

Submission from Hong Kong Waste Management Association

Municipal solid waste (MSW) charging is a policy tool to encourage waste reduction at source. It has been adopted in many cities using different charging approaches based on waste quantity, a proxy or a fixed charge. Practical experience has shown that the effectiveness of these different charging approaches varies from one to another and the same applies to the complementary measures required at the community level, particularly waste separation at source.

As one of the important first steps to achieve the waste reduction targets, HKWMA strongly supports the initiative to implement quantity-based MSW charging within the whole community with an acceptable charging rate at the earliest possible moment. At the same time a clear message has to be disseminated to the residents and various business sectors of Hong Kong to encourage their assistance to make the initiative a success. MSW charging will emphasize the fact that there is a cost to handling wastes and prompt Hong Kong's residents and business operators to think in-depth and then make a paradigm shift to practice MSW segregation and reduction.

Effective quantity-based MSW charging will create a financial incentive to drive the necessary changes in the public's waste-generating behavior thereby realising significant waste reduction benefits. As an indication, the Hong Kong Government notes that MSW disposal dropped by about 30% in the initial period in Taipei City and Seoul after the introduction of charging due to both reduced generation and enhanced recycling. Introducing appropriate measures to sustain the impact will also yield further benefits in the longer run.

Based on the experience from the Environmental Levy Scheme on plastic shopping bags, the new charges should facilitate behavioral change to minimize waste so that the life of Hong Kong's landfills can be extended. Waste charges would promote a greener and more sustainable society.

The government should utilize the revenue from the waste charging scheme to provide funding for sorting facility operators to cover the additional resources required for localized at-source sorting and material recovery

It is expected that some confusion and teething problems may arise during the launch and initial implementation of the MSW charging scheme. HKWMA therefore suggests that a full scale review be conducted one year after the implementation of the MSW charging scheme to identify any necessary adjustments that need to be made.

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