

LCQ12: Waste glass containers

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Pierre Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (October 27):

Question:

Regarding the disposal of waste glass containers, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that this Council passed the Promotion of Recycling and Proper Disposal (Product Container) (Amendment) Bill 2015 in May 2016 to amend the Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance (Cap. 603) and the Waste Disposal Ordinance (Cap. 354), so as to provide a statutory regulatory framework for the Producer Responsibility Scheme on glass beverage containers, of the latest approach of levy collection and implementation timetable for the Scheme;

(2) given that the Government has appointed glass management contractors (GMCs) to provide collection and treatment services for waste glass containers, of (i) the quantity of waste glass containers discarded at landfills and (ii) the quantity of waste glass containers collected by GMCs, in each of the past two years; whether such figures met (a) the targets originally set by the Government and (b) the targets set out in the glass management contracts with GMCs; if the targets were not met, whether it will take improvement measures; if it will, of the details; if it does not intend to take improvement measures, the reasons for that;

(3) of the following details of the public expenditure incurred on the collection and treatment of waste glass containers in the past three years: (i) the total expenditure (including the fees paid to GMCs by the Government and other Government expenditure), with a breakdown by year and expenditure item, and (ii) the respective percentages of the expenditure on supporting the recovery of containers, treatment of the containers collected as well as publicity and education work in the total expenditure;

(4) whether, apart from GMCs, there were community organisations/groups which assisted the Government in collecting and treating waste glass containers in the past three years; if so, of the names of such organisations/groups, and whether they received subsidies from the Government; if so, of the total amount of subsidies received and the quantity of waste glass containers recovered by them in the past three years; and

(5) given that the Reverse Vending Machine Pilot Scheme encourages, through the provision of cash rebates, members of the public to return used plastic beverage containers, whether the Government will offer rebates to those members of the public who return waste glass containers, with a view to increasing the recovery quantity of waste glass containers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and whether there are other ways to

increase the relevant recovery quantity?

Reply:

President,

The introduction of the Producer Responsibility Scheme on glass beverage containers (GPRS) enables the concerned parties (including product manufacturers, importers, retailers and consumers) to take up the eco-responsibility for proper collection and treatment of waste glass beverage containers, turning such waste into resources for better utilisation as well as alleviating the pressure on landfills. This is also conducive to the development of circular economy locally. To provide for the statutory regulatory framework for the GPRS, the Legislative Council (LegCo) passed in May 2016 the Promotion of Recycling and Proper Disposal (Product Container) (Amendment) Ordinance 2016 (the Amendment Ordinance). The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) thereupon arranged for the implementation of GPRS progressively, including the engagement of two glass management contractors (GMCs) through open tender to undertake collection and treatment services for waste glass containers in three regions, namely Hong Kong Island (including Islands District), Kowloon and the New Territories. With the two regional contracts for Hong Kong Island and the New Territories commenced in November 2017 and that for Kowloon in May 2018, free glass container collection and treatment services are now available across the territory.

My responses to the questions raised by Dr the Hon Pierre Chan are as follows:

(1) The Amendment Ordinance stipulates the collection of container recycling levies from suppliers (including importers and manufacturers) that supply the local market with beverages carried in glass containers. Concerned suppliers shall register with the EPD as "registered suppliers", who would have to submit returns to the EPD on the total volumes of beverages carried in glass containers that they "distribute" or "consume" in Hong Kong for calculating, based on volume, the container recycling levies payable. The detailed arrangements, including the levy level, will be set out in the relevant subsidiary legislation. The EPD has completed the drafting of the subsidiary legislation, which will be submitted to the LegCo for scrutiny in due course. The Government's target is to fully implement the GPRS in 2023 or before.

(2) Under the contracts, the recovery target of the two GMCs in the first year of the contract is 15 000 tonnes in total, and the Government's goal is to gradually increase it to 50 000 tonnes a year. The respective quantities of waste glass containers disposed of at landfills and total quantities of waste glass containers collected by the two GMCs (see Note) for the period from 2018 to June 2021 are tabulated below.

Note: The contractor of the Hong Kong Island (including Islands District) and the New Territories regions has been providing waste glass container collection and treatment services since January 2018; while the contractor of the Kowloon region has been providing such services since July 2018.

Year	Quantity of waste glass containers disposed of at landfills (tonnes)	Total quantity of waste glass containers collected by GMCs (tonnes)
2018	77 400	9 600
2019	73 200	21 200
2020	under compilation	14 200 (Note)
2021 (as at June)	under compilation	8 800 (Note)

Note: The quantities of waste glass containers collected in 2020 and 2021 were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

If a GMC fails to meet the operational performance requirements under the contract, the Government may deduct the service fees for the concerned contract year in accordance with the relevant contract terms. If the GMC performs unsatisfactorily on a continual basis and fails to comply with the contract requirements after warning is given, the EPD may terminate the contract before its expiry and arrange for re-tendering in accordance with relevant contract terms.

(3) The EPD's expenditure on the implementation of the waste glass container recovery programme is mainly for the service fees for the glass management contracts. Under these contracts, GMCs are required to properly treat the waste glass containers collected for subsequent recycling. The service fees payable to GMCs are primarily calculated by the weight of the treated and recycled glass materials they deliver. The table below sets out the service fees for glass management contracts over the past three years.

Financial year	Total service fees for glass management contracts (\$ million)
2018-19	16.05
2019-20	54.68
2020-21	29.40
2021-22 (as at August 2021)	10.27

(4) Apart from GMCs, the community recycling network GREEN@COMMUNITY (consisting of Recycling Stations, Recycling Stores and Recycling Spots) also provides waste glass container collection services. The network is operated by non-profit making organisations that are engaged by the EPD under service contracts, and the waste glass containers so collected are mainly provided to GMCs for recycling. Between January 2018 and July 2021, a total of 8 052 tonnes of waste glass containers were collected via GREEN@COMMUNITY. We have no information on the waste glass containers collected by other

community organisations/groups in the past three years, and no funding support in this respect was offered by the Government.

GREEN@COMMUNITY offers one-stop service for arranging environmental education and collection of various types of recyclables (including waste paper, metals, plastics, glass bottles, regulated electrical equipment, small electrical appliances, rechargeable batteries, fluorescent lamps and tubes, etc.) As regards the expenses incurred in the recovery of waste glass containers, a breakdown is not available.

The operating expenditure of GREEN@COMMUNITY in the past three years is set out below.

Financial year	Expenditure (Note 1)	
	Recycling Stations	Recycling Stores
2018-19	\$24 million	Not applicable (Note 2)
2019-20	\$31 million	Not applicable (Note 2)
2020-21	\$42 million	\$127 million

Note 1: Including the 100-odd Recycling Spots operated by Recycling Stations and Recycling Stores.

Note 2: 22 Recycling Stores progressively commenced operation in the fourth quarter of 2020.

(5) At present, waste glass containers are collected effectively through the ample collection points set up by GMCs at different locations and via GREEN@COMMUNITY. The Government will continue to expand the recycling network to facilitate the recovery on waste glass containers. For glass beverage containers, we have no intention to introduce a rebate arrangement similar to that of plastic beverage containers.