

**SPEECH BY MR LAWRENCE WONG, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, AND
MINISTER FOR FINANCE AT NORTH WEST COUNCIL APPOINTMENT
CEREMONY AND APPRECIATION LUNCH 2023 ON SATURDAY, 16
SEPTEMBER 2023, THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE**

Mayor Alex Yam

Parliamentary Colleagues Mr Lim Wee Kiak, Ms Carrie Tan, Mr Edward Chia, Mr Derrick Goh;

North West Council Members;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. Good afternoon, I'm very happy to join all of you today to thank the 8th Council and to welcome everyone who is going to serve on the upcoming 9th Council.

2. It's a special day because of our CDC, but today is also a special day, because it happens to be the centenary of Mr Lee Kuan Yew's birth.

a. If he was still with us here today, he would have been 100 years old. Of course, when we think about LKY 100, we are also very mindful Mr Lee had always admonished and reminded us not to have a personality cult.

b. Our focus is not on the man per se, but on his principles, his values, and his ideals. They form the founding values that help enable us to build today's Singapore, including very important core values like multiracialism, meritocracy, and incorruptibility.

3. For Mr Lee and that founding generation of leaders, their obsession was to build a better Singapore. they recognised how vulnerable Singapore was and still is; how we have always been an improbable nation forged out of the collective will of our people.

a. And so, it was always about thinking how Singapore can be better, what are the ideas, the solutions, and the ways in which we can build a better and stronger and more united country. They were never just thinking about one or two years ahead but thinking for the long term.

b. One of my favourite quotes from Mr Lee is this: "I am calculating not in terms of the next election, I'm calculating in terms of the next generation, in terms of the next 100 years, in terms of eternity. And believe you me, for the next 1000 years, we will be here".

4. I of course cannot predict what is going to happen next year, in 5 years, or 10 years – let alone 100 or 1000 years. But the point is, we

all want to make sure that Singapore continues to thrive and prosper not just for today, not just for our generation, but for our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

a. That's what nation building is about, and this is a collective endeavour that we all have a stake in.

b. In order for this to happen, it cannot just be through government policies. Our government of course must do its part, we must make sure there are good policies, and we must always plan for the long term, which we continue to do in Government.

c. But we also need a strong active community. We need every Singaporean to feel that strong culture of kinship and fellowship with one another.

d. We need Singaporeans to look out for each other. We need people to feel that we are not just here to pursue our own individual successes. In fact, our success is interlinked with the success of our fellow citizens, and we truly achieve success only when we succeed together as one people and as one nation.

e. This strong sense of community is critical to ensuring Singapore's future success in the long term. That is why we have

always been very focused in ensuring that we have strong, vibrant, and cohesive communities.

5. The CDCs play a very important role in this endeavour. Nowhere was this clearer than during the last three years, when we had to tackle COVID-19 together.

a. We saw many families thrust into challenging and unexpected circumstances in the last three years. Those who did not know who to turn to, knew that they could rely on the CDCs for assistance.

b. There was government assistance and government programmes, but certainly, within the community, the CDCs also played a very important role.

c. CDCs across Singapore, not just in the North West, were there on the ground from the get-go, ready to provide support in whatever form was required.

6. North West CDC was especially active in the last three years.

a. You ran more than 250 programmes benefitting over 600,000 residents.

b. To uplift our community in the North West, North West CDC launched new programmes like the North West Interim Financial Assistance Scheme (IFAS) to help residents tie through their immediate financial difficulties.

c. You launched programmes to reach out to seniors – particularly vulnerable seniors – because we were concerned that they would feel isolated at home. We reached out to them, and we got them involved in a whole range of health interest groups, as Mayor Alex talked about just now.

d. North West has a very strong signature brisk walking programme. We stepped up even more fitness programmes and we are continuing to do all these through HealthierSG.

e. We also have SkillsFuture programmes engaging mid-career workers, particularly those in more vulnerable areas. We have been engaging Grab drivers, for example, to share more about the importance of lifelong learning and upskilling.

7. Today, I would like to put on record my thanks to everyone in the CDC; our Councillors, our Grassroots Advisors, resource partners, all of you. Thank you for contributions, efforts and hard work. Thank you very much.

8. Now, COVID just feels like a bad dream we have forgotten about, that we had gone through very quickly. I'm sure you don't want to be reminded of it. It's fortunate that we have put COVID behind us but there remain many things that CDCs can do to make a difference in the lives of our residents.

9. In particular, cost-of-living remains a salient issue for many of our households. There are concerns about rising prices and the day-to-day expenses.

a. On the Government side, we have put in place quite a range of programmes to help them, including CDC vouchers and utility rebates, and we are considering what more we can do to support our residents.

b. But there is also scope for the community to do its part.

c. Today, I'm glad to share that North West CDC has raised funds and will be rolling out a new \$9.5mil Support Grant for the North West District. It will be spread out to all Divisions in the North West District.

d. Other CDCs, I'm sure, will have their own schemes. But North West CDC, through the efforts of Mayor, the District Councillors, and the Club-100 programme that Mayor highlighted, has raised funds to do this. We will put in place this Support Grant to support residents in the North West to help those who are in need, and to enable them to better cope with cost-of-living concerns.

10. For the members of the 9th Council, I'm sure you will provide many more ideas and help us think through how the CDC can provide even better support for the community and for our residents.

a. Let me congratulate the 39 Councillors who have been re-appointed and welcome the 24 who will be joining us for the first time. Let's give them a round of applause to welcome all of you.

b. Each of you brings unique skills, expertise, and networks in your various fields. I look forward to working with each of you, and I hope that you will bring valuable, fresh perspectives and community resources to bare in support of the CDC work.

c. I hope you will also do your best to serve Singaporeans and our residents with passion and purpose.

d. All of us here – the Grassroots Advisors, resource persons, stakeholders, and partners in the community – value the work that our District Councillors do.

e. We look forward to working with you, strengthening our partnership with all of you, to build a better and more cohesive community.

11. Let us continue to strengthen this partnership, working hand-in-hand to serve our residents in North West District, to build a better community and a stronger Singapore.

12. Thank you very much.