

**PROPOSED WELCOME ADDRESS FOR MR ALEX YAM,
MAYOR OF NORTH WEST DISTRICT
AT THE NORTH WEST DISTRICT MEETING AND COUNCIL
APPOINTMENT 2026
ON SATURDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2026
MARINA BAY CRUISE CENTRE SINGAPORE**

Prime Minister, Grassroots Advisers, fellow Council members,
partners, volunteers, friends —

1. Good evening, and welcome to our North West District Meeting.
2. PM, thank you especially for joining us tonight.
3. Tonight is a little bittersweet for me.
4. We are saying thank you to our 9th Term Council after three years together, and at the same time welcoming our 10th Term Council.
5. So perhaps it is a good moment to ask ourselves: what exactly is the CDC here to do?

6. Because Singapore already has many national schemes and agencies. And they do important work.

7. But no national scheme, however well designed, can anticipate every family, every circumstance, every need on the ground.

8. Different communities are different. Different families face different pressures.

9. And sometimes there is that little gap between a national policy and the person who needs help.

10. That is where I think the CDC matters.

11. We are close enough to the ground to listen. We have enough scale to bring resources together. And we have the flexibility to try something different when the usual solution does not quite fit.

12. We connect.

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13. We bring government, grassroots, businesses, schools, social service agencies and volunteers around the same table.

14. And hopefully, somewhere in all that connecting, we make life just that little bit better for someone.

15. That has been the work of our 9th Term Council.

16. What we have done together

16. You saw some of it just now in the sand art presentation.

17. Over these three years, we worked with 1,738 partners.

18. More than 37,000 volunteers have given their time.

19. Our 18 local assistance schemes have supported 198,587 beneficiaries.

20. Our 47 community programmes have brought together more than 400,000 participants.

21. And today, we have 330 active interest groups connecting more than 80,000 people across the North West.

22. Those are big numbers.

23. But I don't want tonight to become a recital of numbers, because the numbers are not really the point.

24. Behind every number is somebody.

25. A family who needed some help.

26. A volunteer who decided to give up a weekend.

27. A company which said, "We can contribute."

28. A neighbour who turned up for a brisk walk and somehow, many walks later, found a whole new group of friends.

29. And sometimes, it is one person like Mdm Lin Lay Hong.

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30. Mdm Lin is 62. She needed to return to work to support her family while also caring for her critically ill husband.

31. For her, just saying “go and find a job” wasn’t much help. A conventional job simply didn’t fit her life.

32. Through Jobs Nearby @ CDC, our Job Ambassador connected her with Stevie Wash.

33. They understood her circumstances, interviewed her at home, and found her a flexible customer service and administrative role which she could manage alongside her caregiving responsibilities.

34. For Mdm Lin, it meant income, of course.

35. But it also meant some stability at a very difficult time for her family.

36. And that, to me, is what local means.

37. Not lowering our ambitions.

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38. But understanding that sometimes the best solution is not the biggest one. It is the one that fits the person.

39. There are many Mdm Lins across our district.

40. That is why our work matters.

41. None of this belongs to the CDC alone

42. But I also want to make one point very clear tonight.

43. These are not North West CDC's achievements.

44. They are ours. Collectively.

45. Our District Councillors and Resource Persons have given us their ideas, networks, experience and, quite often, a great deal of their personal time.

46. Our grassroots leaders know their communities in ways no spreadsheet ever will.

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47. Our schools, social service agencies and community partners tell us where the needs are.

48. And our corporate partners have contributed not simply cheques, but people.

49. Micron, for example, mobilised more than 500 volunteers over the past three years, serving thousands of residents, while also contributing resources to support families in need.

50. So to our outgoing 9th Term Councillors, and to every partner, grassroots leader and volunteer who has walked this journey with us:

51. Thank you.

52. I think they deserve a round of applause.

53. But tonight isn't only about looking backwards.

54. We are welcoming 62 District Councillors into our 10th Term.

55. Some familiar faces, some new ones, from different ages, backgrounds and parts of our community.

56. And the question for us is: what do we do next?

57. The answer cannot simply be “more programmes”.

58. The needs are changing. Costs have risen. Families are under pressure. Our population is changing.

59. At the same time, everywhere I go, I meet people who want to contribute, if we give them the opportunity and the means to do so.

60. And I think this is worth saying.

61. In Singapore, we are very good at building systems.

62. We plan nationally, we organise well, and when there is a problem our instinct is often to ask: what scheme can we create to solve it?

63. That strength has served us well.

64. But community cannot be built entirely through schemes.

65. Sometimes when we talk about community, we make it sound more complicated than it is.

66. Community is really people deciding that somebody else's problem matters to them.

67. A neighbour checks on another neighbour.

68. A volunteer gives up a Saturday.

69. A company says, "We have resources. How can we help?"

70. A group of residents has an idea and decides to do something about it.

71. Government cannot programme neighbourliness.

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72. And actually, we should not want to.

73. There must always be space for people to take ownership of their own community.

74. What the CDC can do is make that easier.

75. We can connect people. We can provide resources. We can bring partners together.

76. And when somebody comes forward with a good idea, instead of always asking, "Which programme does this fit into?", sometimes we can simply ask:

77. "How can we help you make it happen?"

78. Because ultimately, a strong community isn't one where the CDC does more and more for residents.

79. It is one where more residents, partners and volunteers are able to do more with one another.

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80. And that is really the spirit in which we are approaching our next term.

81. So over the next three years, we want to do four things:

82. Support families.

83. Extend help to more households.

84. Give more people the means to do good.

85. And give our Divisions greater capacity to respond to their own communities.

86. First — support our families

87. From April next year, we intend to introduce a new North West Baby Bag programme.

88. Up to 3,000 newborns and their parents each year will receive a pack of practical baby essentials and vouchers worth up to \$200.

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89. About \$600,000 of support annually.

90. Now, I know a \$200 baby bag is not going to determine whether somebody has a child.

91. As a father of 4, it certainly isn't going to pay for the next twenty years!

92. But that isn't really the point.

93. Having a child is a moment of tremendous joy. It can also be rather overwhelming.

94. And we want young parents in the North West to know, right from the beginning:

95. Your community welcomes your child, and we are walking this journey with you.

96. It is practical help, yes.

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97. In addition to our Little Steps programme helping kids 0-6, I hope this is also a small expression of what kind of community we want the North West to be.

98. Second, widen our safety net

99. Our local assistance schemes have always been intended to complement national schemes

100. Particularly for residents who may not quite qualify elsewhere but are nevertheless genuinely struggling.

101. But thresholds must move when circumstances move.

102. So we will raise the Per Capita Income eligibility threshold for our local assistance schemes from \$1,000 to \$1,500.

103. That means around 6,000 more North West residents will potentially be able to receive help.

104. That matters.

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105. Because falling just above an eligibility line doesn't mean your electricity bill becomes smaller, your groceries become cheaper, or your family suddenly stops needing help.

106. And this is precisely where a CDC should have the flexibility to respond.

107. Third, help more people do good

108. One thing I have learnt as Mayor is that Singapore does not suffer from a shortage of people who care.

109. Very often, people already have an idea.

110. A school wants to start something.

111. A group of residents sees a problem.

112. A volunteer says, "Why don't we try this?"

113. Our job should not always be to tell them what programme to join.

114. Sometimes our job is simply to say:

115. "Good idea. How can we help?"

116. So over the coming term, we want to increase the number of ground-up projects we support from around 300 to 400.

117. Through our North West WeCare and GIRAFFE Funds, groups, schools and community organisations can receive up to \$10,000 per project to turn good ideas into action.

118. Because, as I said earlier, a strong community isn't one where the CDC does everything.

119. It is one where more people believe they can do something.

120. Finally, enabling our Divisions to do more

121. Our twenty Divisions know their residents best.

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122. A need in Marsiling may not be quite the same as one in Bukit Panjang, Bukit Timah, Sembawang or Chong Pang.

123. So we want to give our Grassroots Advisers and Divisions greater room to respond.

124. We will increase the matching ratio for our Divisional Matching Grant Vote from 1:1.5 to 1:2.5, capped at \$80,000 contribution per Division.

125. I know “Divisional Matching Grant Vote” does not exactly set the pulse racing!

126. But what it really means is very simple:

127. More resources going back into our neighbourhoods, and more ability for each Division to do what makes sense for its residents.

128. And that takes us back to where I started.

129. Nationally, we build strong systems.

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130. Locally, we make those systems human.

131. So as we begin our 10th Term, my hope is not simply that North West CDC will run more programmes.

132. In fact, that would be a rather poor measure of success.

133. My hope is that we become an even better connector and enabler.

134. That when somebody needs help, we help connect the dots.

135. When somebody wants to contribute, we open the door.

136. When our Divisions see a need, we give them the means to respond.

137. And when businesses, schools, agencies, volunteers and residents want to make a difference, we bring them together.

138. Because the story of the last three years isn't really about what the CDC achieved.

139. It is about what all of you achieved together.

140. To our outgoing Councillors: thank you for what you have built.

141. To our incoming Councillors: welcome. There is plenty of work waiting for us!

142. Especially in raising funds for the many programmes we run.

143. And to our partners and volunteers: thank you for continuing to believe that community is something worth investing your time, your energy, and your heart, in.

144. PM, thank you once again for being here with us tonight and for tirelessly supporting our work.

145. The next chapter starts now.

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146. Let us keep charting new possibilities, and together build a Caring and Healthy North West that every resident can feel proud to call home.

147. Thank you.
