

**SPEECH BY RADM (RET) KWEK SIEW JIN,
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE,
FOR
THE LAUNCH OF THE E-LEARNING PROGRAMMES
AT THE NCSS LEADERSXCHANGE
TUESDAY, 13 JANUARY 2009, 6.00PM
NCSS AUDITORIUM**

Mrs Fang Ai Lian, Chairperson of the Charity Council

Mr Low Puk Yeong, Commissioner of Charities

Distinguished guests and partners in social service

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening. Thank you for being here at the 6th National Council of Social Service (NCSS) LeadersXchange. It is my pleasure this evening to specially welcome Mrs Fang Ai Lian, Chairperson of the Charity Council and Mr Low Puk Yeong, Commissioner of Charities to this LeadersXchange and to jointly launch the e-Learning Board Governance Programmes in a short while. The LeadersXchange, held twice a year, has been an excellent avenue for Board Members and Executive Heads from Voluntary Welfare

Organisations (VWOs) to share and exchange views on best practices, governance and management matters.

E-Learning Board Governance Programmes

2 Tonight, the Charity Council and the Social Service Training Institute (SSTI) will be jointly launching the E-Learning Board Governance Programmes. The E-Learning Board Governance Programmes were formatted with Board Members in mind, tailored to give them the flexibility of acquiring knowledge at times of their own choosing and convenience. These on-line sessions are being offered in addition to the Board Governance Programmes that will still be conducted in the typical classroom settings. These more formal courses will be for those who prefer to have the opportunity to learn from a lecturer and to be able to discuss the course material with their course-mates.

3 The modules and content of the e-Learning Programmes are similar to those of the class-room Board Governance Programmes, and encompass such diverse topics as the roles and responsibilities of

Board Members, managing conflict, and legal governance. Later on, there will be a demonstration of the E-learning Programmes, which will allow members here today to gain a better understanding and insight on how the programmes work.

Board Governance Training Programmes

4 The Board Governance Training Programmes were first launched in 2003 to raise governance standard of VWOs, and to equip Board Members with the relevant knowledge, skills and tools needed to discharge their duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently. Since that launch, more than 2,000 participants have enrolled for the training programmes. This alone speaks volumes about how important the programmes were to the VWO community.

5 Going forward, SSTI's Board Governance Training Programmes will progressively evolve to address the shifting dynamics of the social service sector, as well as to respond to the changing regulatory landscape in Singapore. And we need to be proactive in addressing the needs of the people in the face of changing

societal demands. Given the looming economic dark clouds ahead of us, all of us should be gearing up for the expected increase in the number of people who will need our help.

6 As some of you may be aware, NCSS has produced a brochure in December last year, listing all the social services that needy Singaporeans may tap on in their time of crisis. It also includes tips on how to work through the crisis, which we hope would be of use to Singaporeans who find themselves in difficult circumstances. In order to reach out to as many Singaporeans as possible, the brochure has been printed in the four official languages and can be obtained from Community Centres, Community Development Councils (CDCs), the self-help groups - Chinese Development Assistance Council, Yayasan Mendaki, Singapore Indian Development Association, and Eurasian Association, Family Service Centres (FSCs), and Counselling Centres. The brochure is also available on the NCSS homepage. I strongly urge all VWOs to obtain copies of the brochure for distribution to your clients so that they are more aware of the various avenues available to them.

7 NCSS has also developed a resource kit for FSCs that serves as a comprehensive guide for staff to use when assisting their clients. This is a consolidated information package in which details such as the list of available resources and schemes that are offered by government agencies and VWOs are documented. Hence with the kit in hand, FSCs can direct clients quickly to the most appropriate channel for assistance. Other VWOs who feel that such a kit would be of use to them can also request for the kit from NCSS.

8 We also have plans to run more training programmes for social workers to increase their awareness of the issues involved and to enhance their skills in helping their clients to cope with their challenges. At the same time, we are also considering other measures which could take the form of new services and initiatives, depending on the developing situation and the feedback that we receive from VWOs.

Conclusion

9 I think we are all aware that we are headed for some tough times in the coming months. Let us all work even closer together to meet the challenges that will come. The better prepared we are, the better we will be able to assist those who need our help to get through their difficulties, hopefully till better times roll around again.

10 Thank you.