

**A response to the MSW charging bill**

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The implementation of municipal solid waste (MSW) charge is to drive behavioural changes for mainly a reduction in the quantities of waste generated or disposed by the society and individuals. In association with waste reduction, carbon emission in association with waste disposal can also be reduced, particularly, the emission of CH<sub>4</sub> from landfill gas and the energies that are devoted to manufacture short-lived or one-off commodities.

I support the implementation of a volume or weight-based MSW charge (the Charge). Such a charge is in line with the polluter pays principle and can also educate the public that waste disposal and waste generation will bring about environmental and other social costs and that such costs, while avoidable, should be borne directly by the polluters, i.e., the waste generators.

While theoretically, a volume or weight MSW charge can achieve the intended purpose, i.e., to encourage waste disposal quantities, in reality, based on the currently set rate of the charge for households, i.e., \$0.11/litre, significant reduction in waste disposal is not expected to be achievable. I understand that a low rate of charge is set on purpose to ease acceptance for this new policy. However, unless the community has a high level of waste literacy, the effect, if any, on reducing waste requiring disposal, especially for the domestic households, would disappear soon after the implementation of the charge. Thus, I suggest that for this policy to achieve its intended purpose, the rate of charge should be reviewed and adjusted up as soon as possible, if necessary.

While, I agree that waste avoidance is the most environmentally preferred waste reduction approach, there are major limitations in using only this approach to significantly reduce waste disposal quantities in the present context. Thus, in order to enable effective waste disposal reduction, I also urge the government to as soon as possible fill the gaps in current waste recycling systems, namely, a lack of reasonably convenient and reliable recycling infrastructure and reverse logistics for the large number of dry (plastics, mixed paper and composite materials) and wet recyclables (food waste) in the MSW streams. Without such infrastructural support, householders cannot effectively divert the waste generated from the disposal channel.

I fully support the proposal to relieve the financial burden of the underprivileged brought about by the Charge. The approach that the government proposed is rational and smart as

the incentive of the beneficiaries of the subsidies to reduce waste requiring disposal can still be maintained.

I agree that visual inspection should be performed by the FEHD staff and waste or waste bags out of legal specifications should not be accepted. However, I am apprehended that the warnings or penalty imposed on the non-compliance may not reach the very waste generators breaching the use conditions of the designated waste bags. In this regard, I hope that other than suggesting practical helps to the frontline cleaning staff and property management office by the outreach team, appropriate level of authority should also be granted to them for rejecting the improperly set out waste or waste bags so that most Charge evaders are detected before their illegally disposed waste show up in the municipal refuse collection points. Given the existence of 'three-nils' buildings, CCTV and other advanced monitoring technologies should be deployed to deter effect on fly-tipping around municipal refuse collection points.

In order to nurture a low waste society with waste-literate citizens, aggressive and ambitious resource management policy measures, such as territorial-wide product charges (charges on the use of one-off disposable products, such as straws for beverages), product ban (expanded polystyrene containers), producer responsibility controls on all secondary and tertiary packaging (not just glass and plastic bottles) are imperative. As a result, while I support the establishment of outreaching team, I suggest that i) outreaching teams be maintained for at least the first 10 years of the implementation of the Charge by the government and ii) the focus of the outreaching team should also include source reduction of waste (not just waste reduction) soon after the inception period of the Charge.