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Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Mr Wong Kan Seng, 19 Mar 2000, 12.45pm

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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**CLOSING ADDRESS BY DEPUTY CHAIRMAN MR WONG KAN
SENG AT THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SEMINAR
AT THE GRASSROOTS' CLUB ON SUNDAY, 19 MARCH 2000 AT
12.45PM**

Today's Seminar has given us an opportunity to share our experiences. It also enables us to reflect on what we have done and to chart new directions for the Community Development Councils (CDCs). The CDC vision "A Vibrant Community with One Heart" seems clear and simple. But the CDCs cannot achieve this on their own. To achieve community bonding and social cohesion, the CDCs have to work with grassroots organisations and other civic groups.

Achievement of CDCs

2 During the last 2½ to 3 years, you have done well in many ways – reaching out to the people with better, bigger and practical activities and

programmes and helping the less fortunate among our midst. We can only feature nine CDC projects during the video presentation today but there are many more.

3 The successful efforts to get the residents to help out in community projects such as cleaning the parks, participating in care projects for the aged and improving the safety of neighbourhoods are good examples. Such forthcoming actions by the residents are important. These are signs of a good community willing to look after one another. We should not take this for granted. If we have a society with people who care only for themselves and are indifferent to the happenings in their community, then we will be a weak society. But I am pleased to note that CDCs have helped to make the difference in galvanising the community to take ownership of its local issues and initiate programmes to resolve them. These efforts promote community bonding and social cohesion. They help to make a better home and community for all.

4 I am also happy that the CDCs will be developing their own flagship programmes. This is good. The CDCs should organise and support more projects of interest and benefit to the majority of the people. There is no need for all the nine CDCs to be the same. In fact, you should be different, as the needs and aspirations of residents in the respective districts cannot be the same. How you achieve this is up to you.

5 At the same time, the CDCs should develop programmes which go beyond those of the CCs, RCs and CCCs. They should organise programmes that have a district-wide impact. Programmes for community safety and security, lifelong learning, healthcare and youth development are good

examples. The CDCs must be an inclusive organisation. They must work closely with other voluntary organisations and civic-groups which share the mission and objectives of the CDC to bring the greatest benefit to all communities.

6 There are also good suggestions put forward by the workshops today. Let me assure you that the conclusions reached at your workshops will be closely studied and considered by the PA and the CDC Steering Committee chaired by me and comprising the respective CDC Mayors and Chairmen.

The Next Steps

7 I am sure many of you have reflected or are reflecting on the Prime Minister's speech. Yes, the future direction of CDCs is clear. Each CDC will evolve to become a local authority. This will lead to better community governance. More of the services currently under Government agencies will be decentralised to the districts and run by your Mayors and Chairmen. They will be responsible for managing them efficiently.

8 The CDCs will be given the resources to perform these roles. They will be staffed by professional officers. The CDCs will also be given the funds to implement the projects. The challenge for you to realise the vision of the CDC is very great.

9 I acknowledge and thank all the grassroots leaders for their support and hard work in building up the CDCs. At the same time, the CDCs needs to bring in more non-grassroots leaders to serve in the CDCs. Inevitably some grassroots leaders will have to make way for others as the number of Council

members per CDC is limited.

Conclusion

10 Change is the only constant in this globalised world. As our economy adjusts to the new knowledge-based and information age, our society cannot afford to stay the way it is. We must change our mindset. The community cannot be stagnant. It should prepare for the future through the strengthening of its social fabric and through the spirit of community self-help and self-reliance. The CDCs will be the catalyst in this process. You are part of this change. You are now playing an important role in the political and social development of our Singapore. I hope that all of you will take on the challenge with vigour and pride.

11 In closing, may I thank Mr Kua Hong Pak and his team for organising this Seminar. They worked hard and produced a good seminar even though there had been last-minute developments. A big thank you to everyone here today.

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