html>

The Product Eco-responsibility Bill was written to minimize the environmental impact of various types of products. The above 5 products should be considered for this bill.

Best regards,

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