

**SPEECH BY DR TEO HO PIN
MAYOR OF NORTH WEST DISTRICT
AT SIGNING OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING -
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS AND LAW SOCIETY 2014
ON FRIDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2014, 6.30PM
AT TREETOPS, LEVEL 5 AT SCAPE**

The mission of the Community Development Councils, in short, CDCs, is to assist the needy, bond the people and connect the community. To fulfil our roles, we must harness resources from the wider community; work with community, corporate partners together with the Government to better serve our residents; do more for the needy and encourage self-help. In this way, we build resilience in the community and strengthen the social fabric of our nation.

2 Today's event marks a milestone in our partnership between the five CDCs and The Law Society of Singapore. We will launch the Community Legal Probono Services Network initiative at the five districts, making it more accessible for low-income residents to seek legal advice. We will also slowly build up our network of legal clinics within the districts to make it more convenient for residents.

3 We started with two community legal clinics as pilots at North West and South East CDCs in 2007. Over the years, we have seen an increasing number of residents seeking legal advice, with over 60 % of the residents coming from other districts for advice. Advice can range from divorce proceedings, wills, child custody, parental care and some minor criminal issues. Without proper legal advice, such issues will not only remain unresolved, but may escalate to bigger issues, or lead on to actions that could be detrimental to the families and even lead on to criminal issues. Beyond legal issues, residents too often have social issues. This is where the legal clinics will refer them to the CDCs and other community partners. The CDCs will work with the voluntary welfare organisations, the social service offices as well as WDA to help these residents beyond legal matters.

4 The Community Legal Probono Services Network initiative launched today will not only provide legal advice as the pilot projects, but will be more structured with better value add. For example, there will be assistance by the Law Society to provide case synopses for the pro bono lawyers. This will save the lawyers' time which could be better spent giving advice. Secondly, there will be a referral system

put in place, where the pro bono lawyers can refer the residents to the right agencies for further help. For example, a resident coming for legal help on broken marriage could be referred to the Family Service Centre for counselling; Social Service Office for financial assistance and CDC for local assistance programmes such as food assistance and community befriending.

5 As lawyers, we do appreciate and understand that your schedules are very busy. The time you are volunteering to serve in the districts will make a difference to many residents. With more such pro bono and corporate social responsibility efforts from you and your law firms, I am confident, we can even do more for the community to improve the quality of life of our residents.

6 It is timely for the five CDCs to come on board to promote volunteerism and the spirit of giving back. The launch of this initiative at the five districts is only the beginning. With this collaboration, and the support of People's Association, community partners, law firms and lawyers like yourselves, the community legal services will grow further and become even more accessible to residents. This will translate to more service points where residents can seek help readily.

7 Let me end, by thanking The Law Society of Singapore, People's Association, student volunteers from the National University of Singapore and Singapore Management University; and our colleagues from Social Service Offices of the Ministry of Social and Family Development and community partners.

Thank you and wishing everyone a great weekend.