

**Translation**

28 October 2013

Secretary General  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn: Ms. Sophie LAU)

Dear Ms. LAU,

**Matters on the Works for the Hong Kong Section of  
the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link**

Thank you for your letter dated 10 October 2013. Regarding the Hon. TANG Ka-piu's concerns over the works safety of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL), I am authorised to reply as follows.

2. Safety is a prime concern of the Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL). Through educational, promotional and incentive programmes from time to time, the MTRCL has endeavoured to enhance safety awareness among its staff, contractors and frontline workers to foster a good site safety culture. The MTRCL has also established a stringent mechanism to ensure that its contractors and frontline workers comply with all relevant safety regulations and requirements, and that all engineering staff employed possess the necessary qualifications and skills and have received proper safety training.
3. We require the MTRCL to maintain close liaison with its contractors to ensure that workers are provided with a safe working environment. We are very concerned about the fatal accident happened at an XRL tunnelling site in September 2013. The MTRCL and its contractor have contacted the deceased's family to offer necessary assistance, and have taken practical measures to avoid recurrence of similar accidents.
4. Since January 2010, most accidents happened under the XRL project have been minor ones (such as slips or sprains). As at the end of

September 2013, the accumulated accident rate per 100,000 man-hours for the XRL contractors was 0.37, while the accumulated accident rate per 1,000 workers was 10.97 cases. These figures are lower than the overall accident rate of 44.3 cases per 1,000 workers for the local construction industry in 2012. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement and the Government will continue to urge the MTRCL to strengthen the safety management of railway construction sites, enhance workers' safety awareness and ensure that safety always comes first during construction.

5. The Government and MTRCL attach great importance to the working environment within the XRL tunnels. We note that contractors have improved the ventilation facilities inside the tunnels by installing more fans and blowers and strengthening the fresh air-intake systems. This is to enhance the ventilation inside the tunnels and help reduce the interior temperature and improve the air quality. Moreover, the contractors have provided workers with additional air-conditioned containers within the tunnels for recess purposes. The Government and MTRCL value the labour relationships. We require that the MTRCL should ensure proper site management and that the contractors should have effective staff communication channels to understand the workers' needs. It is learnt that the contractors have adopted more flexible arrangements for work breaks to allow adequate rest for the workers.

6. In respect of law enforcement, the Labour Department conducts inspections inside the tunnels from time to time to ensure that the air quality within the tunnels meets the relevant standards and requirements. Under the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Confined Spaces) Regulation, the contractors have to provide workers within the tunnels with sufficient ventilation facilities, approved breathing apparatus, safety equipment, emergency facilities and safety instructions to protect the safety and health of workers. In late September 2013, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare also paid a visit to an XRL tunnelling site to understand the occupational safety measures taken for major infrastructure projects, as well as other occupational safety and health issues relating to tunnelling works.

7. The Railway Development Office of the Highways Department has been monitoring the construction safety of the XRL project at various levels. Regular meetings with the MTRCL are held to understand the latest situation of safety management. An engineering consultant has been employed to assist in project monitoring and verification, which covers different aspects including

construction safety. The Government will continue to work closely with all parties concerned to ensure that the entire XRL project will proceed in an orderly and safe manner.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frankie Wan', written in a cursive style.

(Frankie WAN)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.

Director of Highways (Attn: Mr. CHAN Choi-wai; Fax: 2714 5297)