Finance Committee of the Legislative Council

Minutes of special meeting
held at Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex
on Thursday, 1 March 2018, from 9:01 am to 10:52 am and
from 2:03 pm to 5:03 pm

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Han-pan, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Kenneth LEUNG
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Dennis KWOK Wing-hang
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, SBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon Alvin YEUNG
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, JP
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon LAM Cheuk-ting
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai
Hon SHIU Ka-chun
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan
Hon CHAN Chun-ying
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon HUI Chi-fung
Hon LUK Chung-hung
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon KWONG Chun-yu
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho
Members absent:

Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT Assistant Secretary General 1

Staff in attendance:

Mr Derek LO Chief Council Secretary (1)5
Ms Ada LAU Senior Council Secretary (1)7
Mr Raymond SZETO Council Secretary (1)5
Miss Queenie LAM Senior Legislative Assistant (1)2
Mr Frankie WOO Senior Legislative Assistant (1)3
Ms Michelle NIEN Legislative Assistant (1)5

Item 1 — Members' motions to amend the Finance Committee Procedure, the Establishment Subcommittee Procedure and/or the Public Works Subcommittee Procedure under Rule 71(13) of the Rules of Procedure

Meeting arrangement

The Chairman advised that the Finance Committee ("FC") had scheduled a total of eight hours of special meeting today to deal with the motions and their amendments as set out in the agenda. The special meeting would be suspended at 11:00 am to make way for FC to hold another meeting from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm, where members would receive a briefing by the Financial Secretary on the Budget. The special meeting would then be resumed at 2:00 pm.

2. The Chairman said that Mr Martin LIAO had given notice to move two motions, with the first one relating to paragraph 39 of the Finance Committee Procedure ("FCP") as well as the corresponding provisions in the procedures of the two subcommittees of FC, and the second one relating to FCP 37A as well as the corresponding provisions in the procedures of the two subcommittees of FC. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Mr Alvin YEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Dr Fernando CHEUNG had also
given notices to move a total of 24 sets of amendments to Mr Martin LIAO's two motions. FC would hold a joint debate on the two motions and 24 sets of amendments before putting them to vote. The Chairman reminded members that the wording of those motions and their amendments, as well as the debate and voting arrangements thereafter had already been set out in detail in LC Paper Nos. FC131/17-18 and FC157/17-18.

3. The Chairman instructed that Mr Martin LIAO would first speak and move his 1st motion, but he might not move his 2nd motion at this stage. Movers of amendments would then take turn to speak, but they might not move their amendments at this stage.

Motion moved by Mr Martin LIAO

4. Mr Martin LIAO moved his 1st motion. Mr LIAO said that in recent years, the scrutiny progress of FC and its two subcommittees on financial proposals had been seriously hampered by filibustering. In the four legislative sessions between 2012-2013 and 2015-2016, it took FC an average of only 1.8 hours to scrutinize one financial proposal, whereas in the 2016-2017 legislative session, it took an average of 4.2 hours for FC to scrutinize one financial proposal. In the 2017-2018 legislative session, as at January 2018, FC had only dealt with 12 public works projects, and they were all items carried forward from the previous legislative session. Meanwhile, many infrastructure projects could not be commenced, resulting in serious uncertainties for people working in the construction industry as well as substantial increases in the construction costs. FC must strike a reasonable balance between monitoring public spending and maintaining the efficiency of its deliberation.

5. Mr Martin LIAO said that his 1st motion sought to amend FCP 39, as well as the corresponding provisions of paragraph 32 in the Establishment Subcommittee Procedure ("ESCP") and paragraph 33 in the Public Works Subcommittee Procedure ("PWSCP") (FCP, ESCP and PWSCP collectively referred to as "the Procedures"). Under the current rules, members could move a motion without notice to adjourn the discussion on a particular agenda item or further proceedings of FC/the subcommittees, and the said procedure was adapted from Rule 40 of the Rules of Procedure ("RoP"). When a motion was moved under RoP 40(4) that further proceedings of the committee be now adjourned, the purpose was to adjourn the proceeding of the Committee of the whole Council. If the motion was agreed to, the Council shall resume and proceed to deal with the next item on the agenda of the meeting of the Legislative Council ("LegCo"). But in the case of FC or its subcommittees, if a motion for the
adjournment of further proceedings was agreed to, it would mean bringing the relevant meeting to an abrupt end. When the adjournment procedure was discussed by FC at its meeting on 29 November 1996, members agreed that a member could move to adjourn the discussion on an agenda item or further proceedings of the meeting, but not both, or back-to-back. Mr LIAO opined that contrary to FC's original intent, the adjournment procedure had been abused in recent years. Mr LIAO said that according to his proposed amendment, a member when speaking on a proposal might move without notice that discussion on an item, but not further proceedings of FC, be now adjourned, while the speaking time of each member would be not more than three minutes or any time period as decided by the Chairman.

6. Mr Martin LIAO went on to say that his 2nd motion sought to amend FCP 37A, ESCP 31A and PWSCP 32A. Mr LIAO pointed out that the procedure of FCP 37A motions was made in the 2007-2008 legislative session, so that FC could put consolidated views to the Administration on its financial proposals. That said, some members had on occasions in recent years moved hundreds or even tens of thousands of FCP 37A motions for the sake of filibustering, which clearly violated the original intent of such a procedure. Mr LIAO stated that as specified under his proposed amendment, a member might propose no more than one FCP 37A motion, which was not amendable, and any proposed motion must be presented by a time specified by the Chairman. The same as under the current practice, such a motion must be considered by the Chairman as directly related to the agenda item and agreed by a majority of members that it should be proceeded forthwith, although it was provided under his proposed amendment that no debate shall take place to ascertain if members would so agree.

7. Mr Martin LIAO stressed that his two amendment proposals would not undermine FC's functions in monitoring the Government; instead, they served to strike a reasonable balance between monitoring public spending and maintaining the efficiency of the legislature, so that FC could scrutinize funding proposals in a more focused manner.

8. The Chairman proposed the question on Mr Martin LIAO's 1st motion.
Members' questions on whether the Chairman should preside over the meeting

9. Citing the Chairman's repeated moves to promote the amendment of FCP in July and August 2017, Mr CHU Hoi-dick demanded an explanation from the Chairman as to whether it was appropriate for him to preside over the meeting. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Mr Kenneth LEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Mr HUI Chi-fung considered that given the Chairman's stance on amending FCP, a conflict of interests would arise if he was to preside over a meeting for FC to consider amendments to FCP. Citing the case where the LegCo President had never spoken publicly about amendments to RoP, the FC Chairman should also refrain from casually making public his views about amending FCP or FC's scrutiny on the funding proposals. Those members opined that as the Chairman must from time to time make rulings about the number and speaking time limit of speeches to be made by members during the meetings, he should strive to maintain neutrality both inside and outside FC. If the Chairman often gave his personal views in a bid of steering the direction of FC's discussion, it would give rise to the impression that he was not impartial. Citing the Handbook for Chairmen of Bills Committees, Dr Fernando CHEUNG stressed that the Chairman should conduct himself with impartiality in discharging his responsibilities.

10. Mr Martin LIAO said that as the meeting had already proceeded to the joint debate on the motions and the amendments, individual members should not raise any questions at this juncture on whether it was appropriate for the Chairman to preside over the meeting. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, Mr Steven HO and Mr Paul TSE considered that the Chairman should not allow any member to digress from the agenda item and waste meeting time. Mr YIU Si-wing, Mr CHAN Hak-kan and Dr Junius HO said that while it was LegCo's convention for the LegCo President to refrain from expressing his views, the chairmen of other committees should, given their role as a LegCo Member, be able to express views on behalf of their voters or the sectors they represented. Also, LegCo Members would take up the role of chairmen of different LegCo committees and often express views on various matters. So long as Members could chair the meetings impartially in their capacity as chairmen of committees, it would be acceptable for them to express their own views. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan considered that if the Chairman's attention was brought to the fact that FCP had become a tool of stalling FC's deliberation due to inadequacies in its procedures, it was natural for him to express a view on amending the same.
11. In response, the Chairman said that as he noted from previous occasions when similar situations were handled by FC, the FC Chairman would only agree to deal with a member motion for the Chairman not to preside over a meeting when detailed facts or justifications had been submitted alleging that the Chairman had pecuniary interests in a particular funding proposal. Regarding the motions presently handled by FC to amend FCP, ESCP and PWSCP, he neither had any pecuniary interests nor considered himself chairing the meeting for the item would give rise to any conflicts of interests or roles.

12. Regarding some members' claim that given his pre-set position on amending the Procedures, he could not chair the meeting in a fair and impartial manner, the Chairman considered that there was no conflict between him expressing personal views on amending the Procedures as a Member and chairing the meeting as the Chairman. If a Member was not allowed to chair a meeting simply because he had personal views on a particular matter, possibly no Member could qualify to chair the meeting in that sense and hence, the meeting might have to be aborted ultimately. He opined that the rule under FCP 13 about the Chairman being unable to chair a meeting for a particular item was not intended for the above situation. In accordance with FC's past practices, FCP 13 should only apply when the Chairman was alleged to have pecuniary interests in a particular agenda item.

13. Citing the example about him chairing the FC meeting on 10 February 2017 to consider the proposed increase in cash remuneration for politically-appointed officials, the Chairman pointed out that there were also members claiming that it was neither impartial nor appropriate for him to make public remarks on the agenda item in a radio programme in the capacity of the FC Chairman. Those members requested that the Deputy Chairman or another member should chair the meeting for that item. The Chairman said that having consulted the Counsel to FC, he came to the view that unless members could specifically point out that he was unfit to chair the meeting because he had pecuniary interests in the said agenda item, he would not deal with members' request for the Deputy Chairman or another member to chair the meeting on his behalf. At that time, members accepted his decision.
14. The Chairman further stated that he had indeed made public his views on the need to amend FCP for the sake of enhancing the efficiency of its deliberation after the end of the 2016-2017 legislative session because FC had failed to timely approve a number of items related to people's livelihood, not to mention his deep personal feelings about the matter given his experience of chairing FC meetings for two years. The Chairman pointed out that when standing for the FC Chairman election this legislative session, a number of members also questioned whether he was fit to be the Chairman given his position on the matter. After he responded to those questions and having the matter debated by members, he was eventually elected as the Chairman. Moreover, he had not made any comments about amending FCP after he got elected. The Chairman said that he had all along heeded the views of the Counsel to FC and the Clerk to FC. Hence, no member who acted as the Chairman could take actions on his own initiative.

Speeches made by movers of amendments

15. The Chairman called upon movers of amendments, i.e. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Mr Alvin YEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Dr Fernando CHEUNG, to take turn to speak. He directed that each member might speak once for not more than 10 minutes.

16. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen opposed the two motions proposed by Mr Martin LIAO and queried the accuracy of Mr LIAO's remark about tens of thousands of FCP 37A motions being moved by members. He pointed out that in the 2017-2018 session, no infrastructure project had so far been prevented from commencement due to members' filibustering. In recent years, there was a remarkable reduction in the number of FCP 37A motions moved in FC, and the Chairman had also exercised his powers from time to time asking members to select or combine their proposed FCP 37A motions. It was thus clear that the moving of FCP 37A motions by members was for expressing views on the item concerned and should not be regarded as filibustering. He considered that it was not unreasonable for FC to spend three to four hours on average to scrutinize a financial proposal involving billions of dollars. Mr CHAN called on members to support the 2nd set of amendments he proposed on the 1st motion. The said amendments proposed to retain the provision which allowed members to move that further proceedings of FC be now adjourned, but such a motion might not be moved more than once under the same item.
17. Mr Alvin YEUNG opined that Mr Martin LIAO's amendments to the Procedures were aimed at substantially curtailing Members' powers, while strengthening the Chairman's powers. If his motions were passed, it would be difficult for LegCo to monitor the Government effectively. Members had to put questions to the public officers repeatedly during the deliberation of an agenda item because they could not answer members' questions satisfactorily. Members hoped that by making use of FC's proceedings, such as the moving of adjournment motions, they could force the Government into giving a satisfactory answer. Efficiency should not be the only benchmark for evaluating FC's work. Mr YEUNG stated that his proposed amendments to Mr LIAO's motions were intended to prevent excessive restriction on Members' functions and powers in monitoring the Government. He considered that by allowing the Chairman sole discretion to specify the time of receiving FCP 37A motions and to decide the speaking time limit of members, it was tantamount to vesting all FC's functions onto the Chairman alone, which was a very dangerous move. In reality, members would also exercise self-constraint and refrain from obstructing the meetings indiscriminately because it might otherwise invite disastrous political consequences for themselves should their voters turn away. Regarding his amendments, Mr YEUNG said that members' speaking time limit should be clearly specified in the Procedures in order to avoid abuse of power by the Chairman. Separately, it was natural for members to see the need for expressing views on an agenda item at a later stage of the scrutiny process as they identified problems with the relevant financial proposal. Thus the Chairman should allow members to submit FCP 37A motions anytime during the meetings.

18. Mr WU Chi-wai said that since the amendment of the relevant RoP provisions, it was no longer possible for members to achieve the effect of filibustering by moving motions for the adjournment of further proceedings of FC. In the 2017-2018 session so far, it took FC only one to two hours on average to complete the scrutiny of a financial proposal. While it was natural for members to ask public officers questions repeatedly to seek information, pro-establishment Members regarded such a move as obstructing FC's deliberation, blatantly ignoring the fact that the Government had evaded the questions from members in the first place. Mr WU opined that it was natural for Members to have different views on the financial proposals, not to mention that discussion on the policies concerned in the relevant Panels was invariably constrained by inadequate time. The Chairman had all along been vested with the power to decide whether the speeches made by members were repetitive, irrelevant or tedious. Hence it was indeed unwise to impose additional restrictions through amending the Procedures presently. When elaborating his 5th set of amendments to Mr LIAO's 1st motion, Mr WU said that the Chairman
should first consult the attending members before setting the speaking time limit. Such an approach could avoid the abuse of power by the Chairman and was in compliance with procedural justice.

19. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the amendments presently proposed to be made to the Procedures had restricted the exercise of powers by LegCo Members in FC. Dr CHEUNG held that while modern societies should develop towards the direction of maintaining checks and balances, Hong Kong was now moving backwards. The powers of LegCo Members had already been restricted by Article 74 of the Basic Law ("BL") to the effect that Members could not propose any bills or amendments which related to public expenditure, while the written consent of the Chief Executive shall be required before bills relating to government policies were introduced. When examining the Budget, Members were not allowed to propose the creation of new heads of expenditure. Instead, they could only reduce the sums or additional provisions as proposed by the Government. By raising rounds of questions to the Administration on its financial proposals, FC members could highlight the pros and cons of the relevant items or the details of hidden irregularities in the use of public funds, so as to ensure public monitoring as well as better use and allocation of public resources. Dr CHEUNG opined that it was only in rare occasions previously that items could not be passed due to a voluminous number of FCP 37A motions moved by members to obstruct FC's scrutiny and hence, it was unreasonable to provide that each member could only move one FCP 37A motion for individual items. Moving members' motions for the adjournment of further proceedings of FC could force the Administration to pay heed to the concerns raised by members, so that the relevant funding proposals could be revised accordingly as per members' requests.

Speeches made by other members

20. The Chairman invited other members to speak. He directed that each member might speak once for not than 10 minutes.

21. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, Dr Priscilla LEUNG, Dr Junius HO, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan, Mr KWOK Wai-keung, Mr Holden CHOW, Mr SHIU Ka-fai, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung and Mr WONG Ting-kwong expressed support for the two motions proposed by Mr LIAO to amend the Procedures.

22. The meeting was suspended at 10:52 am to make way for the briefing by the Financial Secretary on the 2018-2019 Budget. The meeting resumed at 2:03 pm.
23. **Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok** cited meeting statistics to illustrate his concerns about the scrutiny progress of FC and its two subcommittees on the financial proposals. **Ir Dr LO** pointed out that in the 2016-2017 session, the meeting time of the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") had been increased from the originally scheduled 34 hours to 70-odd hours, yet the amount of funding provisions under the approved items was only half of the total funding provisions sought under the Administration's plan. As for FC, only $58.3 billion had been approved so far in the 2017-2018 session for public works projects, with all the relevant items being those brought forward from the last session. In the 2017-2018 session, PWSC had considered 12 projects with a total cost of $23 billion. **Ir Dr LO** pointed out that in the three legislative sessions of 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, the average time spent by FC on each financial proposal was respectively 2 hours 47 minutes, 2 hours 1 minute and 4 hours 14 minutes. In the 2016-2017 session, 64 meetings of FC had been held with a total meeting time of close to 123 hours, yet only 29 financial proposals had been approved. In the three legislative sessions of 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, the average time spent by PWSC on each item was respectively 53 minutes, 1 hour 31 minutes and 3 hours 52 minutes. In the three legislative sessions of 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, the average time spent by the Establishment Subcommittee ("ESC") on each item was respectively 1 hour 40 minutes, 1 hour 38 minutes and 2 hours 29 minutes. In the 2017-2018 session, the average time spent by PWSC on each proposal so far was 2 hours 6 minutes, while that by ESC was 2 hours 14 minutes.

24. **Dr Priscilla LEUNG** did not agree with pan-democratic Members' view that the present exercise to amend the Procedures was aimed at curtailing Members' powers in monitoring the Government, while increasing the Chairman's discretion in chairing the meetings. She pointed out that in the past, members did have different understanding on whether members could only move one or a large number of motions under FCP 37A. There was also a previous case where more than 10,000 motions had been proposed by Mr WONG Yuk-man. **Dr LEUNG** considered that RoP and FCP should not be revised casually had they been operating smoothly. As an example, **Dr LEUNG** said that previously some items with community support could not be passed before the end of the session due to the slow progress of FC's scrutiny. Some members of the public thus came to the view that the Procedures might need to be revised. She did not agree that Members' scope and right of discussion would be curtailed under the present exercise to amend the Procedures. The FC Chairman should be allowed to exercise discretion. Pan-democratic Members should make their cases through quality
speeches, rather than resorting to filibustering indiscriminately because it had already become tiresome to the public. Even if each member could only move one FCP 37A motion for individual items, 20-odd FCP 37A motions could be moved by the 20-odd Members of the pan-democratic camp. So long as members could maintain the quality of their speeches and questions, the scope of Members' discussion would not be undermined.

25. Dr Junius HO considered that the provisions under the existing Procedures where members could move a motion for the adjournment of further proceedings immediately after a motion for the adjournment of discussion on an agenda item had been vetoed were neither reasonable nor in line with the principle of optimizing the use of meeting time for the discussion on agenda items. Dr HO was of the view that the present arrangement where members of FC or its subcommittees took turn to speak and less speaking time was allowed for each additional round of speech was orderly and effective. Moreover, the Chairmen would always exercise their discretion to allow members or public officers to finish their speeches. Dr HO held that at present, members already had enough time to express their views, and the moving of a voluminous number of FCP 37A motions by members could not increase the time for discussing the financial proposals. Instead, it would only stall the voting on the relevant agenda items by FC or its subcommittees.

26. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that the progress of scrutinizing certain livelihood items had indeed been stalled by filibustering. Citing the examples about Ms Claudia MO asking public officers for the difference between arsenic and cyanide or the conversion method between hectare and square metre in FC meetings, as well as Mr CHU Hoi-dick moving a motion to adjourn further proceedings of FC because he was dissatisfied that the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs who was in charge of a project for the West Kowloon Cultural District under discussion was not present at the meeting, Dr CHIANG said that while she agreed that Members were duty-bound to raise questions to the Government, it was clear from the above examples that many of the questions repeatedly raised by some members at the meetings were niggling ones. Dr CHIANG held that as it was Members' duty to attend the meetings, there was really no need to provide for the moving of members' motions to adjourn further proceedings in the Procedures. It was obviously an abuse of procedure should members move hundreds of FCP 37A motions.
27. Mr KWOK Wai-keung considered that FC was still making slow progress in terms of scrutinizing the financial proposals. To show their participation in the scrutiny process, pan-democratic Members would raise nagging questions even for uncontroversial items. Thus a considerable amount of time had to be spent on the scrutiny of such items needlessly, resulting in a huge backlog of funding proposals awaiting consideration by FC. Notwithstanding, pan-democratic Members still moved adjournment motions time and again or even requested to speak and discuss motions to shorten the duration of the division bell, merely for the sake of further wasting a substantial amount of FC’s meeting time. Regarding the point raised by pan-democratic Members that they must ask questions repeatedly or even move motions for the adjournment of discussion because the Administration had failed to answer their questions satisfactorily, Mr KWOK opined that such a theory was only meant to divert attention and cover up their real intention of filibustering and obstructing FC’s progress in scrutinizing the funding proposals. Mr KWOK held that the aim of the present amendments to the Procedures as proposed by Mr Martin LIAO was to ensure the smooth conduct of meetings of the legislature, so that it could discharge its functions properly. To this end, the proposed amendments were appropriate in scope and mild in intensity.

28. Mr Holden CHOW said that while he agreed that it was Members’ duty to monitor the Government's administration, it should not become an excuse for stalling FC's scrutiny on the Government's funding proposals, so much so that the Government could hardly maintain effective operation or even preventing the timely approval of certain funding applications related to people's livelihood. As far as FCP 37A motions were concerned, even if the Chairman could exercise his discretion and limit the number of motions to be moved by members, there were also past cases where violent debate among members or even scuffles had arisen from the Chairman's decision. In the end, FC must spend a fair amount of meeting time to deal with those situations. Mr CHOW considered that even if each member could only move one FCP 37A motion, members would not be deprived of the opportunity to move meaningful motions so long as the motions were proposed after careful consideration. Mr CHOW pointed out that if the requests of pan-democratic Members were pragmatic and feasible, and they were willing to compromise and forge a consensus, they could always lobby support from pro-establishment Members.
29. Mr SHIU Ka-fai said that there were occasions when he would rather give up on asking questions to avoid the worsening of FC's backlog because the progress of FC's scrutiny had been hampered by the questions raised by some members. Mr SHIU agreed that while Members were duty-bound to monitor the Government, they should avoid creating adverse impact on the Government's funding allocations and operation, such that the development of society was also affected. Mr SHIU stated that the engineering sector was perturbed by the uncertainty arising from the delays in securing funding approval for public works projects as they could hardly make effective planning for the allocation of resources. Workers in the engineering sector likewise were gravely concerned about their employment prospects. Mr SHIU opined that as extensive and in-depth discussion had already been held on the funding proposals recommended by the subcommittees for FC's approval, they should not be discussed in FC again endlessly. Disagreeing with pan-democratic Members' view that some public works projects were white elephant projects, Mr SHIU said that those projects were conducive to Hong Kong's development. Regarding Mr LIAO's amendments to FCP 37A to the effect that each member could only move one motion for individual items, Mr SHIU considered that the right of members to express their views had not been undermined.

30. Expressing support for Mr Martin LIAO's amendments, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung considered that society was made to pay a high price when some members previously proposed a voluminous number of FCP 37A motions to stall the scrutiny progress of funding proposals. As a result, the engineering sector could not proceed with the works projects, and the workers' livelihood had been adversely impacted. According to his observation, some members were unchecked in terms of their filibustering as they were still asking questions repeatedly, moving FCP 37A motions or moving motions for the adjournment of further proceedings immediately after motions for the adjournment of discussion on agenda items. Mr LEUNG pointed out that members should win the public's support through sound arguments, rather than filibustering indiscriminately to stall the progress of meetings. Mr LEUNG opined that FCP 37A motions were originally intended to allow members to express views, and in turn, urge the Government to refine the funding proposals, while motions for the adjournment of discussion on an item or further proceedings of FC under FCP 39 were intended to allow time for LegCo and the Administration to convince each other. Notwithstanding, the two provisions had now been abused seriously and became a tool for stalling the scrutiny progress of funding proposals. Thus it was indeed necessary to amend the same.
31. **Mr WONG Ting-kwong** said that the provisions in RoP were strictly observed by Members of both the former LegCo and LegCo before and after Hong Kong's unification. But in recent years, a handful of Members tried to paralyze the Government and obstruct its administration through filibustering under the pretext of democratic monitoring of the Government. Citing that the time taken for the scrutiny of funding proposals could vary from more than two hours to less than one minute in some cases, he pointed out that pan-democratic Members were effectively and completely controlling the duration of the scrutiny period. **Mr WONG** considered that members who proposed a voluminous number of FCP 37A motions were obviously abusing the procedure rather than expressing dissenting views. Referring to previous cases when a handful of members had besieged the Chairman's podium in protest and disrupted the Chairman's chairing of meetings, **Mr WONG** held that such acts were extremely inappropriate.

32. **Mr Charles Peter MOK**, **Mr Kenneth LEUNG**, **Dr KWOK Ka-ki**, **Ms Claudia MO**, **Mr CHU Hoi-dick**, **Mr LAM Cheuk-ting**, **Mr James TO** and **Mr Dennis KWOK** opposed the motions proposed by Mr Martin LIAO to amend the Procedures.

33. **Mr Charles Peter MOK** said that at present, FC could on average complete the scrutiny of a financial proposal in about one or two hours. In the 2017-2018 session, only a limited number of motions had so far been moved by members to adjourn the discussion on an item or further proceedings of FC, which were significantly fewer than those in the past two sessions. **Mr MOK** pointed out that at present, the Chairman already had the power to request members to combine their FCP 37A motions or even rule certain motions to be out of order on the grounds that they were unrelated to the item under discussion. In most cases, FC would decide against handling the FCP 37A motions and hence, FCP 37A motions could rarely be put to discussion in FC. **Mr MOK** queried that the claim made by the pro-establishment camp about pan-democratic Members filibustering in FC meetings was nothing but fabrication and stigmatization. He opined that the present exercise of amending FCP was tantamount to LegCo undermining its own powers to monitor the Government as the room for discussion allowed for the pro-democracy camp in monitoring the Government had been tightened. By asking all sorts of questions about the financial proposals, Members could help improve the Administration's governance, and it would be against the public's expectation if Members just passed the financial proposals hastily without any questions.
34. Mr Kenneth LEUNG queried whether FC's efficiency in handling the agenda items should be benchmarked against the amount of approved funding provisions. He also pointed out that there was no direct relationship between the time of discussion and the amount of approved funding provisions. The FC Chairman could chair the meetings and impose restrictions on the number of FCP 37A motions proposed by members, their speaking time, and so on, pursuant to the powers conferred by FCP. He held that the Chairman could decide for himself how to exercise his powers so long as he was guided by the spirit and letters of the Procedures, and if necessary, reference could also be made to the relevant court judgments concerning the Chairman's powers in chairing the meetings. Mr LEUNG held that FC Members were duty-bound to consider the funding proposals for various public works projects from the perspectives of proper use of public funds and improving people's livelihood before giving approval. Mr LEUNG considered it unfair that while pan-democratic Members were dutifully asking all sorts of detailed questions on the funding proposals, they were being stigmatized as filibustering.

35. Ms Claudia MO expressed dissatisfaction about pro-establishment Members seeking to undermine Members' powers in monitoring the use of public funds by the Government through amending the Procedures. Given that pro-democracy Members did not hold a majority of seats in Council and hence, failing to maintain their power of veto, they had no choice but resort to filibustering in the hope of sabotaging or stalling the Administration's abhorrent policies or draconian laws.

36. Dr KWOK Ka-ki considered that Members were duty-bound to monitor the Government's administration. Even before RoP was amended in December 2017, LegCo Members only had very limited powers. For instance, they could not introduce motions incurring public expenditure or amendments to the Budget to increase the provisions for benefitting people's livelihood. FC and its two subcommittees thus became the only venue for Members to give full play to their already very limited powers in monitoring the Government. The views expressed by Members when considering public works items could help the Government refine the details of the relevant projects, improve its administration and rectify any irregularities. Dr KWOK opined that many works projects approved by FC, such as the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, were white elephant projects passed hastily by the pro-establishment camp to protect the interests of major consortia. For projects involving substantial funding provisions, FC's gate-keeping role had become all the more important as there was invariably inadequate discussion in the relevant Panels. Yet with the present amendments to the Procedures,
the control over members' deliberation power had been tightened further. Dr KWOK considered that after the disqualification of six LegCo Members, pro-establishment Members could dictate the game and have full control over the voting results in FC meetings.

37. Mr CHU Hoi-dick pointed out that for pro-establishment Members who supported the amendments to the Procedures, FC was like a factory producing goods according to the owner's demands. But FC was vested with the power and responsibility to actively and properly discharge its functions under BL in monitoring the Government's public expenditure. Through deeply probing the items under discussion, members were putting pressures on the Government to ensure that its policies would not deviate from public opinion. Mr CHU pointed out that under Mr LIAO's proposed amendments to FCP 37A, the Chairman would be vested with the power to decide the timing for members to propose FCP 37A motions. In this way, members could no longer propose their FCP 37A motions after consolidating the views which emerged in the course of discussion. Mr CHU pointed out that at present, the Chairman could already exercise his powers to limit the number of FCP 37A motions that could be moved by members or require members to consolidate a large number of motions into several motions. Through such an approach, the Chairman should be able to effectively control the progress of scrutiny. Mr CHU also considered that Mr LIAO's proposed amendments to the provisions on moving the adjournment of further proceedings and increasing the Chairman's discretion over the speaking time of members were unwarranted.

38. Mr LAM Cheuk-ting admitted that Members of the Democratic Party had taken part in some filibusters previously because they had doubts about the relevant funding proposals and did not want to see their passage. Questions asked by Members in the meetings could invariably reveal certain important questions yet to be accounted for by the Government. While LegCo only had very few powers in checking against the Government's administration, the time available for Members to ask questions at Panel meetings was also quite limited. As such, pro-establishment Members should attach importance to the quality of FC's scrutiny on the financial proposals. It would be against the public's expectation if dubious funding applications were passed lightly. Mr LAM considered that repeated questions were asked by members because the Administration had failed to answer them satisfactorily, while the moving of FCP 37A motions for the expression of views was also a power conferred to members by the Procedures. As each member might have views on different aspects of a funding proposal which they wanted to express through FCP 37A motions, it was unreasonable to limit that only
Mr LAM held that Members known for filibustering were elected into LegCo because their filibustering was endorsed by many members of the public. As such, the view of those members of the public should also be respected.

39. Mr James TO said that disputes and confrontation started emerging in LegCo primarily after the previous term of Government came into office. As the new Chief Executive assumed office, the atmosphere of confrontation in society had become less intense. Yet pro-establishment Members still sought to impose even more stringent restrictions on FC's scrutiny process, so much so that they even considered the average discussion time of two hours for each financial proposal too long and wanted to cut it down further. Of all the FC members, there were only about 10-odd Members who asked questions actively, and their questions were always of a high quality. Mr TO considered that it was nothing unusual in any free and democratic society for Members to spend a little more time on the scrutiny of a handful of seriously controversial items. Mr TO pointed out that the essence of "one country, two systems" was the representation of opposition Members in Hong Kong's legislature. The opposition camp could disapprove bills or funding applications by filibustering allowed under the Council's rules and procedures as a means to prevent the passage of any proposals which they considered to be not in order. However, the amendments presently proposed to the Procedures might defeat the original intent of "one country, two systems".

40. Mr Dennis KWOK said that 83 bills (or more than 90%) and all the 200-odd items of subsidiary legislation had been passed by LegCo. For FC, more than 90% of the items submitted for approval were eventually passed. Illustrating his point with examples, Mr KWOK said that FC was indeed duty-bound to block the approval of certain items such as the making of capital injection for the expansion of the Hong Kong Disneyland and the $20-odd billion additional provisions to cover the cost overrun of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link ("XRL"). Mr KWOK considered that the backlog of funding proposals or the so-called filibustering of members could easily be resolved if the Chairman reshuffled the order of agenda items by deferring those which were controversial or advancing those which were uncontroversial or related to people's livelihood. Mr KWOK held that Mr LIAO's proposed amendments to the Procedures could only achieve a minimal saving of meeting time and failed to prevent members from blocking or stalling FC's scrutiny on gravely controversial items through other means. Mr KWOK called on members and the Administration to hold discussions on how to improve the relationship between the Executive and the Legislature, so as to avoid the inclusion of controversial items into the agenda.
Mr Martin LIAO speaking on the amendments and in reply

41. The Chairman called upon Mr Martin LIAO to speak on the amendments. Mr LIAO said that the adjournment procedure was adapted from RoP 40, and the intention was not to adjourn the entire meeting. He pointed out that it was unreasonable for pan-democratic Members to propose amendments to the effect that the expression "or further proceedings of the Committee" deleted by his motion was reinstated to expand the meaning of the adjournment procedure. Regarding the 2nd set of amendments which provided that the motion of further proceedings of FC be now adjourned might not be moved more than once under the same item, Mr LIAO opined that it was unjustified because even the procedure for the adjournment of further proceedings under RoP 40(4) had not provided for the adjournment of the entire LegCo meeting, not to mention the number of such adjournment motions to be moved.

42. Regarding members' speaking time limit during debates on motions to adjourn discussion on particular agenda items, Mr Martin LIAO pointed out that the amendments proposed by members respectively suggested a time limit of 5, 7 or 10 minutes, but no plausible justifications had been given. Mr LIAO pointed out that in his motion, the speaking time limit of three minutes was adopted to reflect the original speaking time limit specified in the provision, while allowing the Chairman discretion to decide on the speaking time limit as a balance. Mr LIAO held that adjournment motions were to be moved under urgent circumstances with proper justifications and hence, members' speeches on such motions should be clear and concise. The amendments proposed by pan-democratic Members to extend the speaking time limit for adjournment motions were totally unjustified.

43. Mr Martin LIAO pointed out that the amendments also sought to impose various restrictions on the Chairman's power to decide the speaking time limit for adjournment motions; for instance, such decisions could only be made after consulting the members present or with the agreement of the committee or the Deputy Chairman. Mr LIAO considered that the powers and functions of LegCo President to preside over meetings and to decide on the agenda, and so on, had already been provided under BL 72. The principle, which had already been given effect in RoP, should also be extended to apply to FC meetings. The FC Chairman could only chair the meetings effectively if he was vested with the discretion to decide members' speaking time limit. Mr LIAO opined that the FC Chairman had all along handled the unreasonable requests made by some opposition members with a conciliatory attitude, and the proposals to check against the Chairman's powers under the amendments were unreasonable.
44. Mr Martin LIAO said that if his 2nd motion was passed, each FC member could still propose no more than one FCP 37A motion, and FC would still have all the means to express consolidated views on the Government's funding proposals. FC's discussion could then become more focused, while FC could discharge its constitutional and social responsibilities more effectively. Regarding the amendments to the effect that each member could propose no more than 10 or 15 FCP 37A motions or such motions could still be amendable, Mr LIAO considered them tools to create room for filibustering and abuses of the procedure. Regarding the amendments proposed by four Members on the way of presenting FCP 37A motions, Mr LIAO said that there was a suggestion for such motions to only be read aloud at the meetings. In that case, the wording of the relevant motions might become unclear. Separately, regarding the suggestions that such motions could be presented at the meetings or immediately, he said that in the former case, members would be deprived of the opportunity to take note of such motions and make preparations before the meeting, while practical and operational difficulties would be created in the latter case.

45. Mr Martin LIAO pointed out that the two motions he proposed were intended to increase FC's efficiency in its deliberation, facilitate the discharge of its constitutional and social responsibilities and curtail certain common abuses of procedure or filibustering tactics.

46. The Chairman then called upon Mr Martin LIAO to speak in reply. Mr LIAO said that at present, the development of Hong Kong's economy and the improvement of people's livelihood were lagging seriously behind as a result of filibustering in LegCo. The present move made by pro-establishment Members to amend the Procedures was aimed at restoring the normal operation of FC and its two subcommittees by suitably curtailing filibustering, so that FC could monitor the Government on the one hand and safeguard the overall interests of society on the other hand. Mr LIAO pointed out that when speaking in the debate, some members only reiterated slogans about safeguarding the so-called Members' rights to speak and monitor the Government. He expressed regret about those members ignoring the adverse impact of filibustering on the overall interests of society.

47. Mr Martin LIAO said that in the 2016-2017 session, FC spent about 16 hours or 13% of its total meeting time on the handling of motions for the adjournment of further proceedings of FC or discussion on an agenda item. In the case of PWSC, the time spent on such proceedings was over 11 hours or more than 15% of its meeting time. Separately, the time spent
by FC on the handling of FCP 37A motions moved by Members amounted to 12 hours or 10% of its meeting time, while in the case of PWSC, over 5 hours or 7% of its meeting time was spent on the handling of the same kind of motions. Similarly, ESC spent over 8% of its meeting time on the handling of the above two filibustering procedures. If counting together the time spent on the handling of points of order raised by Members and their misconduct, as well as the proceedings on motions to shorten the duration of division bell, FC had lost almost 40% of its meeting time. Mr LIAO considered that Members who supported filibustering had ignored the fact that as much as 40% of FC’s meeting time was spent on proceedings which had no substantive content and were unrelated to the financial proposals, and such a substantial amount of time could have been used for asking questions on the substantive content of the financial proposals.

48. Mr Martin LIAO also pointed out that construction costs had increased by 60% over the past six years. As a result of delays in granting approval for public works projects due to filibustering, project costs had been driven up invariably, leading to a waste of public money. In recent years, the engineering sector had been impacted seriously by the drastic fluctuations of the construction output, with no new projects commencing for eight months in a roll at one point. As a result, there was insufficient work for the 12,000 frontline workers in the industry, while the starting salaries for graduates had also dropped. This might, in turn, undermine the willingness of new entrants to join the industry and affect its sustainable development. Regarding the point raised by some non-establishment Members that the Government should advance the order of livelihood items on the agenda, Mr LIAO considered that such a view reflected their mindset of regarding livelihood items as political bargaining chips. Regarding some Members’ claim that they had filibustered when considering the funding proposals concerning the advance works of the Northeast New Territories New Development Areas and the Hong Kong section of XRL in order to reflect public opinion, Mr LIAO considered that those projects were supported by mainstream public opinion. He held that Members and the entire legislature must be accountable to society as a whole, and individual Members should not opt for total destruction and abuse the system.

49. Mr Martin LIAO pointed out that the general public already found the protracted filibustering loathsome and tiring. His proposed amendments were meant to slightly rein in the filibustering which had gone haywire, so as to give Members more space to seriously consider the details of the financial proposals. Mr LIAO stressed that his proposed amendments were mild in nature and not intended to target specific persons.
or political parties. The amendments were only intended to bring the meetings back to smooth operation and increase efficiency, so that LegCo could properly perform its gate-keeping role in approving public expenditure and duly discharge its constitutional and social responsibilities.

Voting on the motions and amendments

50. At 4:17 pm, the Chairman declared that FC would proceed to voting on the motions and amendments. He invited Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Mr Alvin YEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Dr Fernando CHEUNG to move respectively the 1st to 10th sets of amendments which sought to amend Mr Martin LIAO's 1st motion and forthwith proposed and put to vote the questions on their amendments set by set. At the request of members, the Chairman ordered a division on each set of amendments.

51. After the Chairman declared that the 1st set of amendments to the 1st motion was negatived, a motion was moved under FCP 47 that in the event of any divisions being claimed in respect of any motions under the same agenda item, FC should proceed to each of such divisions immediately after the division bell had been rung for one minute. The Chairman put the motion to vote. At the request of members, the Chairman ordered a division, and the motion was carried. The votes of individual members were set out in the Annex. FC then proceeded to vote on the 2nd to 10th sets of amendments. The votes of members on the 1st to 10th sets of amendments to Mr Martin LIAO's 1st motion were as follows —

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<th>Moved by</th>
<th>Serial number of amendment</th>
<th>Voting result</th>
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<td>Mr CHAN Chi-chuen</td>
<td>1st set of amendments</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr CHAN Chi-chuen</td>
<td>2nd set of amendments</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr CHAN Chi-chuen</td>
<td>3rd set of amendments</td>
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<td>Mr Alvin YEUNG</td>
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<td>Mr CHAN Chi-chuen</td>
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<td>Dr Fernando CHEUNG</td>
<td>8th set of amendments</td>
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<td>Dr Fernando CHEUNG</td>
<td>9th set of amendments</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Fernando CHEUNG</td>
<td>10th set of amendments</td>
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</table>
Voting on the 1st motion

52. At 4:43 pm, the Chairman put Mr Martin LIAO's 1st motion to vote. At the request of members, the Chairman ordered a division, and the division bell had been rung for one minute. The Chairman declared that 32 members voted in favour of and 20 members voted against the motion. The votes of individual members were as follows—

*For:*

Mr Abraham SHEK Lai-him          Mr Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung
Mr WONG Ting-kwong                Ms Starry LEE Wai-king
Mr CHAN Hak-kan                   Dr Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun
Mr WONG Kwok-kin                   Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yeey
Mr Paul TSE Wai-chun              Mr Steven HO Chun-yin
Mr Frankie YICK Chi-ming           Mr YIU Si-wing
Mr LEUNG Che-cheung               Ms Alice MAK Mei-kuen
Mr KWOK Wai-keung                 Mr Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung
Dr Elizabeth QUAT                  Mr Martin LIAO Cheung-kong
Mr POON Siu-ping                   Dr CHIANG Lai-wan
Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok                  Mr Jimmy NG Wing-ka
Mr HO Kai-ming                     Mr Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Mr SHIU Ka-fai                     Mr Wilson OR Chong-shing
Ms YUNG Hoi-yan                   Mr CHAN Chun-ying
Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan               Mr LUK Chung-hung
Mr LAU Kwok-fan                    Mr Kenneth LAU Ip-keung
(32 members)

*Against:*

Mr James TO Kun-sun                Prof Joseph LEE Kok-long
Ms Claudia MO                      Mr WU Chi-wai
Mr Charles Peter MOK               Mr CHAN Chi-chuen
Mr Kenneth LEUNG                   Dr KWOK Ka-ki
Mr Dennis KWOK Wing-hang           Dr Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Helena WONG Pik-wan             Mr IP Kin-yuen
Mr Alvin YEUNG                     Mr Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Mr CHU Hoi-dick                    Mr LAM Cheuk-ting
Mr SHIU Ka-chun                    Dr CHENG Chung-tai
Mr KWONG Chun-yu                   Mr Jeremy TAM Man-ho
(20 members)

53. The Chairman declared that Mr Martin LIAO's 1st motion was carried.
54. At 4:42 pm, the Chairman called upon Mr Martin LIAO to move his 2nd motion. Mr LIAO moved his 2nd motion. The Chairman proposed the question on Mr LIAO's 2nd motion and called upon Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Mr Alvin YEUNG, Mr WU Chi-wai and Dr Fernando CHEUNG to move respectively the 1st to 14th sets of amendments which sought to amend Mr Martin LIAO's 2nd motion and forthwith proposed and put to vote the questions on their amendments set by set. At the request of members, the Chairman ordered a division on each set of amendments.

55. The votes of members on the 1st to 14th sets of amendments to Mr Martin LIAO's 2nd motion were as follows —

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<tr>
<td>Mr CHAN Chi-chuen</td>
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<td>Dr Fernando CHEUNG</td>
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<td>Mr WU Chi-wai</td>
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<td>Dr Fernando CHEUNG</td>
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Voting on the 2nd motion

56. At 5:04 pm, the Chairman put Mr Martin LIAO's 2nd motion to vote. At the request of members, the Chairman ordered a division, and the division bell had been rung for one minute. The Chairman declared that 33 members voted in favour of and 17 members voted against the motion. The votes of individual members were as follows —

For:
Mr Abraham SHEK Lai-him
Mr WONG Ting-kwong
Mr CHAN Hak-kan
Mr WONG Kwok-kin
Mr Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung
Ms Starry LEE Wai-king
Dr Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun
Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee
57. The Chairman declared that Mr Martin LIAO's 2nd motion was carried.

58. At 5:03 pm, the Chairman declared the meeting closed.

Legislative Council Secretariat
8 June 2018
動議 MOTION: 動議其後就相同議程項目下任何議案或待議議題進行點名表決時，委員會須在點名表決鐘聲響起一分鐘後進行點名表決
Motion that in the event of further divisions being claimed of any motions or questions under the same agenda item, the Committee do proceed such divisions immediately after the division bell has been rung for one minute

結果 Result: 通過 Passed

個別表決如下 THE INDIVIDUAL VOTES WERE AS FOLLOWS:

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