

**Speech by Mr Seah Kian Peng, Speaker of Parliament
at the end of the Committee of Supply Debate
on 10 March 25**

Honourable Members

1. We have had a robust and meaningful debate over the past 12 days, and I want to thank each of you for your contributions. This is what Parliament is about – rigorous discussions, diverse perspectives, and a shared commitment to Singapore and Singaporeans.

2. Traditionally, the Speaker expresses his appreciation at the end of his speech but this year, I wish to do this first. So, thank you to all Members for your cooperation and support in helping me ensure we had a rigorous, intense but orderly Budget debate.

3. My gratitude also goes to the Leader of the House, Minister Indranee Rajah and Deputy Leader, SMS Zaqy Mohamad. Likewise, I wish to appreciate my two Deputy Speakers Ms Jessica Tan and Mr Christopher De Souza, and to my dedicated Parliamentary Clerks and all support staff, whose unseen but

invaluable backroom efforts ensured that proceedings went smoothly throughout this two-week period. Thank you, team.

4. A total of 61 Members of Parliament filed 600 cuts, speaking for about 49 hours with respective Ministers in charge from the front bench responding in turn. I know many Members wanted to file more cuts and wished for more time. There were 41 thirty-second cuts filed by 13 MPs. Some of you spoke so fast - without taking a breath – that you quite literally took the breath away from our simultaneous language interpreters. And for those who spoke in a more measured pace, the same staff told me it was for them, a breath of fresh air!

5. As we reflect on these debates, let us also remind ourselves that being succinct is a virtue. Clarity and focus ensure that discussions are effective and engaging. Parliament is at its best when we articulate our views clearly, when we have done our homework, and when we debate with facts and reason. Importantly, regardless of our political stripes, we must uphold mutual respect because respect is the foundation upon which meaningful discourse is built.

6. As Speaker, what impressed me most about this debate is how and why we disagree - and the disagreements can be as strong from the same side of the House, as from across. Paradoxically, our laws are binding, not because their message is smooth and unfettered but because they are stress-tested and subject to strong scrutiny. This is how our laws - and our country - mature.

7. This respectful and productive disagreement is not to be taken for granted. This year's Budget was presented at a crucial time, a pivotal moment. The world is shifting – geopolitical tensions are rising, economies are being reshaped by new forces, and the future feels more uncertain than ever. Like every other country, Singapore must brace for unpredictability and volatility.

8. A recurring theme in our debate has been the call for “more” – more support for workers and businesses, more security for families, and more investment in Singapore's future. We discussed how economic growth must translate into tangible benefits. The Government has put forth measures to uplift our

workforce – through upskilling, reskilling, and ensuring that our businesses, especially SMEs, remain competitive. Members have rightly pointed out that we must not pursue growth for its own sake, but ensure that it leads to better wages, better jobs, and better lives for Singaporeans.

9. At the same time, cost-of-living concerns remain a key priority. The support measures, such as financial assistance for individuals and households and targeted relief for businesses, are a recognition of these pressures. We heard different views of how best to sustain this support without overburdening future generations, and this delicate balance will always be one we have to manage with care.

10. On social policies, Members have spoken passionately about strengthening our safety nets – whether in healthcare, childcare, eldercare, or retirement adequacy. The enhancements to MediSave and other healthcare initiatives are a step forward, but as some have pointed out, policy alone is never enough. We need strong community networks, families that look out for one another, and a society where no one is left behind. As we grow

older, the demands on our budget can only increase. And how we prepare for the future will define us.

11. Beyond our domestic priorities, we must stay alive to global realities. Global disruptions – be it in trade, technology, or security – can and will impact Singapore significantly. While we may be small, we are far from powerless. Our economic strength, our reserves, our strong defence, and our unity as a people give us an edge in an increasingly unpredictable world.

12. As MP Mr Liang Eng Hwa reminded this House, 60 years ago, Singapore had very few cards to play, and if any, they were ‘weak’ cards. Today, we do have more and stronger cards, which we need to use them wisely and carefully, and always safeguard our national interests.

13. NMP Mr Neil Parekh reminded us that Singapore and Singaporeans have a happy budgetary problem – a fiscal surplus is definitely better than a fiscal deficit. But having been in this House for 19 years, I can say this: a surplus does not mean we

have infinite cards to play. It simply means we have a few more this time round.

14. And that brings me to my final point: the strongest card we hold is the same one we have had for the last 60 years - our ability to adapt, to stay relevant, and to navigate uncertainties with clarity and courage. Our progress has never been a given. Every step forward has been earned – through hard work, sacrifice, and a deep sense of duty to one another.

15. So as we approach Singapore's 60th year of independence, let us not take this unity, this progress, or this stability for granted. Let us move forward and onward together – with confidence, with determination, and with the unwavering commitment to do what is best for Singapore and Singaporeans.

16. Thank you.