

25<sup>th</sup> March, 2019

## Air Quality Objectives Review Coalition opposing EPD's recommendation to Greatly Increase the Allowable Exceedances for PM2.5 to 35 Times



The Air Quality Objectives Review Coalition, formed by a collection of 19 cross-disciplinary organizations and units, held a joint press conference at the Legislative Council Complex today. The Air Quality Objectives Review Coalition (the Coalition) condemned the Environmental Protection Department's suggestion to greatly increase the number of allowable exceedances for air pollutant, PM2.5 (fine suspended particulates), from 9 times to 35 times a year. The coalition called for a withdrawal of the suggestion, claiming that the proposal would harm public health.

The government recently announced their proposal on the new set of Air Quality Objectives (AQO), after doing a 2-year review. AQOs set the concentration limit for the major air pollutants, and it is the duty of the government to ensure the actual air quality meets these limits. One of the most controversial amendments proposed by the EPD is to **tighten the concentration limit of PM2.5 by 33%, from 75  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  to 50  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , while at the same time, increase the number of exceedances allowed from 9 times to 35 times a year. The logic behind the proposed amendment is that, the EPD estimated in 2025, the concentration level of PM2.5 (24-hour average) in Hong Kong would exceed the new standard for 33 times.**

The Coalition opposes the government proposal on relaxing the exceedance allowed for air pollutants, as it puts technical feasibility before public health and allows for more pollution, which clearly does not adhere to the principle of "public interest" (i.e. to maintain and achieve air quality)



## Press Release

in Air Pollution Control Ordinance (section 7A). The Coalition also worried that the proposed amendment would set a very bad precedence for future AQO reviews, as the number of exceedances could be arbitrary increased without a sound justification from a public health point of view.

It is estimated that levels of PM10 (respirable suspended particulates) and ozone would continue to increase in the future, yet, the EPD recommended no further tightening of AQOs on the two pollutants. Should the EPD's proposed AQOs be approved, in the coming five years, Hong Kong's AQO will continue to significantly fall short of the safety standards established by the World Health Organization.

The LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs had a discussion on the EPD's proposed AQOs today. **The Coalition has sent a written submission to the panel opposing the government's proposal. A motion calling for the withdrawal of the EPD's plan to increase PM2.5's allowable exceedance and the tightened standards of PM10 and ozone, introduced by lawmaker Kenneth Leung, was moved in and successfully passed in the panel.**

### Attended coalition members:

Blue Skies China, Clean Air Network, Friends of the Earth (HK), Greenpeace, Green Power, Health in Action, the Hon. Chu Hoi Dick, the Hon. Kenneth Leung, the Hon. Tanya Chan, the Hon. Ted Hui Chi Fung

**The AQO Review Coalition** was established in July 2018; its members include environmental groups, medical organizations, Legislative Council members and lawyers, forming 19 units in total.

The AQO Review Coalition petitions that:

1. The Hong Kong AQO be tightened to WHO standards;
2. The AQO Review be based on the protection of citizens' health, and a more progressive policy framework be established on such basis;
3. The air policy includes more thorough policies on emission control, transport planning which aims to reduce carbon emission and pollution.

### Coalition member includes:

350HK	Health in Action	LegCo Jeremy Tam office
Blue Skies China	Hong Kong Doctors Union	LegCo Kenneth Leung office
Clean Air Network	Hong Kong Society of Paediatric	LegCo Kwok Ka Ki office
Friends of the Earth (HK)	Respirology and Allergy	LegCo Tanya Chan office
Greenpeace	LegCo Chu Hoi Dick office	LegCo Ted Hui Chi Fung office
Green Power	LegCo Dennis Kwok office	

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Remark : The press release is jointly issued by The AQO Review Coalition formed by 17 groups and LegCo Members' Offices