

Speech by SLW at Opening Ceremony of Education & Careers Expo 2025 (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, at the Opening Ceremony of the Education & Careers Expo 2025 organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) today (January 16):

Margaret (Executive Director of the HKTDC, Ms Margaret Fong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is great to be back again. Margaret reminded me I was here for the opening about two years ago. It is great to be back again at this exciting event. As Margaret said, this year is going to celebrate its 34th edition of the Education & Careers Expo. It sounds a bit old, but I think the exhibition keeps on reinventing itself every now and then. Please do come and visit the event because there will be new things, exciting new additions every year.

As Margaret said, this year we are welcoming 820 higher education institutions, professional associations, enterprises, and including government departments from a total of 22 countries or regions. We are also recruiting, so we want to reach out and invite young people to join the Government. It really showcases that Hong Kong is a truly international hub. We are very delighted to have Consuls General from France, Germany, the Philippines and other countries as well here in Hong Kong. Thank you very much for being with us.

The title of this event is a combination of education and developing your career. As you know, the Hong Kong Government keeps investing into education. The money and resources we put into education are huge and keep on growing. By now 73 per cent of our young people are getting post-secondary education. That is almost three out of four, which is quite an impressive figure. Ten years ago, it was two out of three, or 67 per cent. So, we are seeing improvement. As a result of our continued investment in education, our workforce is becoming more educated and more productive. Currently, 45 per cent of our workforce in Hong Kong has a post-secondary education. This ensures that we have a more productive workforce. As you can predict, looking forward five or 10 years down the road, we are going to reach a point where more than half of our workforce will have a post-secondary education or beyond. This will greatly enhance the productivity of Hong Kong.

And also, we are placing more attention and priority on reinventing our VPET (vocational and professional education and training). As you know, right now two universities have been designated as universities of applied sciences. It's a way to make sure that Hong Kong keeps on having the right people and the right skills to grow our economy. This is for young people, who have the opportunity to get educated, starting as students.

We also have a large number of people already in the workforce. They did have the luxury when they were young to get a higher education, but they do want to keep updating their skills and stay relevant. For that, we have a very important organisation here called the Employees Retraining Board (ERB). Every year, we provide all sorts of courses and different skill upgrading programmes to help those in the workforce in their middle age – mid-30s, mid-40s, mid-50s. So we keep on providing new things. Starting from now, apart from employment-based and skill-based training, we are also lifting the educational restrictions. Before this year, all the courses were only available to those with up to a sub-degree level. Those with a degree were not allowed to join the ERB for courses due to resource allocation. But from now on, the ERB courses are open to all, irrespective of education level. This also recognises that degree holders now account for quite a significant portion of our workforce.

Also, we have a Continuing Education Fund. Again, this is opening to all. We look forward to our workforce making use of the credit available to them, upgrading themselves, and learning some new things so that they can stay relevant and make the best out of their talents.

And clearly, for Hong Kong to go ahead and grow, we have to work together with our whole society as well as partners both locally and abroad. I am very glad that with this Education & Careers Expo, we are making a start on that. I know that there will be a tour for me later on. I do look forward to, apart from renewing my connection with the existing exhibitors, also some new exciting openings and doing something that is quite unusual for me, so I do look forward to the tour. I encourage all of you to have a look, and I wish you all a very enjoyable day today and great success at this year's Education & Careers Expo. Thank you very much.



