



IT'S ALBERTA CALLING

Canadian province starts bid to recruit Glasgow nurses

By **TRISTAN STEWART-ROBERTSON**

IT HAS twice as much sunshine as Scotland, low taxes and more space than you can chase a buffalo in.

Now the Canadian province of Alberta could again become the destination of choice for Scots a century after the first immigrants forged a path west.

A recruitment drive in Glasgow tomorrow for nurses to emigrate to Alberta is the latest chance being offered to skilled workers to move around the globe for booming economies.

Fifty nurses have already sent replies to the event and more are expected on the day.

In the last few months officials from all over the world – including the outback of Australia, Bermuda, Boston and even Antarctica – have launched recruitment campaigns in the city.

Alberta has oil reserves in its tar sands that make it second only to Saudi Arabia, so the province is swimming in money, attracting workers from across Canada and worldwide.

That is putting pressure on the health care system and government officials told the Evening Times they need 1000 nurses immediately and about

6000 over the next 10 years.

Lori Zaparniuk, director of health work force attraction for Alberta, said the quality of

life is the main draw for new immigrants, as well as hourly wages for nurses starting at \$31 and ranging up to \$42 (about £15 to £21). Personal income tax is the lowest in Canada at 10%.

She said: "Even with the number of nurses being trained in Alberta it is not enough.

"A lot of people go to Alberta for an adventure and something different, but this is a huge move for a lot of people, so they are looking to stay for the long term."

Alberta has the highest employment rate in the country, with the health care sector providing almost 180,000 jobs. Health care is

the second largest profession in the province.

But there have also been reports of growing health care concerns, particularly in rural communities and poorer indigenous populations, where there is a high need for doctors and speciality health professionals.

In the cities, nurses of all types are needed, from medical and surgical, to mental health and physiotherapy.

A spokesman for Unison said recruitment by foreign countries is nothing new,

but the UK Government needs to ensure it is training sufficient numbers of nurses to ensure Scotland still has enough staff.

In October, a study by the

“ Our company has had a huge number of inquiries from Glasgow

Emigration Group found Glasgow was facing a substantial exodus of doctors, scientists and teachers.

The group received 150 inquiries in the past nine months from Glasgow, almost double the UK average.

More than 250,000 Brits left the UK last year, 684 a day or one every two minutes.

Paul Arthur, Emigration Group director, said: "Our company has experienced a huge number of inquiries from Glasgow.

"What Scotland and the rest of the UK is seeing is a brain drain. Doctors, scientists, teachers and tradesmen are leaving to fill the huge skills shortages overseas."

A Scottish Government spokesman said: "We believe NHS Scotland is an attractive and rewarding organisation in which to work. All Scottish NHS boards have robust workforce plans in place to ensure they recruit and retain staff."

Similar concerns about staffing levels were expressed five years ago as a recruitment drive tried to woo social workers to Boston, Massachusetts.

Four months ago, UK childcare workers were

tempted by a growing demand for work in Australia due to chronic shortages in the state of Victoria. They were offered air fares, relocation costs and

assistance with short-term accommodation.

At least 56 child protection workers with social work degrees – many from Scotland – were expected to take up new posts this month.

Western Australia was also recruiting child aid workers and teachers; shipbuilders are needed in Bermuda; and boiler makers are wanted at Canada's largest nuclear power plant.

Even Antarctica has tried to attract more Scots. The British Antarctic Society last year called for carpenters, electricians and plumbers to help maintain its research stations near the South Pole.

If Alberta does entice nurses at tomorrow's sessions at the SECC they will be the latest Scots to go there.

"Wild Rose" country bears the names of Barrhead, Busby and Calgary a few hours drive from the Rocky Mountains.

The city of Calgary has even been called Canada's most "Scottish" city, with dozens of communities within the metropolis named after Scottish places and personalities.

And Alberta is eight times the size of Scotland, yet has only 3.5million people.



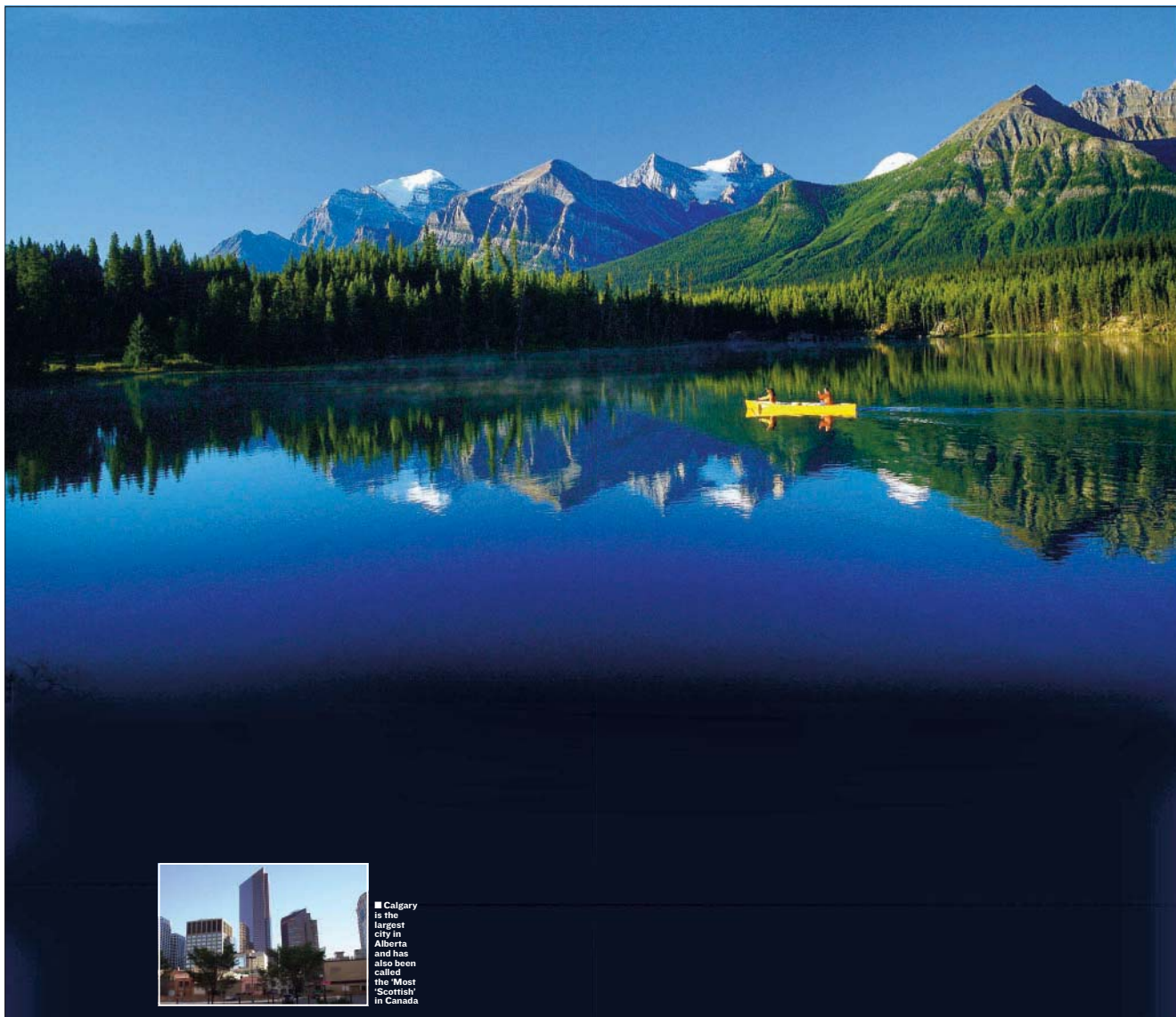
FACTFILE

CAPITAL: Edmonton
LARGEST CITY: Calgary
SIZE: 661,000sqr km
POPULATION: 3.5million
GDP: \$235.6billion (£117.5bn)
RAIN: 350mm to 600mm a year (14in to 2ft)
SUNSHINE: 2000 hours a year
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICES: Range from \$167,000 (Lethbridge) to \$347,000 (Calgary) in major centres (about £83,000 to £172,000)
WEATHER: Winter temperatures can hit -40°C, with strong winds bringing an even bigger chill. Summer highs average 20-25°C, with top temperatures in the high 30s.
ECONOMY: Alberta's boom economy makes it an attractive option. There is no provincial general sales tax on products (similar to VAT), no capital tax, no payroll tax, and the lowest tax at the fuel pumps. Personal income tax is also the lowest in the country at just 10%.



MAIN ATTRACTIONS

THE ROCKIES: Canada's largest mountain range boasts downhill and alpine skiing, snowmobiling, rock climbing, hiking and wilderness camping.
DRUMHELLER VALLEY: 80mils northeast of Calgary, Drumheller is best known as the home of the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, which is a world-class facility dedicated to the study of dinosaurs.
WEST EDMONTON MALL: The largest shopping mall in North America. It has more than 800 stores and services. Attractions include Galaxyland, the world's largest indoor amusement park, and World Waterpark, with slides, a wave pool and a bungee jump.
EDMONTON: The capital of Alberta is famed for its scenic river valley and has a thriving music and art community.
LAKE LOUISE: This beautiful lake in the Rockies is the ultimate example of mountain serenity. The shores are home to magnificent elk and the occasional bear.



■ Calgary is the largest city in Alberta and has also been called the 'Most Scottish' in Canada