

LCQ17: Efforts in promoting waste reduction and recycling

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Priscilla Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

According to a paper submitted by the Environment and Ecology Bureau and the Environmental Protection Department to the Panel on Environmental Affairs and the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of this Council in December last year on the latest progress and achievements of the efforts in promoting waste reduction and recycling, the authorities were conducting a study on how to enhance the municipal solid waste (MSW) charging scheme, and would continuously monitor and assess public views and participation in waste reduction and recycling. It is expected that they will report to members again in the middle of this year on the relevant work progress and the Government's views on implementing MSW charging. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the specific measures currently put in place by the Government to enhance MSW charging scheme; of the expected time for implementing MSW charging;
- (2) how the Government assesses the level of public participation in the process of promoting waste reduction and recycling, and of the factors affecting such participation;
- (3) how the Government plans to increase the number of Food Waste Recycling Spots, and of the specific timetable; and
- (4) as regards the implementation of the Producer Responsibility Scheme on Plastic Beverage Containers and Beverage Cartons, of the challenges the Government expects to face; how it ensures that the implementation of the scheme can balance the interests of various parties?

Reply:

President,

Although the Government announced the suspension of the implementation of municipal solid waste (MSW) charging scheme, our determination to reduce MSW has never wavered. The reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon Priscilla Leung is as follows:

- (1) and (2) The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is continuously enhancing the community recycling network and strengthening public education to promote a green waste reduction and recycling culture in our society. We will assess public participation in waste reduction and recycling based on

data such as the usage of public collection facilities, the amount of recyclables collected, and the total quantity of MSW disposed of at landfills. In this regard, the latest figures show that the number of visits to GREEN@COMMUNITY (G@C) in 2024 surged to approximately 12.7 million, representing an increase of about 80 per cent compared to that of 2023, while the quantity of recyclables collected (by weight) rose by nearly 60 per cent year-on-year. We have also successfully reversed the rising trend of waste disposal. Since 2021, the daily average quantity of MSW disposed of at landfills has decreased for three consecutive years from 11 358 tonnes per day in 2021 to 10 510 tonnes per day in 2024, representing a 3.4 per cent decrease from 2023 and a 7.5 per cent decrease from 2021.

Convenient community recycling facilities and continuous public education are crucial in promoting and encouraging public participation in waste reduction and recycling. As revealed by the abovementioned figures, with the gradual enhancement of the community recycling network, public participation in waste reduction and recycling has risen continuously. To this end, the EPD has substantially increased the number of public collection points under G@C to over 800 in the first quarter of this year. Meanwhile, we are promoting the Waste Reduction and Recycling Charter (the Charter) to encourage private residential premises to set up convenient waste separation and recycling facilities, and to strengthen education and encourage residents to practise waste reduction at source and clean recycling. As of the end of February 2025, a total of 826 private residential premises have signed the Charter, accounting for approximately 40 per cent of the total number of households in private residential buildings with property management companies/owners' corporations/residents' organisations in Hong Kong and covering around 700 000 households.

On the other hand, through the outreaching services of the Green Outreach, the EPD has strengthened the publicity and education as well as the community support for waste reduction and recycling. In 2025-26, the Green Outreach will focus on territory-wide or district-based waste reduction and recycling publicity programmes, including "We-recycle@School" and Programme on Source Separation of Waste. The Green Outreach will also make more use of mass media platforms such as social media and the Internet to carry out publicity and promotional activities, and strengthen collaborations with G@C operators, local groups, non-governmental organisations, etc. to promote a green waste reduction and recycling culture to the public. Besides, the EPD launched the GREEN\$ Electronic Participation Incentive Scheme (GREEN\$ ePIS) in 2020. Through providing incentives, it has successfully motivated many members of the public to participate in waste separation and recycling. The EPD has further expanded the electronic redemption options since February 2024, allowing members of the public to convert their GREEN\$ points into a more diverse range of electronic rewards, including free MTR tickets, local eco-tours and supermarket items, thereby integrating waste reduction and recycling habits into their daily lives. As of the end of February 2025, the number of user accounts of GREEN\$ ePIS has reached over one million.

The total quantity of MSW disposed of at landfills has begun to decline steadily, and the recovery rate has risen. These results demonstrate that the

public is actively participating in waste reduction and recycling, and that the community starts to build up a green waste reduction and recycling culture. Taking on the current positive momentum, we will continue to strengthen waste reduction and recycling initiatives, along with publicity and education, so as to encourage more public participation. At the same time, the Government is reviewing the MSW charging scheme. During the process, we will engage with relevant stakeholders, such as representatives from the property management, food and beverage, and cleaning sectors, to continuously and comprehensively evaluate public sentiments and the level of public participation in waste reduction and recycling. The Government will report on the work progress in promoting waste reduction and recycling and present the way forward of MSW charging scheme to the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Environmental Affairs in mid-2025 as planned.

(3) As at the end of 2024, the EPD installed around 1 200 food waste smart recycling bins (FWSRBs) in residential buildings across the territory, and will increase the number of FWSRBs or food waste collection facilities in residential premises to around 1 600 in 2025. The EPD will also progressively install additional FWSRBs in public rental housing estates with higher usage rates, with a view to achieving the "one FWSRB per block" target. For premises without sufficient space to install food waste recycling bins (e.g. single-block residential buildings and "three-nil" buildings), the EPD has set up approximately 200 fixed or mobile Public Food Waste Recycling Points, of which 76 are Food Waste Recycling Spots operating as night-time kerbside booths at fixed times and locations for the convenience of small business operators and nearby residents. To expand the service coverage, the EPD is preparing to increase the number of Food Waste Recycling Spots gradually to around 100 in 2025, with priority given to more densely populated districts where fixed food waste collection points have yet to be set up. By taking forward various initiatives, the overall quantity of food waste recovered is expected to increase progressively from an average of about 280 tonnes per day in 2024 to about 350 tonnes per day in 2025, representing an increase of nearly 30 per cent.

(4) The Government plans to introduce an amendment bill to the LegCo in April this year to establish a common legislative framework for the producer responsibility schemes (PRSs) applicable to different products. After the passage of the bill, we will extend PRSs to more products (including plastic beverage containers, beverage cartons, electric vehicle batteries, vehicle tyres and lead-acid batteries) as and when appropriate by means of subsidiary legislation. The Government continues the ongoing discussion with the trades about the implementation details and their readiness. Only if the trades are ready shall we consult the LegCo on various PRSs (including the PRS on Plastic Beverage Containers and Beverage Cartons) and gradually implement them in light of the prevailing circumstances.

We will maintain close communication with the trades and consider their views when fine-tuning the operational details of the schemes as appropriate, with a view to alleviating the compliance costs of the trades, setting appropriate recycling targets, assisting the trades in establishing recycling networks, and considering the provision of exemptions as appropriate, etc. In

addition, we will provide sufficient preparatory and adaptation periods as well as strengthen publicity and education for members of the public, so as to ensure the smooth implementation of various PRSs in the future.