

Final Report

for the European-Canadian exchange program for
Munich University of Applied Sciences
and
Mount Royal College, Calgary

Fall 2005

by
Stephan Poser

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Calgary and Alberta	3
What to see and do.....	3
Public Transport.....	3
Mount Royal College	4
Courses.....	4
Student Residence.....	4
Conclusion	5
Tips for future students	5
Links	6

1 Introduction

From September 2005 until January 2006 I participated in a student exchange between Fachhochschule München (FHM) and Mount Royal College (MRC). This exchange program was also supported by a scholarship of the European Union.

This report is primarily to help new students going to Calgary as well as a feedback for the responsible institutions.

2 Calgary and Alberta

Calgary is a city in the province of Alberta, Canada. It is situated in the south of the province, in a region of foothills and high plains, approximately 80 km east of the front ranges of the Canadian Rockies. It has a estimated population of slightly over one million people and is thus the largest city in Alberta.

It is a popular destination for winter sport and Calgary was also the host of the 1988 Olympic Winter Games.

Nowadays Calgary is mainly centered on the booming Oil Industry in Alberta and a quite fast growing city.

2.1 *What to see and do*

Being just 100 years old, Calgary is not that much of a tourist spot and there is not that much to visit besides of the Calgary Tower (which gives a nice view over Calgary), the Glenbow Museum (where I haven't been) and downtown with some skyscrapers.

Nightlife centers mainly around 9th and 17th Avenue downtown and consists of a lot of really nice pubs and some good nightclubs.

The area around Calgary has some nice and interesting things to see, but one should always keep in mind that distances in Canada are larger than in Europe.

You have Drummheller 200km to the East with some nice (small) Canyons. Edmonton (the other city in Alberta) around 300km to the north and the Rockies somewhere around 100km to the west. Banff and the Banff National Park are a must-see in fall (September) and it's also extremely nice for skiing in winter.

2.2 *Public Transport*

Public transport is not the best, it basically consists of two train lines, called the C-Train, and a quite extensive bus net. Unfortunately the C-Train is for the MRC quite useless, since the next line is several km away.

This only leaves the bus, which takes you anywhere ... if you have enough time. All bus lines run every half an hour, so if you take the bus you spend half of the time waiting at some cold and windy bus station.

At least it's quite cheap, C-Train and Bus tickets only cost 2 \$ and valid for 3 hours in one direction.

Since MRC is a little bit outside it takes at least half an hour with public transport to go to the downtown area. A better choice is often to take a taxi, fares are regulated by the city and comparable cheap (around 10\$ MRC – downtown).

3 Mount Royal College

The college is with around 8000 students not too big, but almost everything is concentrated on the main campus (Lincoln Park Campus). Unfortunately it's not that central.

3.1 Courses

Courses in Canada have a much higher workload than in Germany, they have a lot of homework, quizzes, tests, midterms and labs + assignments (which are somewhat similar to a "Praktikum" at the FHM). The advantage is that you always know how well you do. Also the final term is usually only 30% of the mark, so it's not that easy to mess it all up and it's actually quite easy to get good marks. Also all my courses I took were relatively easy. The tests are usually at least 50% multiple choice and most of the time you have enough time to finish everything, which takes some time to get used to.

We can take between 3 and 5 courses, I enrolled for "ASTR 2201 The Solar System", "COMP 4407 Networks II" and "COMP 4409 Advanced Internet App Development" and "COMP 4401 Quality Assurance and Testing".

ASTR 2201 was sometimes a bit boring because a lot of basic physics were explained but overall it was a quite interesting class. There were 2 midterms, 2 take home tests, two observation reports and a final term, so it was quite a lot to learn, but fortunately not that much workload, since there were only two reports.

COMP 4407 was about basic network installations and configuration of servers and routers. The teacher is Bill which is also the exchange coordinator at MRC for our program. His lessons are quite good, he is open for every comment during the class and tries to leave no one behind.

But the workload is quite heavy, there is a short quiz about a chapter of the textbook and a lab-report every week, two assignments, a midterm and a final term.

COMP 4409 is about application development with ASP.NET and C#. During the Assignments a bigger Internet application is developed. This class was quite easy since I already had experience with Internet/Intranet applications. The teacher was Randy, he tries to keep the lessons funny and is a really nice guy, even though he seems to have the reputation for giving too much work to do. The workload was ok, though, there was a small homework every week, three big assignments a midterm and a final term.

I dropped COMP 4401 after two weeks, mainly because the course itself was not that interesting, also quite late (until 9pm) and I wanted to drop one course to keep the workload manageable.

3.2 Student Residence

The Residences are located on the Campus, so it's quite a short walk to the classes which is quite handy in winter when it's -30°C. The residences are divided into the old East Residences which are small Houses for four persons, originally build for the Olympics 1988 and the new West Residences which are bigger and modern buildings with apartments also for four persons.

There are also the so called "Residence Advisors" (RA's) which are responsible for a group of maybe 20 people and act as a contact person for residence life and organize some activities every now and then.

The other students living in residence are mostly very nice and fun people and there is

almost anytime a party somewhere. So enough possibilities to socialize and improve your English skills, especially since there are compared to Germany or bigger Canadian cities few foreign students.

The only disadvantage are annoying RA's and Securities that want to shut anything down that gets a little bit louder and no-drinking-outside rules.

4 Conclusion

I had a very good time in Calgary and found it a very valuable decision. I improved my English quite a lot, made a lot of new good friends and visited West Canada. I would recommend the MRC, Calgary and an exchange semester to anyone anytime.

5 Tips for future students

- Move to East Residence if you want to have a nicer environment, more parties and your own house, move to West Residence if you want bigger rooms and newer buildings, furniture and appliances.
- Don't get the Housekeeping package, it's a waste of money. Bring a sleeping bag or buy everything you need and can't take with you at the Wal-Mart (37ST 13AV SW).
- Don't use the airport pick up service, take the airport shuttle instead (25\$)
- Try to hook up with other exchange students, after all they want to visit Canada as well. That's what the Orientation day is for.
- Only get 3 or 4 courses, you probably want to see Canada and not sit at home doing homework all the time.
- Don't buy all textbooks they want you to, not all are really necessary and they are all really expensive. In the beginning there might also be some used books available for a reduced price and you can also sell all your books to the MRC bookstore at the end of the semester (but only for ~30% of the price).
- Keep your bills (especially hotel rooms) you can get taxes back when you leave Canada
- Get a Credit-Card you can pay almost anything anywhere with it (pizza service, taxi, stores ...) and for MRC and Residence it's the only practical solution. Of course you can also get money with your EC-Card at every ATM (there are two in the main hall) it costs around 4 € for every withdrawal (depends on your bank).
- It can get as cold as -30°C sometimes (or even below), but compared to Munich it's quite dry not that much snow and the weather is sunny most of the times. So if you're used to Munich weather you'll probably have no problem with it, just bring some warm sweatshirts and a good coat and you'll be fine.
- Almost every pub offers one day per week Chicken Wings Special, where you only pay around 10-20 cents per wing and have a lot of flavors to choose from. (the "Weaselhead" next to the College for example every Monday and Wednesday)
- Go to the "Ranchmans" and try mechanical bull riding and the "Cowboys" once (and only once and make sure to wear a Cowboy hat), you're in Alberta after all and Calgary is called "Cowtown" for a reason.
- Try all Nightclubs in Calgary, there are a lot really nice ones.

6 Links

- [Google maps of MRC](#)
- [Wikitravel Calgary](#)
- [Calgary bus schedule](#)
- [Routeplaner](#)