

SPEECH BY MS LOW YEN LING, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (MINISTRY OF TRADE & INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION) AT THE PEP-SBF AWARDS, 10 NOVEMBER 2016, SUNTEC INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE, 10.10AM

Mr Loh Khum Yean, Deputy Chairman of the PEP and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry

Mr Teo Siong Seng, Chairman of the Singapore Business Federation

Colleagues and friends

1. Good morning. I am delighted to be here with you at this year's PEP-SBF Awards Event. Since 2012, this annual event jointly organised by the Pro-Enterprise Panel (PEP) and Singapore Business Federation (SBF) serves to recognise the partnership, efforts and achievements of the private and public sectors towards enabling a regulatory environment that supports innovation, productivity, and the growth of healthy competitive businesses.
2. In Singapore and around the world, technology, innovation and new operating models are disrupting businesses and opening up new opportunities. This year's theme of "Regulating for Innovation and Growth" is indeed apt, given the increasingly important role regulations play in enabling innovation and entrepreneurship to flourish for a more competitive economy.

Regulating for innovation and growth

3. In the last 16 years, the government's Pro-Enterprise Panel, or "PEP" for short, has been an advocate for businesses. The PEP engages businesses and government regulatory agencies to promote a regulatory regime that enables business growth. I am greatly heartened that PEP-engendered partnerships between businesses and regulatory agencies have led to more than 1,000 pro-enterprise changes to rules,

requirements and processes. This is more than half of the 1,900 feedback that the PEP has received from businesses.

4. Today, we will be recognising some of the best feedback received. One of the winners of the Pro-Enterprise Best Suggestion Awards is Mr Benjamin Tay, an importer and retailer of sanitary fittings. He had provided feedback that instead of introducing a broad-based 3-year validity period for all products under the water efficiency labelling scheme, the PUB could adopt a risk-based approach by applying the requirement only to new developments, and allow existing products to be used for renovation and replacement works. The PUB considered the feedback, and eventually decided not to impose any validity period at all. This benefits businesses such as Mr Benjamin Tay's which do not have to potentially write-off inventory if they are unable to sell their products within the validity period.
5. Looking ahead, it is crucial that our regulatory regime enables innovation and growth for the future economy. In this regard, the PEP annually surveys businesses to get their views on the pro-enterprise performance of our 29 government regulatory agencies. I am happy to report that the Pro-Enterprise Index (PEI), which benchmarks businesses' perception of the overall regulatory performance of our agencies, has been on the upward trend. It has grown from 68.63 in 2006 to 77.64 in 2016. More than half the participating agencies have improved their scores. I would like to congratulate the three agencies which have seen the biggest improvements in their agency Pro-Enterprise Index. They are the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA). This achievement did not happen overnight. In fact, each of these agencies have made steady improvements over the past three years.
6. Take the SCDF as an example. It has been working closely with the trade associations such as the Singapore Food Manufacturers' Association (SFMA), and the Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) on feedback from their members. One of the feedback received highlighted the need to review and amend the Fire Code so that cold store owners can have the option of not building brick walls if the insulation

material of their cold room panel meets fire safety requirements. This not only saves business costs from building the brick walls, it also saves maintenance cost incurred to check on the hygiene compliance of the brick walls.

Collaboration between businesses and government regulatory agencies for innovation and growth

7. We cannot rest on our laurels but must continue to be pro-enterprise. The Committee on the Future Economy (CFE) have pointed out that regulations can be a key enabler of innovation and growth for our future economy. This means Singapore's regulatory regime has to stay forward-looking. We will facilitate the growth of businesses, foster innovations and encourage enterprises to adopt new business models and leverage technology. To capture opportunities of the future economy, we need to sustain and nurture close partnerships between businesses and government agencies. For instance, arising from a business suggestion, businesses can now sell over-the-counter medication that do not require prescriptions, like antacid and charcoal tablets through vending machines. This will benefit both the public and businesses as such common medicines can be bought and sold more conveniently. To ensure that the quality and safety of such products are not compromised, appropriate safeguards have been put in place by the Health Sciences Authority (HSA).
8. Another positive example is the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA)'s initiative to introduce mass-flow metering (MFM) to raise the productivity of Singapore's bunkering sector. We want to maintain our position as the world's top bunkering port, handling an average of about 43.4 million tonnes per year. For over five years, MPA worked with SPRING Singapore, A*STAR and various stakeholders from the marine, shipping and oil and gas sectors to launch the more reliable MFM system which also enhances the transparency and integrity of bunker operations.
9. We have many more such examples of forward-looking regulatory initiatives by businesses and regulatory agencies. The panel session later this morning will present valuable insights on how Singapore's regulatory environment support innovation and

entrepreneurship. I encourage all of us to take an active part in these efforts. You are welcome to share your feedback and propose suggestions to the regulatory agencies. Businesses and trade associations and chambers that want to test-bed new ideas, whether at the development, piloting or initial commercialisation stages, can approach the relevant agencies. If you are unsure on which government agency oversees the regulations, please approach the PEP for assistance. I would also like to encourage our government agencies to take a proactive approach and to be open towards regulatory experimentation and flexibility, even as you seek to mitigate possible risks. By engaging the industries and businesses in areas where regulatory innovation can take place, you can explore and facilitate the revision or development of regulations that are pro-enterprise.

Conclusion

10. Today's event recognises the businesses and regulatory agencies which have contributed towards a more pro-enterprise regulatory environment. This is the result of cohesive collaboration among different players in the ecosystem, so that we can achieve a positive balance that enables business growth with innovation and entrepreneurship, while keeping an eye on any risks that may arise. I urge all of us, whether you are from the public or private sector, to engage in regular dialogues and discussions on how regulations can be responsive and forward-looking. Our collective effort is key to ensuring that government regulations continue to underpin a dynamic and vibrant business environment so that we support businesses in developing, piloting and commercialising innovations for the future. Thank you.