



Methanex Corp. president and CEO Bruce Aitken (third from left) tours the company's new plant in Punta Arenas, Chile, (in banner) with senior management and employees.

In the past decade, building from a small base, two-way trade between Canada and Chile has jumped 150 percent, reaching \$1.6 billion in 2004, spurred by a bilateral free trade pact signed in 1997. That agreement allows most industrial and farm products from Canada to enter Chile duty-free.

Those who do business in the region say that countries such as Brazil and Chile present a number of challenges, including the considerable distance from Canada, as well as language barriers and customs issues. However, Canada also shares much with these countries: similar business climates, good infrastructure, a trained workforce and sophisticated consumers.

While he is pleased with his company's success in Brazil and Chile, Teixeira advises others who want to do business there to do their homework.

"It is incumbent on whoever is entering the market to understand it," he says, "No opportunity for growth comes without risks." ❁

For more information about trade with Brazil, Chile and other countries in South America and the Caribbean, visit the Trade Commissioner Service at www.infoexport.gc.ca and search the region.

LEARNING FROM MAPLE BEAR

When it comes to discovering Canada, kids in Brazil are starting early.

Preschoolers in the country attending new Maple Bear schools will be introduced to Canada through lessons on the country's customs, culture, and bears, as well as songs, poems and books by Canadians. It's all part of a bilingual, child-centred curriculum for children three to six years of age developed by Canadian experts in early childhood education and delivered by local franchises in Brazil.

"We're going as young as we can" says Rodney Briggs, president of the Canadian Education Centre (CEC) Network, a private, non-profit company that promotes and markets Canada as a study destination for international students and has developed Maple Bear. "There's no mistaking that this program comes from Canada."

Seven Maple Bear schools are to open in Brazil in February, with a total of 52 of the preschools expected around the country within four years. There are four Maple Bear schools operating in India, with plans to start the program in South Korea, Turkey, Mexico and Russia.

"It's a positive way to get the message out about Canadian education," says Briggs, adding that there is a lot of demand for such preschool programs in rapidly developing countries with a burgeoning middle class. "Parents are looking for high-quality, western-style

education that will get their children off on the right foot."

Such programs are expected to influence more than just young learners, with the schools "branding" Canada and improving bilateral relations between countries. Maple Bear alumni could also choose Canada as a study destination as they grow up. CEC operates in 17 countries around the world, representing 300 Canadian institutions ranging from universities, community colleges and secondary schools to language schools and summer camps.

Canada is the number one study-abroad destination for Brazilians, with 10,000 students coming to Canada from Brazil last year, attracted by low costs, a streamlined visa process, the ability to study in English or French and few security issues, Briggs says. "They see Canada as a welcoming, safe country with good-quality education programs."

Fernanda Purchio, the manager of CEC Brazil in Sao Paulo, says the number of Brazilians choosing Canada to study is expected to grow. In Brazil, there are more than 55 million students in formal education programs, the fourth-largest student population in the world after China, India and the United States.

There is also an active Brazilian Association of Canadian Studies, with 18 Canadian Studies centres located in Brazilian universities, which serves to enhance academic links between institutions in Brazil and Canada. ❁

