

Press release

LCQ7: Use of paper by the Government

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

Following is a question by the Hon Lee Cheuk-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, in the Legislative Council today (March 5):

Question:

Regarding the use of paper by the Government, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) since 2000, of the respective number of sheets and weight of paper consumed annually by the Printing Division (the former Printing Department) of the Government Logistics Department (GLD) for printing the Policy Address, the Budget and the Hong Kong Annual Report for the relevant year, as well as publications, government forms, paper stationery and other printed matters for various government departments, broken down by the type and the recovered fibre content percentage of the paper used;

(b) whether the Government has defined the meaning of "renewable forests" when procuring paper made from woodpulp derived from renewable forests from its suppliers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(c) of the names of the suppliers which had supplied paper made from woodpulp derived from renewable forests to the Government since 2000, as well as the places of origin of their woodpulp;

(d) whether it has any plan to revise the post-consumer waste (PCW) content requirement of the recycled photocopying paper procured by the Government by increasing from the current minimum levels of 80% recovered fibre or 40% post-consumer fibre to 100% of such materials; if it has such a plan, of the estimated implementation time; if not, the reasons for that;

(e) whether it has any plan to require all government departments to accord priority to the use of recycled paper with a PCW content containing 100% recovered fibre for the printing of printed matters; if it has such a plan, of the

estimated implementation time; if not, the reasons for that; and

(f) whether the Printing Division of GLD has any plan to apply for the Chain of Custody Certification issued by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to facilitate the Government in using FSC certified paper for the printing of printed matters; if it has such a plan, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) Given a wide variety and large quantity (about 18,000 orders per year on average) of printed matters (including books, publications, government forms, paper stationery and other printed matters) printed by the Printing Division of the Government Logistics Department (GLD) (and the former Printing Department) (hereafter referred to as the GLD) for various departments and policy bureaux, the GLD does not maintain statistics on the type, weight and recovered fibre content percentage of the paper used for each printed matter. Moreover, to standardise the assessment of the cost-effectiveness of printed matters, the GLD calculates paper consumption by weight instead of number of sheets. In addition, in view of the wide variety of printing paper and the different sizes (e.g. reel paper can only be quantified by weight and not by number of sheets), the GLD does not keep statistics on the number of sheets of printing paper used. Therefore we can only provide information on the weight of each type of printing paper used by the GLD for printed matters since 2000. For details, please see Table (a).

All the printing paper currently used by the GLD is environmentally-friendly paper (including printing paper with recovered fibre content and printing paper made from woodpulp derived from renewable forests). For the types of environmentally-friendly printing paper used by the GLD since 2000 as a percentage of the total weight of paper consumed, please see Table (b).

(b) Currently, there is no internationally recognised definition of "renewable forests". The general definition of "renewable forests" is trees produced from forests properly managed by forestry operators through a forestry management system. While supplying the raw materials for manufacturing paper, forestry

operators are required to safeguard their biological diversity and renewability and ensure that other ecological systems are not harmed. Since 1997, the GLD, in procuring paper derived from renewable forests, has specified in the relevant tender documents that suppliers must provide a letter of confirmation from the paper mill if they wish to tender for the supply of paper to various government departments, so as to ensure that the raw materials for manufacturing their paper are derived from renewable forests.

(c) Over the past eight years, the GLD has procured paper derived from renewable forests from the following major suppliers:

APP (Hong Kong) Ltd.
Burotech Limited
Che San Stationery Co. Ltd.
Fullest (HK) Limited
Hop Cheong Paper Co. Ltd.
Man Wui Stationery Office Supplies Co. Ltd.
On Hing Paper Company Limited
Pacific State Paper Ltd.
Samson Paper Co. Ltd.
Stanley Shao & Co. Ltd.
Tin Kung Paper Company Limited

According to our records, the places of origin of the woodpulp used by these suppliers include Indonesia, the United States, Canada, the European Union, New Zealand, Australia and China, etc.

(d) The Environmental Protection Department commissioned two studies in 2000 and 2003 to develop the green specifications of common user items, which include recycled photocopying paper. The GLD has adopted the recommendations by the consultants of the Environmental Protection Department, and developed the minimum level of post-consumer waste (PCW) content requirement for recycled photocopying paper, i.e. 80% recovered fibre or 40% post-consumer fibre. Besides, through a marking scheme, the GLD has been encouraging tenderers to supply paper with a higher percentage of recycled content. The Environmental Protection Department is planning to conduct another study to keep abreast of the latest green specifications for products, and to consider whether there is a need to update the existing

post-consumer waste content requirement for recycled photocopying paper.

(e) The Government has been encouraging all departments to use recycled paper as far as possible for daily printing and publishing purposes. The Government's procurement guidelines require all departments to use as far as practicable recyclable products with higher recycled content, including recycled paper, subject to the principle of cost-effectiveness. Recycled printing paper with a PCW content of 100% recovered fibre, however, has limited varieties, less strength, more impurities and limited sources of supply, and its price is also higher. At present, we have no plans to require all government departments to accord priority to the use of this type of paper for the printing of printed matters.

(f) As mentioned in (b) above, the GLD, in procuring paper derived from renewable forests, has specified in the relevant tender documents that suppliers must provide a letter of confirmation from the paper mill if they wish to tender for the supply of paper to various government departments, so as to ensure that the raw materials for manufacturing their paper are derived from renewable forests. To encourage suppliers to provide paper which is made from woodpulp derived from renewable forests and certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or equivalent forestry certification organisations (at present, there are a number of international forestry certification organisations - including the FSC mentioned in the question), the GLD will give extra marks to these products in tender evaluation. Some of the paper currently used for our printed matters is already FSC certified products. At present, the GLD has no plans to apply for the Chain of Custody Certification issued by the FSC.

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