

100,000 on their way to US

By SIMON MACKLIN

ALMOST 100,000 local residents have qualified to emigrate to the United States and are waiting their turn to leave Hongkong.

Meanwhile, the Australian and Canadian consulates report that they do not have the manpower to deal with record numbers of emigration applications.

Diplomatic officials from these three major destination countries for Hongkong residents seeking to leave the territory all say a record number of people are attempting to leave.

With a relaxation of immigration policies in the three countries it was likely more local residents would be taking up the opportunity to move out of Hongkong, a diplomatic official said.

A spokesman for the United States Consulate said 96,869 local residents had applied and qualified for emigration to the United States.

Last year more than 8,500 local residents had emigrated to the United States, he said.

The United States each year applies quotas on the number of immigrants admitted from different parts of the world.

Hongkong's quota was raised from 600 a year to 5,000 each year from October, he said.

The quota was only for those who had been born in Hongkong and more than half the local residents who qualified for emigration to the United States had been born in China or elsewhere.

But these local residents would be able to qualify under the quota of their country

of origin, he said.

The immigration consul at the Australian Consulate, Mr David Cray, said he expected the number of local people who were granted immigration visas to Australia this year would be double that of last year.

The Australian Consulate expected to issue up to 8,000 emigration visas this financial year compared to 5,200 the previous year, Mr Cray said.

And officials at the Commission for Canada said the pressure of applications meant there had been a delay in processing emigration visas.

In the first three months of this year there had been about 3,200 applications, which represented a 10 per cent increase over the same period last year.

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