

Professionals and green groups petition for 6,000 tonnes waste reduction plan

(Press Release, Nov 9, 2010) Controversies over the construction of new incinerator blazes as government's proposal to expand the Tseung Kwan O Landfill has recently been rejected. A petition initiated by a wide spectrum of community groups is launched today against the government's futile and forceless waste management policy. The petition calls for a comprehensive resource management strategy, with the principle of waste-reduction, as well as a concrete objective of 6,000 tonnes waste reduction.

Led by Friends of the Earth (HK) and Professional Commons, the petition has secured endorsement from a wide range of stakeholders, including intellectuals, environmental groups, Legislative Council members and political parties within just one week.

“3 prongs and 5 measures” form the core of the petition (see table 1 and 2), stressing the importance and urgency of implementing the schemes of “Producer Responsibility” “Waste Charging”, “Landfill Disposal Bans” and “Comprehensive Recycling of Food Waste” by 2012, i.e. by the end of Donald Tsang's administration. It is hoped that one third of the current amount of daily municipal solid waste generation (9,000 tonnes) could be cut, resulting a daily amount of 6,000 tonnes by the year 2022. According to the picture projected in the petition, the amount of unrecyclable waste will drop to merely 3,000 tonnes daily. Even if incineration is the inevitable solution for this type of refuse, the emission of dioxin and pressure upon the landfills can be significantly reduced.

In fact, Hong Kong people in average produce two and a half time more waste than neighbouring countries such as Taiwan and South Korea (see table 3). Even OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries such as the U.K. and Japan are not comparable to Hong Kong. It clearly shows the extravagance of Hong Kong people in the way they consume resources, and hence its enormous room for improvement regarding source reduction, the petitioning groups pointed out.

In order to provide a platform for discussing the long term solution of waste management, a summit on “Sustainable Waste Management Strategy” will be organized by the petitioning groups on the coming Friday (Nov 12). Issues to be discussed include the implementation of variable-rate charging system, producer responsibility, recycling industry, and food waste management, etc. (see table 4)

“For the past 5 years, the administration of Donald Tsang chose to ignore the problem of waste management, even when they are fully aware of its acuteness. Not only do we reject the proposal of incineration, we will also mobilize the public against it, should the Government not willing to implement the waste reduction measures such as municipal waste charging scheme and producer responsibility outlined in the Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste 2005-2014”, the representative of FoE (HK) asserted. “The pressure of waste management will inevitably accumulate if Donald Tsang keeps ignoring the problem, which will be even more difficult for the next administration to tackle. There is no way for Tsang to avoid this political and moral responsibility.” said the representative.

Albert Lai, the chairman of Professional Commons, explained, “ The Government should learn from the lessons of the failure of the extension of the Tseung Kwan O landfill, and using this rare window of opportunity to develop a

comprehensive recycling policy and a holistic strategy on the disposal of waste. The Taipei municipal Government has started the “Recycling All Resources, Zero Garbage Going to the Landfills” programme in 2000. Although there are many technical issues and public discontent from the beginning of the launch of the Programme, the objectives as set by the Taipei municipal Government that is supposed to be achieved in twenty year’s time has now been achieved by ten year earlier than the targeted date. This proves that political will and leadership are the key to success for the achievement of the policy objectives. The advantages of our proposals is that not only the costs of the disposal of waste can be reduced, it could also facilitate in the development of the recycling industries, creating green jobs, and facilitating Hong Kong on reaching the level of governance on the same tier as that of an international metropolis. ”

The government used to celebrate her “achievement” in recycling, by claiming that half of the municipal solid waste (49%) has been recycled. Yet the petitioning groups rebutted that “number does not explain everything”. For instance, compared with the 1,027 tonnes of paper recycled, the portion that had gone to landfill amounted to 2,064 tonnes, representing 23% of the landfill's daily capacity. Together with the 1,705 tonnes of plastic bottle, 42% of the landfill's daily capacity has been occupied for handling used paper and plastic bottles – both of them are indeed recyclable resources instead of waste. Incinerator is no destiny for them.

From planning to construction, it takes 7 years for the commission of a new incinerator. While the government is hailing the construction of a new incinerator, 7 years is simply unbearable for the urgency of the city’s waste problem, if not an excuse to further delay.

Table 1: 3 Prongs for the reduction of 6,000 tonnes of wastes and recycling

The present level of 9,000 tonnes daily municipal solid wastes can be handled by 3 different strategies:	
Prong 1: 3,000 tonnes – Comprehensive recycling of food waste, to be treated by means of composting and Anaerobic Digestion Technology (ADT)	
Prong 2: > 3,000 tonnes – Source reduction and recycling, elevating the incentive of waste reduction and implementation of producer responsibility schemes	
Prong 3: 3,000 tonnes – Incineration, significant reduction of the volume of unrecyclable waste, alleviating the pressure of landfills	
The objective of this proposal is “complete recycling and no landfilling”, which is identical to that of the plan made in 2000 by Taipei City Government. They have their objectives basically achieved this year. The key to the proposal is the concurrent implementation of the 3 strategies, any attempt to compromise the difficult task (such as only introducing incineration without simultaneously putting the rest in place) will make the proposal results in vain.	

Table 2: 5 measures for reduction of 6,000 tonnes of wastes and recycling

Policy	Measures
1. Variable-rate Charging System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Designated bag – charging at different rates to all kinds of users (commercial, industrial, household or governmental) for waste disposal; b. To alleviate the economic burden of relevant special needs, a small quantity of designated bags will be provided for free to all users; c. Revenue will be channeled to specific uses such as waste reduction research,

	education and green procurement.
2. Comprehensive recycling of food waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Food bank – surplus food available in the process of commercial and industrial food production to be collected by welfare organizations or community groups, then redistribute to low-income groups; b. Better control of the amount in food production processes for the reduction of waste; c. Encouraging local initiatives for campaigns such as “Save Food Day” by Greeners Action for reduction of food waste; d. Landfill Disposal Ban – Referring to the policies in Germany, Sweden and Denmark, landfill to reject taking of food waste; e. Creating a food waste recycling system, by the use of composting and Anaerobic Digestion Technology (ADT); f. Waste Charging System – reduction of food waste together with the introduction of designated bag.
3. Producer Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Submission of “WEEE”(Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) bill by 2010; b. Submission of bill concerning drinks containers, packaging waste and rechargeable battery by 2012; c. Urging all sizable restaurants, food producers and retailers to set challenging waste reduction targets and resources/waste management plans on or before 2012.
4. Supporting green production, recovery and recycling industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Supporting research and development of green products and production methods, promotion and research of waste reduction technology; b. Implementation of green procurement by the Government; c. Provision of incentives to public organizations, welfare organizations and community groups for green procurement.
5. Recycling and treatment facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Construction of facilities for composting and ADT b. Reservation of industrial/special lands for electronic/plastic wastes recovery and recycling c. Reservation of public places in urban area, such as existing refuse collection chambers and idle lands under flyovers, for waste separation and recovery points. d. Construction of a waste-to-energy incineration facility with daily capacity under 3,000 tonnes, in compliance with the existing best emission standards

Table 3: Comparison of the waste generation among the four Asian Little Dragons

	Hong Kong (2009)	Taiwan (2009)	South Korea (2007)	Singapore (2008)
Domestic and Commercial waste generation (per day) (tonnes)	17,046 tonnes/day	21,924 tonnes/day	50,346 tonnes/day	13,235 tonnes/day

Domestic and commercial waste generation per capita (per day) (kg)	2.51kg/day *	0.95 kg/day **	1.02 kg/day***	2.73 kg/day****
---	--------------	----------------	----------------	-----------------

*Hong Kong final end 2009 population: 7.03 millions ; **Taiwan final end 2009 population: 23.12 millions ; ***South Korea final end 2007 population: 48.46 millions ; **** Singapore final end 2008 population: 4.83 millions.

+Sources: Hong Kong Environmental Department; Environmental Protection Administration Executive Yuan R.O.C; South Korea, Ministry of Environment and National Environment Agency of Singapore.

#Waste generation: sum of volume of waste disposed and volume of recyclables.

Table 4: Summit on “Sustainable Waste Management Strategy”

Date: Nov 12, 2010 (Fri)
Time: 1400 – 1730
Venue: Rm 101, The Boys' and Girls' Club Association of Hong Kong 3 Lockhart Road, Wanchai
Registration : www.foe.org.hk

Media Inquiry:

9125-6505 – Mr. Albert Lai, Chairman, The Professional Commons

9287-0677 – Ms Au Wing Tsz, Michelle, Senior Environmental Affairs Officer, FoE (HK)

Petitioning Organizations:



Dr. Chung, Shan Shan, Assistant Professor, Department of Biology, HKBU

Hon. Tanya Chan, Hong Kong Legislative Council Member;

Hon. Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo Hong Kong Legislative Council Member;

Hon. Cyd Ho Sau-lan, Hong Kong Legislative Council Member

Mr. CHAN Kai-yuen, Eastern District Council Member

Ms. Chan Yuen-han