

# Existing Waste Collection Services in Hong Kong

**5.1** For the purpose of effectively promoting waste reduction and recovery, MSW charging must be operationally well aligned with our waste collection system. Although MSW has not been subject to charging in Hong Kong, waste charging in general is not new to our city. At present, in line with the “polluter pays” principle, individual charging schemes are in place for the disposal of chemical waste, construction waste and clinical waste. Private waste collectors using RTS are also subject to a charge. Each of these charging schemes is underpinned by a compatible waste collection system. Based on the “polluter pays” principle as opposed to mere cost sharing, our goal is to protect the environment by internalizing social costs and offering incentives to polluters to reduce their pollution.

## The Current MSW Collection System

**5.2** Hong Kong is a city characterized by a very high population density which in many districts is much higher than that of other international cities. For instance, Kwun Tong has a population density of over 50 000 people per square kilometre, while in Manhattan of New York City the figure is around 27 000. Some 88% of Hong Kong people live in multi-tenant buildings with more than 10 storeys. While most of these buildings are served by PMOs, 6% of households are located in buildings without proper building management, mainly single block buildings (“SBBs”) in older districts and more than 30 000 village houses scattered across the New Territories. Annex B sets out some pertinent facts characterizing Hong Kong.

**5.3** The unique characteristics of our city have led to the development of a complex MSW collection system which aims to maximize the efficiency of our municipal services in order to ensure environmental hygiene. At present, about 85% of MSW from domestic sources<sup>6</sup> is collected by FEHD or its contractors for transfer to the landfills without any charges levied on the waste

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<sup>6</sup> Such sources include residential and institutional premises such as schools. Waste collected from public litter bins, streets, marine areas and country parks also comes under this category.

producers. C&I establishments, however, are not serviced by FEHD and have to hire their own collection services. Private waste collectors collect the majority of MSW generated from C&I sources and deliver it directly to landfills for disposal. Irrespective of how MSW is collected, no waste producer is currently charged for disposing of their MSW at landfills.

#### Our Efficient Waste Collection System

FEHD and its cleansing contractors operate some 240 modern refuse collection vehicles. Every day, they collect (directly or through RCPs) about 5 300 tonnes of household waste, including 1 060 tonnes from Hong Kong Island, 1 630 tonnes from Kowloon and 2 610 tonnes from the New Territories and outlying islands. The waste, partly collected from residential buildings direct and partly through RCPs, is taken to the RTSs or landfills.

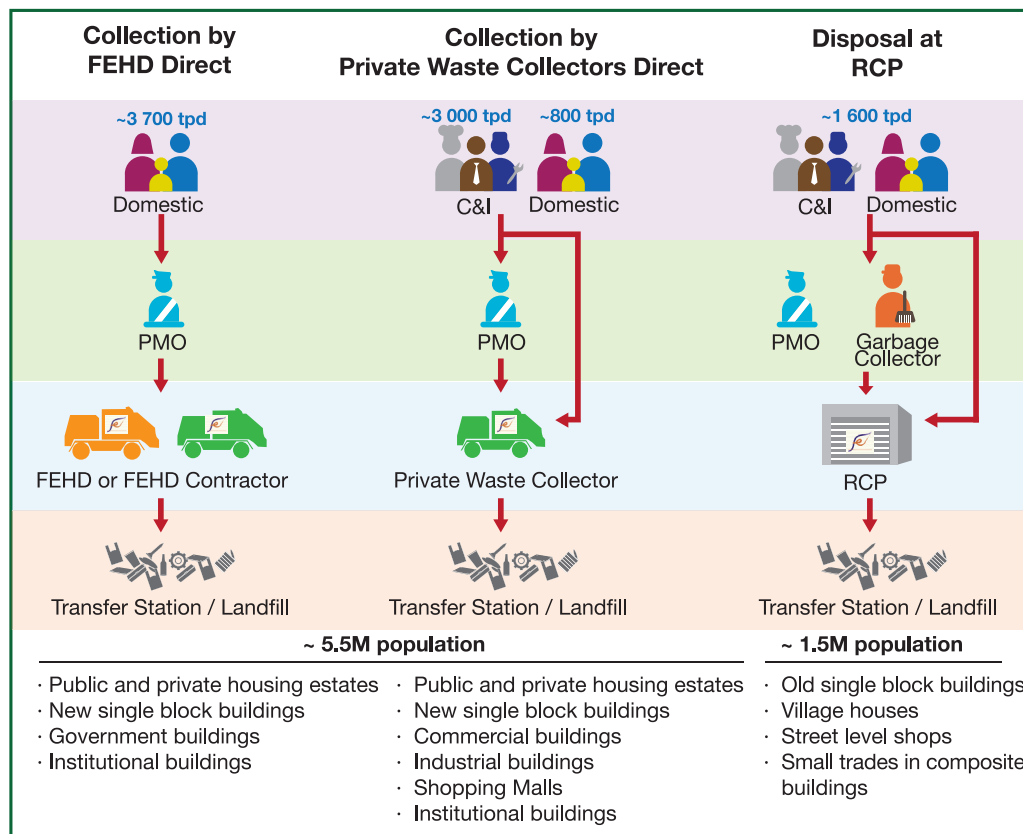
**5.4** Summarized in [Exhibit 5](#) is the existing MSW collection system in Hong Kong. For domestic premises, there are different types of waste collection modes operating in Hong Kong, which show varied practices –

- (a) *Direct Collection by FEHD.* FEHD's collection fleet provides a direct, daily waste collection service to residential buildings at no charge. The service covers nearly all public and private housing estates as well as newly developed SBBs. Some 3 700 tonnes per day ("tpd") of domestic waste are currently collected by FEHD's collection fleet or its contractors.
- (b) *Direct Collection by Private Waste Collectors.* Private waste collectors collect a small portion of domestic waste (~800 tpd) mainly from private housing estates and newly developed SBBs which are not accessible by FEHD waste collection vehicles or do not fit in with FEHD's waste collection schedules. The main service of private waste collectors is to collect C&I waste (~3 000 tpd) and they normally charge the waste producers for such services. It is a common practice for private waste collectors to collect both domestic and C&I wastes in the same trip, resulting in the mixing of wastes.
- (c) *Disposal at RCP Directly or through Garbage Collectors.* Some 1.5 million people use RCPs<sup>7</sup> for disposing of their household waste (~1 600 tpd). They mainly live in buildings located in old districts or village houses scattered around suburban / rural areas. In the former case, the buildings are mostly old SBBs that have no management body to coordinate waste collection activities and that cannot accommodate refuse

<sup>7</sup> Waste delivered to RCPs direct includes street waste collected by street sweepers.

collection vehicles (“RCVs”) for direct waste collection. MSW generated in these buildings is delivered to the nearby RCP by the waste producers or through the waste collection service (at a charge) provided by garbage collectors. Some occupants of these buildings may also choose simply to drop their own waste into public litter bins, which will eventually end up in an RCP. In suburban / rural areas, households living in village houses dispose of their waste at village-type RCPs or bin sites operated by FEHD.

*Exhibit 5:  
Existing MSW Collection System in Hong Kong*



**5.5** For C&I waste, most C&I buildings will engage cleansing contractors to collect and deliver the waste to RTSS or directly to landfills since FEHD does not provide this service to them. There is some degree of mixing between domestic waste and C&I waste during the collection process in the case of composite buildings. In addition, there are also cases of waste disposal through RCPs in the C&I sector. Relevant examples include street-level shops.

## The Impacts of Charging on MSW Collection

**5.6** On the whole, MSW collection services in Hong Kong are jointly operated by both the Government and private collectors. This co-existence has led to a complex service network (see the illustration at [Exhibit 5](#)) that operates efficiently to high standards of hygiene. Based on the experience from outside Hong Kong, the introduction of a charging system must be considered in full context of the established waste collection system. This is because many aspects of the latter, including the garbage collectors, collection mode, cost sharing and level of convenience, etc. As far as the entire community is concerned, these impacts would not only incur additional costs; they might even impinge on efficiency thus undermining the quality of services ultimately enjoyed by members of the public. Accordingly, the successful implementation of any charging initiative has to be premised upon the general support by the community. In particular, it would require a commitment from the community to make certain behavioural changes, as well as public acceptance of the impacts on different fronts.