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# Canada's rise

## Profile raising

Canadian language schools have long bemoaned the absence of any serious government initiatives to promote the industry. Indeed, many have felt that the national policy on student visas has, by contrast, hampered student recruitment. However, with recent changes to visa policy with regard to students working in the country, and the merger of the two language school associations, CLC and Capls, Anthony Stille from the English School of Canada in Toronto, ONT, believes this could provide the impetus for a future marketing partnership between government and industry.

In the meantime some government-led activity has taken place in the course of the last year. Sheila Nunn at the East Coast School of Languages in Halifax, NS, comments that her school took part in a successful government-led trade mission, while Sue Burland of the English Language Centre at Lethbridge College in Lethbridge, AB, reports that the Alberta provincial government recently led a ministerial mission to Beijing. The College has additionally obtained funding for three years from the Alberta Advanced Education project, in order to focus on marketing in Chile.

Meanwhile, initiatives undertaken jointly with other institutions have served ECSL well. It has cooperated with fellow Capls schools and others to undertake group advertisements in both agent magazines and embassy publications. Furthermore, as part of EduNova, an education export alliance in Nova Scotia, her school has benefited from a raised profile. According to Nunn, EduNova has made huge strides in raising awareness of what the province can offer both agents and students, as she explains, "By working together, the educational institutions have been successful on bids for large projects that we could not have tackled individually."

Canada's language travel industry has experienced mixed fortunes of late, although concerted marketing efforts mean that the future looks bright.

JANE VERNON SMITH reports.

The past year has brought mixed fortunes for Canadian language schools. Among those canvassed for this article, numbers were spread fairly evenly across those whose student numbers have increased, those that have experienced a downturn and those for whom numbers have remained stable.

On the negative side, Joanne Nicholson at the School of English at Queen's University in Kingston, ONT, highlights the existence of a growing number of domestic providers of language programmes in many of her school's major student markets. Added to this is the observation made by Sheila Nunn, Director of Marketing and Business Development at East Coast School of Languages (ECSL) in Halifax, NS, that Canada is still seen by some as being a difficult country for which to obtain a visa.

Mark Herringer at Malaspina University College in Nanaimo, BC, says that they have been hit by "a significant decrease" in the number of enrolments from the college's largest market, China. This, says Herringer, is partly due to the increasing number of post-secondary institutions that are being established there, and partly a result of greater competition, now that many institutions from all over the world have woken up to China's potential. On the other hand, at Fanshawe College in London, ONT, Bruce Wilson comments that the largest increase in his school's student numbers has come from China. "The main reason for this is more active marketing, with the hiring of an Asian recruitment specialist. The other region that is starting to increase is Latin America, for the same reason," he adds.

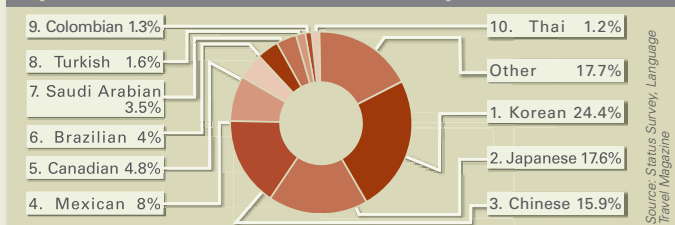
Saudi Arabia was the best growth market for the Queen's University School of English between 2005 and 2006, according to Nicholson, increasing its percentage of total enrolments from five per cent up to nine per cent. Nunn, too, reports a good increase from Saudi Arabia, as well as from Korea, China and Iran. Meanwhile, for Herringer, the Middle Eastern market in general has grown "considerably" over the last year, with Japan also performing well.

Canada's substantial Korean market appears to have performed consistently over the past year. Sue Burland of the English Language Centre at Lethbridge College in Lethbridge, AB, notes that the country is not only their largest source market, but, along with Mexico, also showed the biggest increase in student numbers.

Looking to the year ahead, both Herringer and Nunn anticipate growth among the Middle Eastern markets. Those most tipped for expansion include Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Jordan and Libya. As Herringer explains, "The Saudi Arabian government is taking on initiatives to help financially support top Saudi students



Top student nationalities in Canada by student weeks, 06



Source: Status Survey, Language Travel Magazine

to pursue a post-secondary education in Canada." Furthermore, as Nicholson adds, many Saudi Arabians need to learn English for business purposes, especially, she notes, in the oil industry. Colombia and Venezuela also show promise for the next year, according to Anthony Stille of the English School of Canada in Toronto, ONT, "as visa approval rates are increasing significantly."

In terms of programme types, Nicholson highlights a trend towards English studies that are tied to a degree programme. Exam preparation for Toefl continues to be in high demand at Lethbridge College, while at Heartland International English School in Winnipeg, MB, the Focus programme, an eight-week preparation course for the Toieo and Toefl exams, has "soared in popularity", according to Manager, Keira Bulloch.

Santiago Endara, Marketing Coordinator at Tamwood International in Whistler, BC, points out that some of their niche courses have proved popular with certain nationalities. "Paid [work placements] are extremely popular in Latin America while internships are popular for Europeans. We also offer English plus ski and snowboard, which is very popular in Switzerland and Japan," he says.

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