

For Many From Hong Kong, Vancouver Is a Way Station

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Keep their families and wealth while they wait to see what becomes of the island. Of course, the trip out of Hong Kong was one way for many exiles, and they are happily settled in Vancouver. But among the wealthiest immigrants, the only roots many have put down are in the billions of dollars they have pumped into the local economy. And the tentative nature of their residency here has led to friction and resentment.

"Plan A is that when our daughter gets a little older we will let her go to boarding school and I will go back to Hong Kong," Betty said through an interpreter. "Plan B is for my husband to sell the business and move here." But she clearly longed to go home. "I'm still a Hong Kong lady," she said.

A Chance to Prosper Could Be Lost

Many Chinese here say they are worried about recent attempts by the Chinese Government to restrict civil liberties in Hong Kong even before July 1. But they say they are even more worried about missing the chance to make money in Hong Kong, where housing prices are rising at the same time they are falling in Vancouver.

"July 97 is not a date that has really changed anything," said Terry Hui, president of Concord Pacific

ly because of reports of abuse and manipulation. In one case, according to government records, a Hong Kong entrepreneur invested in a laundromat but worked at I.B.M. The one job he claimed to have created was held by a relative, who emptied coins from the washing machines.

No Shanties for Them, But Mansions

But even though they may now be getting a chillier reception here, more than 10,000 Hong Kong immigrants still came to Canada last year, constituting what has surely been one of the most unusual immigrant movements in North American history.

Part of what makes the exodus from Hong Kong to Vancouver stand apart is the reversal of roles it has brought. After the Tiananmen Square killings in 1989, panic over the coming takeover by the Chinese sent many Hong Kong families packing. They became rich overnight when they sold tiny apartments in Hong Kong for well over \$1 million.

In Vancouver, residents who had considered themselves well off suddenly realized that with the arrival of the newly rich Hong Kong immigrants, and the sky-high real-estate prices they caused, their own economic standing had dropped to middle class.

"Immigration is O.K. when someone comes over to work as a domestic or in a laundry because the local



Todd Kemp for The New York Times

When building a Vancouver branch, the Hongkong Bank of Canada consulted a feng shui master, Sherman Tai, right, over the placement of two bronze lions. He conferred with David Lee, a bank senior vice president.