

Assurance for Canadian citizens born in territory

By KATHY GRIFFIN

HONG KONG-BORN Canadians were assured by Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs yesterday that their status as Canadians would not be jeopardised after 1997.

Andre Ouellet, who met Chinese premier Li Peng and Vice-Premier Qian Qichen last week, said they discussed the status of Chinese-Canadians living in Hong Kong.

Mr Ouellet said he emphasised the number of Canadians living in Hong Kong and the wish that they be able to contribute to society here.

About 25,000 to 35,000 Canadian passport-holders live in the terri-

tory, with numbers varying because some may re-enter on their Hong Kong identity card rather than their passports.

Although the Chinese response to Mr Ouellet was simply an assurance of a smooth transition, Mr Ouellet did not expect Hong Kong-born holders of Canadian passports would experience trouble after the handover.

"We will cross the bridge when we arrive there [but] I have every reason to believe things will take place according to Canadian wishes. I have no reason to believe Canadians will be treated unfairly," he said.

Mr Ouellet also did not expect a flood of Hong Kong people seeking political asylum in Canada after 1997, even though a pro-democracy organiser recently was allowed to stay in the country on political grounds.

He predicted the transition would be smooth and would encourage people to stay here.

But he stressed Canada had no intention of changing its immigration policy, which enables about 30,000 Hong Kong people to emigrate there each year, the largest single source of immigrants.

Mr Ouellet was in the territory to

sign agreements on cultural exchanges and anti-drug trafficking efforts after visiting Beijing, Bangkok, Seoul and Tokyo.

The drug trafficking agreement extends a previous pact between the Hong Kong police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to work together. Mr Ouellet did not believe drug trafficking had increased because more Hong Kong people emigrated to Canada, and stressed most Hong Kong emigrants were honest.

The cultural agreement is a pledge to encourage arts and sports exchanges.

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