

for example, has pledged to increase the number of Malaysian students in its faculties of medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy.

Canadian students are also showing greater interest in Malaysia. This year alone, student delegations from the University of Toronto, St. Mary's University, the University of Victoria, and others have participated in study tours of Malaysia. Those are only some examples of the exciting developments taking place today in Canada-Malaysia education co-operation.

Education in Canada and Malaysian Perceptions

Some of you may wonder what it would be like to undertake your education in Canada. There seem to be a lot of misperceptions in this regard. For starters, Canada does not experience winter all year long! It is not some far-off northern ice field.

In terms of distance from Malaysia, for example, it is closer to fly to Vancouver, Edmonton or Calgary, Canada, than to New York, Miami or Boston in the United States. There are four distinct seasons in Canada, with temperatures ranging from below freezing to over 35 degrees Celsius. As the second-largest country in the world, it also claims several different climatic regions. Parts of the country, such as my own riding of Richmond, British Columbia, rarely experience freezing temperatures or snow. Canada is one of the most beautiful, diverse, clean, and safe countries in the world. For two of the past three years, the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report has rated Canada as the best country in the world in which to live.

However, even for those areas that experience seasons and conditions very different from those in Malaysia, one must remember that there are fantastic activities and experiences associated with every season. If, as a potential international student, one is not looking for new and different experiences, knowledge, and challenges, then in my opinion, one misses some of the most important reasons for obtaining an international education. As Mae Chun of the *New Straits Times* puts it, and I quote: "Canada remains the best country in which to live partly because there is so much life packed into one short year."

Canada has been described as a cultural mosaic. Malaysians will have the opportunity to experience a world of cultures in only one country. In Toronto, more than 50 per cent of the population is made up of ethnic groups that are non-French and non-British in origin. There are over 850 000 Canadians of Asian origin living in Canada. Chinese has become Canada's third most spoken language.

If you investigate carefully, I think you will find that Canada is the best bargain in quality education. On an average annual basis, it is significantly less expensive to study in Canada than