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The Conservancy Association

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Comments on the Proposed Landfill Charging Scheme

The Conservancy Association

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Based on the latest proposed landfill charging scheme, The Conservancy Association has the following comments.

We strongly urge the implementation of landfill charge for construction waste without further delay. CA has always been conscientious of its role in facilitating environmentally conducive policy measures. For instance, CA invited all stakeholders to a public forum in May 2001 to express their concerns and for resolving those concerns. However, nine years have lapsed since the scheme was discussed in the Legislative Council and yet waste disposal is still free in Hong Kong.

Landfill charging is a common practice in Europe, North American and other developed economies. It has been widely recognized that landfill charge encourages waste reduction and recycling. Waste haulers in most countries where tipping fees (another name for landfill charges) are in place typically are required to pay at the gate for tipping waste at landfills. This more popular way to levy landfill charge can be easily administered although the charge is not levied directly on waste generators. In comparison, the latest proposal released by the Hong Kong government is a highly accommodating charging scheme at the expense of high administration cost. But it has the advantage of giving direct incentive for waste producers to reduce waste generation. At the same time, the scheme addresses the cash flow concern of the small waste hauling companies/hauler by allowing them a credit period of 30 days.

It is apparent that this concern of the waste haulers is an extension of their traditional undesirable trade practices rather than a feature inherent from the charging scheme. Given the unwillingness of the waste hauling sector to formalize their business practices and relations with dishonest clients, no matter how administratively accommodating the scheme become, the haulers are still likely to be in a weak bargaining position with

respect to construction waste charge and other charges for their hauling services. Should the charging scheme be rejected or delayed any further for this reason, the Administration and the Legislative Council cannot be exculpated from putting private interest before public one.

Landfill charging for the disposal of construction waste is only the first step to implement the “polluters pay” principle to curb solid waste generation. The charging scheme should be extended to cover other wastes such as clinical, commercial, industrial and household waste in due course. We sincerely hope that the Administration and legislators would start preparing for the reading of the landfill charge bill in the immediate future.
