

Speech by CE at Grand Opening Ceremony of Open University of Hong Kong Jockey Club Institute of Healthcare (English only) (with photo/video)

Following is the video speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the Grand Opening Ceremony of the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) Jockey Club Institute of Healthcare today (January 8):

Mr Philip Chen (Chairman of the Hong Kong Jockey Club), Dr Charles Lee (Pro-Chancellor of OUHK), Mr Michael Wong (Chairman of the Council of OUHK), Dr Conrad Wong (Deputy Chairman of the Council of OUHK), Professor Wong Yuk-shan (President of OUHK), ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to join you at the Grand Opening of the Open University of Hong Kong Jockey Club Institute of Healthcare, although because of the COVID-19 epidemic, this joyful event has to take place online.

COVID-19 is a powerful reminder of the importance of good health to our lives, at both personal, community and global levels. We rely, to an extraordinary degree, on our dedicated health-care professionals to safeguard the health and well-being of the people of Hong Kong and to ensure the daily operations of our society, which we have somehow taken for granted.

So it is indeed gratifying to welcome the timely opening of the Institute of Healthcare of the Open University of Hong Kong. I applaud the vision of the Open University Council for spearheading this landmark initiative, and I am glad that the Government has provided support, with the granting of an interest-free loan of HK\$400 million to the project.

The new building we are opening today – effectively the University's third campus – expands overall space by more than one third. By putting all health-care-related programmes and teaching and learning facilities of the University under one roof, the Institute now presents itself as a central hub for the education and training of the healthcare personnel in Hong Kong.

The University's brand-new physiotherapy programme has moved to the Institute. So, too, has the School of Nursing and Health Studies, with its 13 programmes with more than 3 000 full-time and part-time students. Alongside state-of-the-art nursing laboratories, nursing and physiotherapy students at the Open University can count on the latest technology in the Institute, including the largest, most advanced, digital virtual dissection lab in Hong Kong, and the new Clinical Simulation Education Unit, which can create a real-life hospital-ward setting for the training of nursing skills.

I'm also pleased to note that a new addition, the Child Development

Centre, will open early next year in the Institute. The Centre will provide services to students with special educational needs and their families. It will also offer training to students enrolled in early childhood education programmes.

Open University has come a long and noteworthy way since its establishment in 1989 as the Open Learning Institute. I'm proud to say that it is growing endlessly to meet the ever-evolving needs of the Hong Kong community. Today, it is our largest self-financing university, offering more than 200 programmes, from sub-degree to postgraduate, for nearly 20 000 full-time and part-time students. It has also produced the largest number of nursing graduates in Hong Kong, accounting for about one-third of all graduates.

Soon enough, Open University will make a difference in name and substance. Subject to the necessary legislative changes, this three-decade old university will adopt a new name – the Hong Kong Metropolitan University – which in my view, reflects the institution's character and contribution to our city, and furthermore, to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Pursuant to agreements signed last April between the Open University of Hong Kong and the Zhaoqing Municipal Government and Zhaoqing University, plans are under way to establish the Open University of Hong Kong (Zhaoqing). I have no reservation in supporting this project to the Ministry of Education and the Guangdong Provincial Government and certainly look forward to its early opening.

It has always been the Government's policy to promote the parallel development of publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary education. In particular, we believe that the self-financing sector is well placed to address pressing labour-force needs and flexibly respond to market demands. The Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors launched by the Education Bureau is a case in point. Under the scheme, the Government provides an annual subsidy of up to HK\$75,000 per student enrolled in designated undergraduate and sub-degree programmes in disciplines with keen demand. At present, a total of 11 sub-degree and 12 undergraduate programmes at Open University are included in the scheme, accounting for about 1 700 places out of the total provision of about 5 500 places under the scheme. Amongst them are five healthcare-related programmes with an enrolment of nearly 800 students. The timely opening of the Institute of Healthcare will definitely benefit these students.

Just in case the University has more ambitions, I am happy to mention the HK\$1.3 billion Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Education launched last year by the Education Bureau. It supports self-financing institutions, including Open University, in their continuing development of self-financing programmes that meet market needs. The scheme helps institutions build on their strengths and niche areas, while lessening the financial burden on students. The Education Bureau, let me add, has just launched a pilot study on the development of applied degree programmes. I encourage Open University and similar institutions to take part, to expand their offerings while serving the needs of Hong Kong.

Finally, allow me to thank the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, and others who have contributed to the development of the Institute of Healthcare. Your generous support will help ensure that healthcare education in Hong Kong remains innovative, welcoming and of the highest quality.

I wish you all a healthy and prosperous New Year. Thank you.

