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20 pc of emigrants to return Canada plan to return

By JACQUELINE LEE

NEARLY one in five Hongkong emigrants to Canada say they are likely to return to live in the territory, according to a survey conducted by the Institute of Personnel Management.

A survey of emigrants now in Toronto, Vancouver and Edmonton showed that about 3.5 per cent would certainly come back while 15 per cent had a strong intention of returning.

The poll of 294 former residents of the territory is the first brain drain survey to have been carried out among emigrants.

Its findings indicate that the Government may have underestimated the number of former Hongkong residents planning to return.

The survey also showed that about one in five would not return and about 30 per cent probably would not.

One in three emigrants were undecided about whether to return.

It is believed that this survey among actual emigrants will provide a more realistic picture because respondents are in a better position to chart their plans after having had first-hand experience of life abroad.

Earlier this year, a territory-wide survey of 60,000 people provided data that the Government admitted was inconclusive and unreliable.

But officials are keen to gather as many statistics as they can on potential returnees to plot Hongkong's future manpower needs.

Current estimates are that about one in 10 Hongkong emigrants to all countries come back and the Government expects the return rate will go up significantly in the next two years as people who left in the early days of the brain drain,

which started around 1987, will have acquired foreign citizenship by then.

But IPM's research director, Mrs Sara Tang Cheung Fung-ye, said the survey results suggested that employers who wanted to recruit returned emigrants for experienced posts needed to be more active in attempts to attract them back.

She suggested the Government also needed to step up overseas promotion about Hongkong to encourage the return of emigrants.

Mr Patrick Maule, who heads IPM's committee on emigration, said: "We have to work hard to demonstrate job opportunities to emigrants. It does take a lot of effort to bring Hongkong in close contact with them."

He said IPM needed \$4.7 million to launch its proposed IPM-Net project to facilitate the recruitment by companies of returnees. The programme works by pro-

viding a cross-country database for advertising local job vacancies and collecting resumes of potential recruits overseas.

It is seeking \$2.25 million in financial assistance from the Government, mainly for publicity about the scheme.

"For the project to succeed, we need cash to promote it and we need ex-Hongkongers to log in and provide their resume," Mr Maule said.

The Government is keen to strengthen Hongkong's ability to draw its overseas graduates back in view of a predicted serious shortage of tertiary education graduates in the second half of the 1990s.

IPM's president, Mr Eric Peake, said the IPM-Net project would suit that purpose and such a scheme would be better implemented by private organisation. People would be reluc-

tant to contribute information about their personal background if the data was to be kept by the Government, especially given the prospect of Hongkong's sovereignty change to China, he said.

IPM's latest local survey on the brain drain indicated an increase in emigration of top managers as well as junior and clerical staff last year while fewer professional and supervisory staff left the territory, leading to an accelerated loss of younger workers and high wage earners.

Hongkong lost 125 per cent more people who were earning between \$400,000 and \$600,000 per annum last year and 50 per cent more workers aged below 25.

Companies recorded a 7.2 per cent rate for emigration returnees among staff last year, slightly lower than the 8.5 per cent in 1988.