

Speech by CE at grand opening of International Culinary Institute (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the grand opening of International Culinary Institute (ICI) in Pokfulam this afternoon (October 26):

Dr Roy Chung (Chairman of Vocational Training Council (VTC)), Mr Andrew Leung (Chairman of ICI Steering Committee); Mrs Carrie Yau (Executive Director of VTC), distinguished guests, teachers, students, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you today for the grand opening of the Vocational Training Council's International Culinary Institute.

I took part in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Culinary Institute in 2014 as the Chief Secretary for Administration. After four and a half years, I must say it's gratifying to be here for the formal opening of this purpose-built teaching and training institute in my new capacity as the Chief Executive. It's gratifying because the results of the planning and remarkable commitment that has gone into bringing this state-of-the-art institute to creative life are simply remarkable.

The beneficiaries are, of course, the Hong Kong students and in-service practitioners eager to become professional chefs. No less important, the beneficiaries are the people of Hong Kong, and all who visit us from around the world to enjoy our great city, the culinary capital of Asia. More than 15,000 restaurants call Hong Kong home, and food and beverage services engage more than 240,000 people in Hong Kong. That speaks resoundingly of the value of our food and beverage industry, and the importance of ensuring a continuing flow of talent to serve Hong Kong.

The Culinary Institute will go a long way toward satisfying that need. Designed to support some 2,000 students, it boasts training kitchens as well as a training café, a wine forum, a hall of gastronomy for event training, a sensory lab for food science education and much more. Equally important, the Institute employs highly qualified teachers with solid industry experience. It also has celebrated international chefs as honorary advisors and an invaluable network of professionals and institutions from Hong Kong and from all over the world. In short, it has what Hong Kong needs to produce talented professionals capable of creating European, Mediterranean, American, Middle Eastern and Asian cuisine. Alongside our Chinese Culinary Institute and the Hospitality and Tourism Institute nearby, there will be a creative confluence of hospitality and culinary education, interaction and collaboration. I am sure that it will become one of the region's leading international culinary institutes.

The Institute's opening underlines my Government's support for Vocational and Professional Education and Training, VPET. Such training offers more than technical and practical knowledge. It also provides whole-person development, soft-skills training and international experience. It aims to equip our students to meet the rising expectations of the industries and of the community.

The Vocational Training Council has, from its very beginning in 1982, served as a valued partner of the Government, building a quality workforce to support Hong Kong's sustainable development. Indeed, the Culinary Institute is one of 13 VTC member institutions. Together, they provide education and training from post-secondary three to degree levels for some 250,000 students a year, enhancing professional knowledge and skills to meet our employment needs in this 21st century of opportunity.

That said, attracting students into vocational and professional training remains a challenge. The value of such training, and the bright prospects it offers our young people with the interest and suitable attributes, is still not fully appreciated by some in our community. With that in mind, my Government established the Task Force on Promotion of VPET earlier this year. Chaired by Roy, the task force will advise on strategies for building closer collaboration between business and our Vocational and Professional Education and Training. The goal is to promote the value of VPET for our youth in the context of a multiple pathway regime. Given your leadership, Roy, I'm sure the Task Force will deliver recommendations that make a decided difference for all concerned.

My Government will continue to work with the Vocational Training Council in providing the latest learning facilities for its students. Our recent support of the multi-disciplinary campus in Cha Kwo Ling and the Aircraft and Marine Engineering Centre at the IVE Tsing Yi campus reflect that commitment. So does this dynamic new campus. With its inspired salt crystal design, it stands as an essential element and a much welcomed addition to Hong Kong's splendid vocational offerings.

Finally, my thanks to all those who have over the years contributed to the development of this marvelous new centre of excellence. I wish the International Culinary Institute, ICI, and its students every success in the years to come. Thank you very much.



