

**11 May 2021**

**Written Answers to Questions for Oral Answer Not Answered by the End of Question Time for Parliamentary Question on the Restoration of Names to Registers of Electors**

**Question:**

**Ms He Ting Ru:** To ask the Prime Minister (a) whether a citizen is informed directly by the Elections Department when their name is struck off the Register of Electors; (b) what steps are taken by the Elections Department to ensure citizens struck off the Register of Electors can be restored in time for a subsequent election; and (c) whether the Government will consider removing the fee imposed on citizens to restore their names to the Register of Electors especially for the first restoration request.

**Ms He Ting Ru:** To ask the Prime Minister (a) what is the rationale for ceasing to process requests for restoration of names to the Register of Electors once the writ of election is issued; and (b) whether the Elections Department will consider extending that timeline to allow more citizens struck off the Register of Electors to have enough time to submit their restoration request.

**Ms He Ting Ru:** To ask the Prime Minister (a) what steps are taken by the Elections Department to encourage registration of overseas voters especially in the months surrounding each review of the Register of Electors; and (b) how many Singaporeans living overseas were registered as overseas voters at the General Elections held in 2011, 2015 and 2020, both as a percentage of the total number of overseas Singaporeans and absolute numbers.

**Written Answers to Questions for Oral Answer Not Answered by the End of Question Time by Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister of Trade and Industry, for the Prime Minister:**

1 Voting is compulsory in Singapore. Voters who do not turn up to vote in an election will have their names expunged from the Registers of Electors. However, the Elections Department, or ELD in short, undertakes several measures to remind people to restore their names to the Registers of Electors if they had failed to vote.

2 As required under the law, ELD will display the lists of non-voters for public inspection after every election. These lists can be inspected at ELD,

community centres and clubs, and Singapore overseas missions. Singaporeans can also check their voter status electronically via the ELD website.

3 ELD also issues a press release on the inspection of the non-voter lists and encourage non-voters to restore their names to the Registers after every election. For example, after the September 2015 General Election, ELD issued the press release on the inspection of the non-voter lists on 15 October 2015 and reminded non-voters to apply early to restore their names to the Registers so that they can vote at future elections. General Election (GE) 2020 took place subsequently in July 2020. Thus, non-voters at the 2015 General Election or earlier elections had more than four years to restore their names to the Registers so that they are eligible to vote at GE2020. The non-voter lists for GE2020 was issued in October last year and I strongly encourage non-voters at GE2020 to restore their names early so that they can vote at the next election.

4 The law also requires that the Registers of Electors be brought up to date not later than three years after each general election. After GE2015, and prior to GE2020, the Registers were updated and certified three times, most recently in Apr 2020. During these exercises, ELD also issues press releases to inform Singaporeans that the lists of Singaporeans eligible to vote at the next election can be inspected at various touchpoints such as the ELD website, community centres or clubs, at ELD premises, or at Singapore overseas missions which serve as overseas registration centres. Singaporeans who are non-voters are encouraged to take the necessary steps to restore their names to the Registers.

5 While the law does not require ELD to inform citizens directly when their names are expunged from the Registers, ELD does send notification letters to individual non-voters to remind them to restore their names to the Registers. For example, after the 2015 General Election, ELD conducted two such notification exercises in 2016 and 2019. To make it easy and convenient for non-voters to restore their names, non-voters merely have to scan a QR code in the letter to access ELD's online services. Alternatively, non-voters can bring along the letter and apply in person at any community centre/club, at the Elections Department or at selected Singapore overseas missions.

6 Ms He asked whether the Government will consider removing the fee imposed on citizens to restore their names to the Registers. As voting is compulsory in Singapore, any non-voter without a valid reason for not voting will be required to pay a penalty fee of \$50. However, for those with valid reasons for not voting, ELD will restore their names without any penalty. These include studying or working overseas, on overseas vacation, on medical leave, hospitalised, bedridden, mental incapacity, etc. such that they are unable to go to the polling stations to vote on Polling Day.

7 Ms He also asked for the rationale for ceasing to process requests for restoration of names to the Register of Electors once the Writ of Election is issued, and if we can extend the timeline for restoration. The cessation is required so that ELD can finalise the Registers and proceed with downstream preparatory activities, such as the printing and mailing of the poll cards and preparing the polling station registers. Finalising the Registers and making available the finalised Registers to candidates and political parties also help to ensure the integrity of the electoral system, as it makes clear to all parties and candidates who the voters in their respective constituencies are. As I have explained, ELD reminds non-voters to restore their names to the Registers of Electors as early as a few months after the previous election. As such, non-voters have more than enough time to restore their names before the next election.

8 Ms He also asked what steps ELD takes to encourage overseas voters to register when the Registers are prepared. When the Registers are prepared or revised, ELD will also remind eligible overseas Singaporeans, via press releases, to register early as overseas voters if they wish to vote at one of the 10 overseas polling stations. For those who may not have come across the news carried by the Singapore media, ELD works with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Singapore Global Network (SGN), to reach out to overseas Singaporeans on their database. ELD also emails overseas Singaporeans even if they had registered before, to inform them to register as overseas voters with each preparation or revision to the Registers of Electors. For GE2020, our 10 overseas missions, serving as overseas polling stations and registration centres, also emailed the overseas Singaporeans in their respective databases to remind them to register as overseas voters before the registration closed on the third day after the Writ was issued. I encourage all Singaporeans living abroad to register with MFA so that they can receive such relevant information and stay connected to home.

9 For GE2020, 6,570 voters registered to vote overseas. This was 3.2% of the overseas Singaporean population as of June 2020. The figures were 3,676 voters in GE2011, which was 1.9% of the overseas Singaporean population as of June 2011 and 4,868 voters in GE2015, which was 2.3% of the overseas Singaporean population in June 2015. While more overseas Singaporeans are registering to vote overseas, ELD will continually review how we can improve access to voting for overseas Singaporeans while ensuring the integrity and secrecy of the vote.