

Mexico's needs encompass the full range of education services, from pre-school programs to advanced degrees and continuing adult education. The system has become so badly over-burdened that a quality education is often available only to those who can afford to attend private Mexican schools or to travel abroad. Canadian education and training institutions are well-qualified to help Mexico provide this badly needed education. The opportunities are considerable, given that close to 250,000 students study in private Mexican universities, which are similar in cost to Canadian universities.

The benefits of educational exchanges with Mexico go beyond the obvious exports of services involved. Studying in Canada or in a Canadian program in Mexico gives Mexican students exposure to Canadian technology and expertise. It also builds contacts and knowledge of Canadian suppliers. Mexicans who pursue advanced degrees or technical training are especially likely to end up as key decision makers. The benefits of their familiarity with Canada and its capabilities are an intangible — but substantial — outcome of increased exports of educational services.

## THE MEXICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Mexico has a relatively small education system when compared to its overall population. As in Canada, education and training are seen as essential for career advancement. But for the most part, an advanced education is a luxury enjoyed only by the most affluent Mexicans.

Mexico's system of free public education extends to the high school level. Educational institutions are classified as federal, state, autonomous or private. Autonomous schools are public institutions with discretionary spending authority. Spending on public education was 5.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in

### Students Registered for the 1994-95 School Year

Thousands	
Preschool	3,093
Primary	14,574
Junior high	4,493
Job training	428
Technical training	407
High school	1,936
Teaching studies	137
Undergraduate university	1,217
Postgraduate university	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,351</b>

Source: *Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP)*, Secretariat of Public Education.

1993, and is projected to increase to 8 percent by 2000.

The government of President Ernesto Zedillo has recognized the need to greatly improve access to the nation's basic education system. *The Programa de Desarrollo Educativo*, Program for Educational Development, for the years 1995 to 2000 calls for the enrollment of an additional 600,000 pre-school students. It also acknowledges the need to increase the nation's very low primary school completion rate and to absorb one million new secondary students into the school system.

## THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOL SYSTEMS

About 24 million students are registered in the public and private school systems, up to the secondary school level but excluding vocational training. More than three-quarters of them attend state institutions. The rest are enrolled in federal, autonomous or private schools.

Mexico's system of school levels is similar to Canada's. The system includes preschool, primary, junior high and high schools. In addition there are vocational schools known as *Capacitación para el Trabajo* and mid-level technical schools called *Profesional Medio*.

All public schools are free and secular. Primary education has long been mandatory in Mexico, and a recent constitutional change makes attendance mandatory for junior high school students. Only about 20 percent of Mexicans complete high school. Many private schools belong to the *Asociación Nacional de Escuelas Particulares (ANEP)*, National Association of Private Schools. They cater mainly to affluent Mexicans.

## HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Public universities, teachers' colleges and technical institutes are the primary source of higher education in Mexico.

