

3 Mar 2022

Oral Reply to Parliamentary Question on Voting Arrangements to Improve Voting Accessibility

Question:

Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye: To ask the Prime Minister given that special arrangements were made during the 2020 General Election for those on Stay-Home Notice at designated facilities to vote at these facilities away from other voters (a) whether the Government has any plans to provide similar arrangements for other groups of voters at future elections; and (b) whether the Government will also consider mail-in voting for Singaporeans who are overseas.

Oral Reply by Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister of Education, for the Prime Minister:

Mr Speaker Sir, on behalf of PM please.

2 The 2020 General Election, or GE2020, which was held amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted two key issues in the electoral landscape. First, the electorate is ageing rapidly. 21% of Singapore Citizens in the Registers of Electors were aged 65 and above in GE 2020, from 14% in GE 2011. Second, from time to time travel difficulties such as in this pandemic would make it difficult for Singaporeans working, studying, or living overseas, to vote. In spite of the challenges of the pandemic, 6,500 overseas citizens registered to vote in GE 2020, from just 3,500 in GE 2011. We recognise that many overseas Singaporeans remain engaged with Singapore and are keen to exercise their vote.

3 As the Member noted, the Elections Department, or ELD, made a special arrangement at GE2020 to allow voters serving Stay-Home Notice at designated hotels to cast their votes. ELD is looking at piloting this arrangement for voters residing at some nursing homes. With this in place, there will no longer be a need for nursing homes to bring their elderly voters staying with them to the polling stations to vote.

4 For overseas Singaporeans, ELD had established overseas polling stations for them to cast their vote. This is because voting by paper ballot at polling stations remains the most transparent and secure method of voting that best

ensures the integrity of the voting process and secrecy of votes. However, ELD recognises that it may not be possible for various reasons, for some overseas Singaporeans to travel to these overseas polling stations to vote. ELD is thus studying if we can introduce postal voting and allow overseas Singaporeans to mail in their votes.

5 Mr Speaker Sir, any new voting arrangements will need to provide balance between greater voting accessibility and convenience for voters with ensuring the integrity of the voting process and secrecy of the vote. ELD expects to engage the public and key stakeholders such as the political parties, nursing homes and overseas Singaporeans on the possibility of piloting these initiatives, sometime in the middle of this year.