

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

DUTIES AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES OF LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

28 JUL 2020 — Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced on 11 July 2020 that Mr Pritam Singh, Secretary-General of the Workers' Party, will be formally designated Leader of the Opposition (LO), and that the Government will provide him with the appropriate staff and resources to enable him to carry out his duties as the designated LO.

2 Leaders of the Opposition are formally designated in other Westminster parliamentary systems, such as Australia and the United Kingdom. We considered these other parliamentary systems as well as our own circumstances in defining the duties and privileges of the LO.

3 Such a position is not provided for in either our Constitution or the Standing Orders of Parliament. Singapore's legislatures have never had formal Leaders of the Opposition, not even in the 1950s and early 1960s, when there were substantial numbers of opposition legislative assemblymen. Mr Lee Kuan Yew led the People's Action Party as the largest opposition party in the Legislative Assembly between 1955 and 1959, and Dr Lee Siew Choh led the Barisan Sosialis as the largest opposition party in the Legislative Assembly between 1961 and 1963. Neither Mr Lee nor Dr Lee were formally designated Leader of the Opposition.

4 Nevertheless, as the Prime Minister said in his swearing-in speech on 27 July 2020, the results of the 2020 General Election have "shown a strong desire among Singaporeans for a greater diversity of views in politics" and that "this trend is here to stay". Designating a Leader of Opposition will recognise this desire while enabling our political system to evolve in a way that maintains our sense of national purpose.

5 The Government has therefore decided on the following LO's duties and privileges in the 14th Parliament.

Duties

- 6 Similar to other Westminster parliamentary systems, the LO in Singapore will:
- a) Lead the opposition in presenting alternative views in parliamentary debates on policies, Bills and motions.
 - b) Lead and organise the scrutiny of the Government's positions and actions in Parliament.
 - c) Be consulted on the appointment of opposition members to Select Committees, including Standing Select Committees such as the Public Accounts Committee.

7 In addition to his parliamentary duties, the LO may be called upon to take on other duties such as attending official state functions and taking part in visits and meetings alongside members of the Government and the Public Service.

Privileges and additional resourcing

8 To enable him to carry out his duties, the following will be accorded to the LO.

- a) Parliamentary privileges. In Parliament, the LO will generally be given the right of first response among Members of Parliament (MPs) and to ask the lead question to the Ministers on policies, Bills and motions, subject to existing speaking conventions. The LO will also be given a longer speaking duration for speeches, equivalent to that given to political officeholders.
- b) Briefings on issues of national interest. In addition to the government data or information available to other MPs, the LO will receive confidential briefings by the Government on select matters of national security and external relations, and in the event of a national crisis or emergency.
- c) LO's Allowance. The LO will receive double the allowance of an elected MP. The LO's total norm annual package will be \$385,000, inclusive of his allowance as an MP.
- d) Staff Support. The LO will be provided an office and the use of a meeting room in Parliament House. He will also receive allowances to hire up to three additional Legislative Assistants. This is in addition to the allowances all MPs receive for one Legislative Assistant and one Secretarial Assistant. The LO will also be provided with a secretary to support him administratively with Parliamentary business.

9 As with any new political appointment, the role of the LO will evolve as our political system develops. We look forward to working with the LO to create a robust but stable political system serving the interests of Singapore and Singaporeans.

10 These duties and privileges have been conveyed to Mr Pritam Singh. Leader of the House will make a statement in Parliament to formally set out the terms of the LO.

Issued by:

Office of the Speaker of Parliament and Office of the Leader of the House