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Canada tops list for HK students

BY FRANCES BARTLETT

EACH year, Hongkong students sift through a massive amount of information concerning international education, and each year, there are more students applying to study in Canada. In 1989, the number of Canadian student visas issued topped the list at 5,096.

Considering the frosty climate of some regions, and the confusing educational system where programmes vary from province to province, it may seem surprising that Canada lures so many Hongkong students to its shores.

But there are several reasons for the influx, according to Ms Corina Tsang, senior student counsellor at the Hang Seng Bank's non-

profit Education Advisory Service (EAS). "The low cost of tuition for foreign students is a major attraction," said Ms Tsang.

In Manitoba and Newfoundland, for instance, there is no overseas differential rate so fees range from C\$1,500 (about HK\$9,750) to \$2,200 per year.

Ontario's tuition fees rank highest, at \$5,500 to \$9,000, but are still marginally lower than those in the UK and Australia, and some schools in the United States.

As Canada continues to welcome Hongkong emigrants, there is a flow-on effect with foreign students wanting to study in the country where they have the support of relatives and friends. This is particularly true of younger students attending public secondary schools, where very little accommodation is available.

Not surprisingly, most Hongkong students wish to pursue careers in business and commerce. Other areas of interest include engineering, computer science and hotel management.

Despite the higher tuition fees, Ontario attracts the greatest number of overseas students. There are many schools to choose from here and there is a high Chinese population.

Along with University of Toronto, the University of Western Ontario in London and Queen's University in Kingston are some of the most popular institutions for Hongkong students.

The second area of choice is British Columbia, which has the Vancouver Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia.

The University of Manitoba attracts engineering

There are 45 universities in Canada which use English as the first language. A bachelor's degree program requires between three and four years of study. Over 180 community colleges provide a wide range of vocational training courses in commerce, applied arts and technology.

The EAS provides students with information on education in Canada, the US, Australia and the UK. In recent years, counsellors have seen Canadian institutions step-up their marketing of programs to international students.

Since each of Canada's 10 provinces has its own Ministry of Education administering its own educational system, the EAS maintains close contact with Canadian education bodies to ensure their information is accurate and up to date.

and business administration students.

"In 1985 Canadian community colleges opened their doors to foreign students, especially those in British Columbia," says Ms Tsang.

Many of these offer intensive English courses for overseas students, as well as vocational programs, and university transfer programs. Some even offer grades 11 and 12.

Some community college vocational programs admit

limited numbers of foreign students, though these are few, and tend to be related to the medical field.

Most other programs invite applications from overseas. The colleges require a TOEFL score of 500-550. Students with a lower score may have to enroll in an intensive English program before they are allowed to take a regular course of study.

Even though there is considerable interest in community colleges, Hongkong students are still striving for the

prestige of a university degree.

Direct entrance to a Canadian university can be difficult; "A" level standings are required which are not available for Hongkong's students until July.

By then, many courses may be already full.

To circumvent this problem, many students complete secondary school in Canada, or take advantage of university transfer programs.