
立法會秘書處

Legislative Council Secretariat

新聞稿 Press Release

Examination of XRL Project the biggest challenge to FC
Chairman (with photo)

Hon Emily LAU, Chairman of the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council, said that the 25-hour long examination and approval of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) was the most challenging job in her tenure of office in the 2009-2010 legislative session.

Speaking at the FC Chairman and Deputy Chairman's end-of-session media briefing today (July 20), Hon Emily LAU pointed out that a total of 13 meetings were held in four days to examine the \$66.9 billion funding proposal of the XRL project, which was unprecedented in the past.

Apart from the XRL project, other major projects examined during the session included the construction of sewage treatment works in Stonecutters Island and Hong Kong Island, the Kai Tak cruise terminal development, and the construction of North Lantau Hospital Phase I. The total cost of the public works and infrastructure projects approved by FC this year amounted to over \$108.5 billion.

During the session, FC examined and approved 53 individual financial proposal items. Although the number of items was slightly smaller than the 67 items examined in the previous session, the number of meetings held was far more than that of last year, said Hon Emily LAU. FC held a total of 40 meetings in the 2009-2010 session, an increase of about 30%, as compared

to 31 meetings held in the 2008-2009 session.

Over the past year, the Administration had also put forward quite a number of funding proposals related to the development of various industries. In the area of innovation technology, for instance, FC approved \$200 million for setting up a "Research and Development Cash Rebate Scheme", and approved funding for the third phase development of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks, which entails an estimated expenditure of some \$5,000 million. In the area of promoting culture and creative industries, FC approved a new injection of \$3,000 million into the Arts and Sport Development Fund to provide a sustainable source of funding support for Arts, culture and sports. On enhancing the education industry, an amount of \$2,000 million was approved for providing loans to five self financing degree-awarding institutions to build new campus.

Hon Emily LAU said when examining these financial proposals, FC members were concerned about whether there were comprehensive policies and complimentary measures and whether the mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of these proposals were effective.

Meanwhile, FC also examined and approved various financial proposals related to providing learning and training opportunities for students, including an increase in commitment for Project Yi Jin, subsidies for internet access charges for needy families, injection into the Language Fund, promotion of e-learning in schools, and a new commitment of \$1,000 million for awarding grants to University Grants Committee funded institutions. Hon Emily LAU said FC members were generally supportive of the proposals but were concerned about whether the pertinent policies could indeed nurture students from different strata into capable individuals, and promote diversified development of higher education.

During the session, FC also examined various funding

proposals related to the relief measures announced in the Government's Budget, such as providing two months' rent for tenants living in public housing, extra one-month allowance to recipients of comprehensive social security assistance, old age allowance and disability allowance, a one-off support grant to needy students. These proposals were fully supported by members of FC.

In summing up, Hon Emily LAU hopes that the Administration would provide sufficient information for FC members to decide whether a funding proposal should be approved. She added that under section 8 of the Public Finance Ordinance, proposals to change the approved Estimates of Expenditure must come from the Financial Secretary. FC members cannot amend the Financial Secretary's proposals. As such, FC members could only do their best to reflect their views to the Administration in order to address the concerns of the public, with the aim to convince the Administration to make appropriate amendments or arrangements to its proposals to ensure proper use of public funds.

Ends/Tuesday, 20 July 2010

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Speaking at the end-of-session media briefing, Hon Emily LAU, Chairman of the FC (right); and Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, Deputy Chairman of FC (left), called on the Administration to provide sufficient information for FC members to facilitate their discussion and decision on whether a funding proposal should be approved.