

Capls consolidation

The Canadian Association of Private Language Schools (Capls) has spent the last year improving the internal functions of the association and strengthening its links with government. VALERIE RICHMOND, President of Capls, answers our questions about the association's plans for the future.

Fact box



Full name: *Canadian Association of Private Language Schools / Association Canadienne des Ecoles de Langues Privées*

Year established: 1997

Number of members: 72

Type of members: *Private English and French as a Second Language Schools*

Government recognition: Yes

Complaints procedure: Yes

Code of practice: Yes

Association's main role: *Promoting Canadian schools internationally, promoting Canada as a leading educational destination and working with the government for the benefit of the industry*

Membership criteria: *Three years in operation, agree to Code of Ethics and by-laws, meet Capls standards for teachers, undergo site visit*

Agent workshops/fam trips: Yes

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Q What has Capls been up to over the past year?

A Our Secretariat has been working very hard, with the support of outside consultants, to develop an internal public relations capacity. As a result of this effort, we can now respond very quickly to emerging issues, generate media releases and participate more actively in public discussions about our industry. As part of this process, we also organised our first policy workshop during our November 2003 AGM. The event was a huge success, attracting participants from several government departments. During this event, we launched our first internal Capls Student Survey, which is attracting a lot of interest among decision makers and market planners (see *Language Travel Magazine*, March 2004, page 7). Our efforts in 2003 set the pace for Capls to continue to develop a strong dialogue and spirit of cooperation with government agencies and to be more outward-facing in participating in public discussions that influence the development of our industry.

Q How will the work of the Canada Language Council – which incorporates Pelsa members and the association formerly known as CSLP – affect Capls' goals and aims?

A Capls wishes the newly named Canada Language Council much success in its endeavours. We have also expressed our interest in cooperating with the CLC, especially in areas of common ground. There is a strong dichotomy that exists in Canada between the public and private school systems. Our members want the association to represent the

interests of private language schools and our association places strong value on solidarity among our members. This does not mean that we do not want to work with the CLC. It just means that Capls has its own identity, its own goals to establish parity with the public schools on certain issues and a different set of dynamics and problems to address in moving our respective sectors forward.

Q Will Capls members also be joining CLC?

A We are considering the advantages and disadvantages of such an option and are in dialogue internally and with CLC.

Q Are Capls members experiencing any visa difficulties and if so, are you working to resolve these issues?

A Capls members have experienced some visa processing difficulties, but not an inordinate volume of difficulties because the markets that we pursue, such as Korea and Japan, are [generally] well coordinated. Of course, our members want to more actively pursue markets that are more problematic in terms of visa processing, such as China. To address this issue, we are currently working directly with Canadian government officials to develop a more coordinated recruitment process, self-regulating standards and activities to enable more effective visa processing.

Q Regarding your aim to have national standards in place, is this any closer to being achieved?

A Since its inception, Capls has been striving to put various standards in place. This

began with the development and maintenance of membership standards that are quite rigorous. We are now currently enhancing our standards policy by developing nationally recognised operating standards. Our members have approved that all Capls schools will be inspected by an independent inspector. The Capls Standards Committee is currently reviewing proposals and will be awarding the project in the spring of 2004. In addition, Capls is working with Industry Canada to develop a set of standards and practices for self-regulation. This will be a new milestone in the development of standards that follow the interest of our association to work more cooperatively with government agencies and accrediting bodies.

Q Which markets are showing the most promise for members?

A Capls members are eager to pursue markets with large potential, such as China. But many of our members have also felt that both Western European and some emerging Eastern European countries represent very good market opportunities.

Q What plans does Capls have for working with agents?

A We are contemplating the launch of a national fam tour that will include visits by agents to our member schools. The key here is to make agents more familiar with our schools and to empower them to communicate the good news about our schools to the students. That is why, for example, we are starting a dialogue with tourism authorities in Canada that looks at integrating language travel marketing into Canadian tourism marketing.