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**MR THOMAS CHUA, PRESIDENT
OF THE SINGAPORE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
AT THE LEAD PARTNERS DINNER ON JUNE 2 2015**

Collaboration among trade associations

Mr Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Trade and Industry

Senior officials from SPRING, IE Singapore and JTC

Fellow leaders from the trade associations

Good evening!

First of all, I would like to thank SPRING for inviting me to speak at this year's LEAD Partners Dinner, which also coincides with the 10th Anniversary of the LEAD programme. I would like to thank the government for the support and commitment to the trade associations and chambers in our industry development work in the last 10 years.

The global economy, while recovering, is expected to see modest growth this year. Within Asia, growth will also be uneven. In Singapore, our economy is entering into its 5th year of restructuring with our SMEs continuing to face challenges related to manpower and rising costs. Against this background, our SMEs must quickly adapt and take action to transform themselves. If not, they will risk being phased out.

In today's environment, trade associations and chambers have an even more important role to play. During the current transformation process, there are limitations to what a single SME can do. For SMEs, they may have to collaborate with other SMEs to share resources. They may also need to collaborate with SMEs from other sectors. Trade associations can be important partners of government to help industries transform, improve sector-level productivity, and promote cross-sector collaboration. In fact, these are objectives behind

the formation of the Trade Association Hub that Chamber will take the lead to operationalise in 2017.

Please now allow me to elaborate my speech in details in Mandarin.

林勋强部长,

各位政府部门长官和商团领袖,

今天, 我和大家分享的主题是“发挥团队力量 促进行业成长”。建国五十年来, 政府一直在努力打造亲商环境, 根据我国经济不同发展阶段的需求, 及时调整政策, 实现产业升级, 最终促成了由跨国公司、政联机构、本地中小企业构成的多元化商业社群, 持续不断地推动新加坡的经济发展, 取得了令人瞩目的成就!

随着科技的进步, 世界经济环境逐渐产生变化, 新兴行业不断涌现, 同时也造成了一些行业走入没落, 这是全球性的问题, 新加坡也不例外。由于国土资源有限, 人力资源短缺, 近年来, 我国一些传统行业倍受冲击。现在, 无论是政府还是商家都坚信, 要想突破发展瓶颈, 企业必须进行创新和变革, 最终才能提高生产力。这个观点已经是我国社会的共识, 只有真正做到, 传统行业才有机会扭转局面。

不过, 很多事情说起来容易, 做起来难。这几年, 政府以提高生产力为前提, 推出了许多援助配套, 对商家非常慷慨。一些企业成功把握机会, 顺利转型, 但更多的企业, 特别是中小型企业还停留在摸索的阶段, 有些公司屡试屡败, 屡败屡战, 精神极为可嘉。这个时候我们需要冷静地思考, 提高生产力是一个长期的过程, 有什么办法可以让企业少走弯路, 让成功者的经验遍地开花呢?

我想到了领头羊和牧羊犬。在羊群当中, 领头羊经验丰富, 羊群信任它, 跟着它, 领头羊跑多快, 羊群就能跑多快。经济转型的时候, 商团和行业协会就是领头羊。而政府的角色更像牧羊犬, 用法律、法规和政策来规范、引领羊群, 羊群跑慢了要催促, 方向错了要调整, 而且有责任不让任何一只羊掉队。新加坡有很好的牧羊犬, 我们现在急需的就是能够跑得快, 体格健壮的领头羊。

今天在座的商团领袖可以说个个都是领头羊，一些已经申请到“本地企业与协会发展计划”(LEAD Programme)的商团，在政府援助的支持下越来越健壮。凭借对自身行业深刻的了解，商团可以发挥主动性，用非常内行的眼光和方式，协助属下会员寻找商机，转换经营模式，开拓新市场。

我常想，羊群为什么要跟随领头羊？因为它会思考，有能力，跟着它有草吃，有前途，这就是领头羊肩负的责任。同样，商团和行业协会也要给大家信心，才能带领行业进行转型。一些传统行业的商团在这方面做得非常好，包括纺织服饰、食品制造、餐饮、五金、家具等行业，大家团结在一起，用集体的力量应对转变，带旺整个行业。

最近两年，总商会按照行业分类，定期为属下 153 家商团会员举办午餐交流会，一方面讨论如何解决行业面临的挑战，另一方面也关注政府的政策，讨论行业的发展。例如，当政府推行未来技能在职培训计划 (SkillsFuture) 时，大家一致认为，商团一定要积极主动地参与，才能在人才培养方面占有一席之地。传统行业只有提升整体形象和实力，才能吸引到人才。这些事，在个别行业当中，单靠一、两家公司是做不到的，需要团队的力量。

本地商团面临的挑战还很多。例如，一些商团因为会员越来越少，不得不关闭或者与其他商团合并；一些因为没有固定的会所，开会、搞活动都要先为地点发愁；一些很难请到专业秘书处职员，只好找退休人士帮忙；还有一些商团虽然有了好点子，真心想为会员服务，却受到财力上的局限。

现在，总商会的商团中心计划已经得到了政府的认同，我们也深为裕廊集团的诚意而感动。自从商团中心的概念成型后，双方多次进行讨论和实地考察，即使在制定可行方案时遇到一些条件的限制，JTC 也能主动提出解决方法。现在，总商会正在全力以赴推进商团中心的工作，我们已经成立了专项工作小组，由一位副会长亲自领导，成员包括商团与会员事务、产业、工商业和总务四个委员会的主席，并聘请了一位全职的项目总监，一起来落实商团中心计划。

总商会的目标是把各行各业的商团汇聚在同一个屋檐下，互相借鉴经验，互相激发创意。商团中心不仅有办公地点，有活动场地，而且还能提供专业服务，带动人气。商团机构可以根据各自的行业需求，在中心举办研讨会和工作坊，或者引进有利于行业发展的专项培训课程，甚至可以通过共享资源来组织海外同业的国际交流活动。商团机构在中心举办活动，设施和条件方面也显得更加气派。

我们非常感谢政府支持总商会设立商团中心，共享资源形成群聚效应，更好地推动各行各业的成长。在经济转型的时候，政府的政策为商家营造了一个良好的外部环境，企业自身还要充分发挥积极性和主动性。

政府有政策，商团有创意，加上总商会的组织和协调能力，只要三者互相密切配合，发挥团队的力量，一定能够帮助我国企业跟上时代步伐，在新的经济环境下，继续蓬勃发展！

今天是6月2日，是一个非常有纪念意义的日子。四十年前的今天，也就是1975年6月2日，已故的财政部长韩瑞生先生亲自为裕廊镇大会堂主持开幕仪式，这座建筑物成为当时裕廊镇管理局的总部所在地，也是我国工业化进程起步、发展、成功的见证。四十年后的今天，商团中心同样在这座建筑物里诞生，让我们大家一起携手，迈上提升行业发展的新征程！

谢谢大家！

(English translation)

Minister Lim Hng Kiang,

Senior officials from government agencies and leaders of trade associations

Today, the topic I would like to share with everyone is “Leveraging on the strength of collaboration, Promoting Industry Growth”. In the 50 years since we achieved independence, the government has been striving hard at creating a pro-business

environment. Based on the different stages of economic development, the government has adjusted its policies to achieve industrial upgrading. Eventually we have created a diversified business community made up of MNCs, government-linked companies and local SMEs. They continuously drive Singapore's economic development and accomplish admirable results!

In tandem with advancements in technology, the global economic environment is gradually changing; new industries are emerging while other industries are on the decline. This is a challenge faced globally; Singapore is no exception. With the scarcity of land and shortage of manpower, some traditional industries in Singapore have taken a beating in recent years. Currently, government or businesses alike strongly believe that if we wish to achieve a breakthrough, enterprises have to embark on innovation and transform in order to improve productivity in the long run. This view is already accepted by the public at large. If this can be achieved, our traditional industries will have a chance to reverse their current situation.

However, some things are easier said than done. In the past few years, the government, with the objective of improving productivity, has rolled out many generous assistance schemes for businesses. Some enterprises succeeded in using this opportunity to restructure, but many others, especially the SMEs, are still feeling their way around. Some companies have persevered in trying notwithstanding the lack of results, and their effort is admirable. In this situation, we need to think through calmly. Improving productivity is a long-term process, but how can we shorten the learning curve for enterprises and find more success stories?

I can think of the analogy of the sheep leader and the shepherd dog. In the flock, the sheep leader has a wealth of experience, and the rest of the flock trusts it and follows it. The rest keep pace with the leader. In this period of economic restructuring, trade and industry associations are the leaders. The government's role is more like that of a shepherd dog, using the law, regulations and policies to shape the environment. If the flock runs too slowly, it will have to make it run faster; if they stray from the right direction, they need to be steered back; and it has the responsibility of not letting any sheep stray away from its flock.

While Singapore has good shepherd dogs, what we urgently need now is a group of swift-footed and sturdy sheep leaders.

All the trade association leaders present today are sheep leaders. Some of these TAs are successful recipients of the LEAD Programme, and have grown stronger under government support and funding. As these TAs understand their respective industries very well, they can be more pro-active and apply their industry knowledge to help their members open up new business opportunities, change business models, and identify new markets. I often wonder why a flock of sheep needs to follow its leader. This is because the leader is capable and can think ahead. The flock which follows its lead can be led to pastures and have a future; this is the responsibility of the sheep leader. By the same token, trade associations and industry associations need to give their members the confidence to lead their industry towards transformation. Some trade associations representing traditional industries have done very well, including textile and garments, food manufacturing, F&B, hardware, and furniture. They have all banded together, using the unity of strength to adapt to change and drive the whole industry forward.

In the last two years, the Chamber has been holding regular lunch dialogues with its 153 trade associations, clustering them according to different industry sectors each time. On the one hand, the agenda is to discuss how to solve the challenges faced by each industry, and on the other hand, it is to understand the government policies better and to discuss the growth of their industries. When the government implemented the SkillsFuture programme, everyone agreed that trade associations must participate pro-actively in order to secure a foothold in the nurturing of talent. Traditional industries can attract talent only if they can improve their image and capability. To achieve this, relying on one or two companies within an industry would not be possible. It requires collective effort.

Local trade associations face numerous challenges. For example, some trade associations have a dwindling membership and have no option but to close down or merge with other trade associations; some worry because they have no permanent premises to hold meetings and organise activities; some find it very difficult to recruit professional secretariat staff and

can only hire retirees; some trade associations do have good ideas and sincerely wish to service their members, but have financial limitations.

Now, the Chamber's Trade Association Hub (TA Hub) has received the government's support and endorsement, we deeply appreciate the ongoing support of JTC Corporation. After the TA Hub concept was crystallised, we have held many discussions and site visits with JTC; along the way, as we met with certain constraints, JTC came forward with solutions to address them. The Chamber is now committed to develop the TA Hub. We have formed a special Task Force personally led by one of our Vice-Presidents. The members of this Task Force include the respective Chairmen of four committees - Trade Association & Membership Affairs, Property Management, Commerce & Industry Development and General Affairs. We have also recruited a full-time Project Director to assist in this project.

The Chamber's objective is to cluster the trade and industry associations under one roof, learn from one another's experiences, and stimulate innovative ideas. The TA Hub is not just an office space and activity venue, but could provide professional services and be a hub of activities. Based on the needs of the respective industries, trade associations could organise seminars and workshops, or bring in targeted training programmes beneficial to industry development, or even tap on shared resources to organise overseas networking activities with their international industry counterparts. With the excellent infrastructure and facilities at the TA Hub, it would enhance the image of the trade associations organising their activities there.

We thank the government for supporting the Chamber's development of the TA Hub, to share resources for the benefit of the industries as a whole, and provide an even better impetus to drive the growth of each industry. At this juncture of economic restructuring, government policies have created a favourable external environment for the business community, but enterprises themselves need to make full use of this and be pro-active.

The government crafts relevant policies and trade associations drive innovation; coupled with Chamber's strengths in our organisational skills and coordinating ability, these three



parties create a great synergy. They can tap on each other's complementary strengths to build a strong team. Together we can help Singapore enterprises to progress with the times, and continue to flourish under the new economic environment!

The 2nd of June is indeed a very memorable and meaningful day. Forty years ago, on June 2 1975, Jurong Town Hall was declared open by then Minister for Finance Mr Hon Sui Sen. This building was the headquarters of Jurong Town Corporation, and also witnessed the starting point, development and success of Singapore's industrialisation programme. Forty years later, we are creating a TA Hub in this very same building. Let us work together on this new journey to advance our industry development!

Thank you.