GOVERNANCE &
THE SINGAPORE
PUBLIC SERVICE

“Improving institutions and infrastructure and intervening at the same time is a tall order for any government, but Singapore shows how it can be done.”

World Development Report 2009
THE CONTEXT

Recent History

- 1819 Established as a British colony
  - Developing as a trading port
- 1959 Achieved self-rule
  - Working towards merger with Malaya
- 1963 Merged with Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak into a single Federation of Malaysia
  - Dealing with ideological differences and racial tension
- 1965 Separated from Malaysia to become a fully independent nation
  - Moving into the first world
THE CONTEXT

Geography

• 710 sq km
  – 42 km east to west
  – 23 km north to south
• A tiny speck, between two oceans
• No natural resources
• Completely urbanized

THE CONTEXT

Demographics

Population 4.84 million

• 75% Chinese
• 15% Malay
• 08% Indian
• 02% Eurasians and Others

Religion

• 51% Buddhist or Taoist
• 15% Muslim
• 14% Christian
• 05% Hindus
• 15% Others or No Religion
THE CONTEXT

The Economy

• At Independence [1965]
  – Per capita GDP US$512
  – Unemployment rate 14%

• Today – 40+ years later
  – Per capita GDP US$37,597 [2008]
  – External trade US$655 Billion [2008]
  – FDI US$270 Billion [2007]
  – Unemployment rate 3.3% [March 2009]

GOVERNANCE

The philosophy, principles, and system of government
GOOD GOVERNANCE

“Good governance is epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy-making, a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos acting in furtherance of the public good, the rule of law, transparent processes, and a strong civil society participating in public affairs”

» The World Bank

OUR BASIC PHILOSOPHY

1. Peace and security the foundation for progress
2. Everyone working together for the benefit of the nation
3. No one owes us a living
OUR GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

1. Leadership is Key
2. Work for Reward; Reward for Work
3. A Stake for Everyone; Opportunities for All
4. Anticipate Change; Stay Relevant

Leadership is Key

• Provide long term vision and direction
• Do what is right, not what is popular or politically expedient
• Adopt a whole-of-government and a pragmatic approach
• Set high standards – morally and operationally
Leadership is Key

“The moment key leaders are less than incorruptible, less then stern in demanding high standards, from that moment the structure of administrative integrity will weaken, and eventually crumble. Singapore can survive only if ministers and senior officers are incorruptible and efficient.”

Lee Kuan Yew, then PM, 1979

Work for Reward; Reward for Work

• Facilitate wealth creation
• Encourage self reliance, not dependence on welfare
• Allocate resources for long term competitiveness, and with a basic safety net in place
A Stake for Everyone; Opportunities for All

- Make Singapore a global city and the choice home
- Promote collective responsibility
- Go beyond physical stakes
- Preserve core values and identity

Anticipate Change; Stay Relevant

- Think ahead
- Stay nimble and flexible
- Exploit opportunities even in adversity
- Be well organised
- Be useful to others
OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

• Unitary structure
• British Westminster model
• Executive president elected by the people
• 15 ministries and 63 statutory boards
• Rule of law

OUR STYLE OF GOVERNMENT

• Open and consultative approach in formulating and implementing policies
• Whole-of-government approach in dealing with issues
• Learning by doing and taking risk
• Organisational renewal
TRANSLATION INTO POLICIES

OUR POLICIES

• Promote economic development
  – Attract foreign investment
  – Develop and upgrade physical infrastructure
  – Facilitate rather than regulate
• Encourage people to work and employers to save jobs
  – Provide workfare, not unemployment benefits
  – Offer job credits and training subsidies
• Invest heavily in education and training
  – Encourage innovation and enterprise
  – Upgrade knowledge and skills of workers
OUR POLICIES

• Ensure no marginalisation of groups
  – Four official languages
  – Group representative constituencies
• Promote community responsibility
  – Town Councils
  – Community Development Councils
  – Self-help groups
• Involve the stakeholders - consult and listen
• Connect with others

OUR POLICIES

• Attract talent into the Public Service
  – Offer scholarships
  – Pay market rates
• Identify and develop leaders early
  – Management Associate Programme
• Practise term appointment for top leaders
• Nurture innovation and excellence
  – PS21
• Adopt flexible human resource and financial systems
OUR POLICIES

• Set up whole-of-government structures for integration and coordination
  – Committee of Permanent Secretaries
  – Strategic issues group
  – Sectoral budget discussions
  – Issue-specific platforms
  – Job rotation and exposure

KEY CHALLENGES
KEY CHALLENGES

- Small size and vulnerability
- Changing environment and impact
- Diverse population base
- Growing expectations
- Leadership development and talent management
- Whole-of-government mindset and mechanisms

More QUESTIONS? VIEWS? COMMENTS?