



*Prime Minister
Singapore*

6 May 2025

Mr Heng Swee Keat
Deputy Prime Minister

Dear *Swee Keat,*

As you retire from politics, I would like to thank you for your extensive contributions to Singapore.

Your entire working life – over four decades – has been dedicated to serving Singapore and Singaporeans. You began as a police officer, later joining the Administrative Service, where you held key positions, including as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore. After entering politics in 2011, you served as a Minister. In every role, you brought rigour and dedication – mastering every policy detail and working tirelessly to shape a better future for Singapore.

As Minister for Education, you believed deeply in nurturing the full potential of every child, regardless of their starting point. Your slogan, “every school is a good school”, captured a key objective of our education system: that every school should bring out the best in all its students, in its own ways. You championed educational reforms to emphasise character development and balance academic excellence. You abolished ranking of secondary schools and piloted subject-based banding, paving the way for the complete removal of streaming from our system. You guided planning to create more degree places for Singaporeans, resulting in the Singapore Institute of Technology becoming our fifth autonomous university.

You also envisioned Singapore becoming a learning society. Under your leadership, SkillsFuture was introduced, launching a national movement for lifelong learning. These moves opened up broader, more inclusive pathways of success – pathways we continue to enhance under Forward Singapore.

As Minister for Finance, you were a steady and trusted steward of our fiscal resources. You made tough but necessary decisions, including raising the GST to ensure sustainable revenues. You planned for this move methodically, emphasising disciplined expenditure growth, growing other revenue sources, and exploring the option of borrowing, including through the introduction of SINGA bonds. You designed a comprehensive Assurance Package, which ensured that middle- and lower-income households would not be unduly hit. Your resolve helped Singapore maintain a balanced budget and build up our reserves.

When COVID-19 struck, these resources proved vital. You understood, sooner than many, the massive impact which the pandemic would have on workers, households, and the economy. In 2020 alone, you delivered an unprecedented five Budgets, to save lives and livelihoods, and prepare Singapore to emerge stronger from the crisis. Your calm leadership, grace under pressure, and concern for ordinary Singaporeans provided stability and reassurance for the nation in those uncertain times.

You have also played a key role in upgrading our economy, to create good opportunities for all Singaporeans. As Coordinating Minister for Economic Policies and Chairman of the Future Economy Council and later the Future Economy Advisory Panel, you oversaw the launch and implementation of the Industry Transformation Maps (ITM). These Maps sought to upgrade our economy industry by industry, with tailored plans worked out together with companies and workers in each industry. These efforts have borne fruit: between 2016 and 2023, growth in the ITM sectors outpaced that of the overall economy.

You invested in strengthening ties with international partners to access new economic opportunities. As co-chair of the annual Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation with China from 2019 to 2022, you pushed for bilateral cooperation in frontier fields such as public health, innovation and sustainability, as well as the green and digital economies.

As Chairman of the National Research Foundation, you aligned research, innovation and enterprise strategies with industry transformation plans, and identified new engines of growth. You ensured a strong research and translational focus in our national priorities. As a result, Singapore's standing as a Global-Asia node for technology, innovation and enterprise has risen. Today, we have a

more vibrant research and innovation ecosystem, working not only on our own challenges but also on global problems like climate change and ageing.

You were also a dedicated Member of Parliament (MP). Your approach to community building was bold and imaginative. Our Tampines Hub (OTH), which opened in 2017 when you were an MP for Tampines, testifies to your vision. OTH has become a vibrant community space for Tampines residents, and today it also pioneers the way in providing convenient access to a range of government services.

In 2020, you began a new chapter as an MP for East Coast, embarking on a journey with residents to build a more caring, vibrant and green community. Your GRC team introduced monthly East Coast conversations with residents, to understand their concerns and aspirations, and involve them in the plans for their estate. This has made East Coast a more vibrant and greener community.

As First Assistant Secretary-General and then as Chairman of the PAP, you steered the party's efforts to connect more deeply with Singaporeans.

You have always believed that Singapore is stronger when citizens are actively involved in shaping our shared future. Leading *Our Singapore Conversation*, you conducted wide-ranging engagements and sought out diverse perspectives. You later launched the Singapore Together movement in 2019 and the Emerging Stronger Conversations in 2020. These initiatives tapped Singaporeans' desire for a stronger voice in nation building, and established a good basis to deepen the Government's partnerships with stakeholders, including subsequently through the Forward Singapore exercise.

Throughout your career, you consistently upheld the ethos of service above self. In 2018, when the 4G team unanimously chose you to be our leader, you accepted this responsibility. But after COVID-19 delayed the transition, you selflessly stepped aside to let the team choose a younger leader with a longer runway. Now you have made the difficult decision to retire from public service – which has been for you a lifelong mission and a calling.

I only wish that our partnership could have been longer. You have been a steadfast comrade and cherished friend. We joined politics at the same time, but you were my senior and were always generous with your advice and unstinting in your mentorship. It has been a privilege to serve alongside you in the Ministries of Education and Finance, in our fight against COVID-19, in Cabinet and in politics more broadly.

On behalf of all Singaporeans, thank you for your many years of dedicated service to Singapore and our people. I wish you good health, joy and peace in your retirement.

Yours *sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lawrence Wong', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lawrence Wong