

## Toronto ETO and HKTB host joint Lunar New Year reception (with photos)

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Toronto (Toronto ETO) and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (Canada) (HKTB) jointly held a Lunar New Year reception in Toronto today (February 8, Toronto time) to celebrate the Year of the Pig.

In her welcoming remarks at the reception, the Director of Toronto ETO, Ms Emily Mo, updated some 120 guests on the developments of Hong Kong in 2018. She said that Hong Kong had continued to prosper under the "one country, two systems" principle. "We forecast that the economic growth for 2018 would reach 3.2 per cent. And the current unemployment rate remains low at 2.8 per cent, implying that Hong Kong is basically in a state of full employment," Ms Mo said.

"Human capital has always been the cornerstone of Hong Kong's success and economic development. Last year, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government launched new schemes to attract innovation and technology as well as research and development talents and experts. The first Talent List of Hong Kong was drawn up to attract quality people from around the world in an effective and focused manner," Ms Mo continued.

Ms Mo highlighted that Hong Kong has championed in various world rankings in the past year, including being the freest economy, the largest offshore Renminbi hub and Asia's first fund management hub; having the best environment for initial public offering (IPO) and mergers and acquisitions activities; and raising the largest amounts of IPO funds.

In terms of infrastructure, Hong Kong also ranked first out of 126 economies according to the Global Innovation Index 2018. With the commissioning of two major transport infrastructure projects last year, namely the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, connectivity between Hong Kong, Mainland China and Macao has been greatly enhanced. Hong Kong's position and its role in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development and the Belt and Road Initiative have also become more prominent.

Turning to Hong Kong-Canada relations, Ms Mo noted that the two places continue to have very close relations in terms of trade and investment. "Hong Kong ranks third as a global destination for Canadian exports of services, with the exports to Hong Kong reaching CAD\$2.9 billion in value in 2017. In addition, Hong Kong has also been Canada's eighth largest merchandise export market, particularly for high-quality frozen beef, fish and seafood," Ms Mo said.

Ms Mo remarked that bilateral trade ties between the two places continue to strengthen. In September last year, two Principal Officials from the HKSAR

Government visited Canada to enhance exchanges in areas of trade and investment as well as civil service training and management.

Furthermore, Toronto ETO organised and supported many events across Canada last year to promote Hong Kong. These events included a roving exhibition entitled "Hong Kong: Asia's World City", which was staged in 10 cities to showcase the beauty and achievements of Hong Kong in various areas, business and trade promotion events, international film festivals, cultural performances by Hong Kong performers, Hong Kong-themed dramas and academic seminars.

Ms Mo said that Toronto ETO will continue to promote closer relations between Hong Kong and Canada on all fronts in 2019. She also announced that Toronto ETO will hold a "Hong Kong Week" event under the theme of "Connect and Excel" in June. The programme will encompass a series of activities including a business conference, a photo exhibition, an academic seminar, a concert by the Hong Kong Oratorio Society, Hong Kong-themed drama and a dragon boat festival.

During the reception, the Director for Canada and Central and South America of the HKTb, Mr Michael Lim, reviewed the tourism marketing plans for Canada in 2019. "We will continue our efforts to promote Hong Kong as a multi-experience destination that offers a diverse and authentic experience. Canadian visitors are invited to discover Hong Kong like a local, with experiences such as witnessing the living culture in our neighbourhoods, the great outdoors and the arts. New multi-destination programs are being introduced with Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam and the Greater Bay Area to ensure Hong Kong is an integral part of their Asian itinerary," he said.

A highlight of the reception was a special performance by the award-winning team SLASH from the Hong Kong Rope Skipping Academy. The team gave a breathtaking high-speed performance of swirling ropes, symbolising Hong Kong's dynamism and vibrancy. They will continue to perform on various occasions during their Canada tour, including a charity gala in Toronto on February 9 (Toronto time), exchange workshops with local rope skipping teams in Toronto from February 10 to 12 (Toronto time) and in Vancouver on February 14 (Vancouver time), and a reception hosted by Toronto ETO and the HKTb in Vancouver on February 13 (Vancouver time).



