



FACTS & FIGURES

Issue 2

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TOUCHSTONE
INSTITUTE
COMPETENCY EVALUATION EXPERTS

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A YEAR IN REVIEW

CELBAN was developed in 2004 by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) through a partnership of nursing regulators and language training specialists. This government-funded initiative was designed to ease the nursing shortage in Canada by providing access to the pool of IENs who arrived in Canada but encountered obstacles to obtaining employment. Because CELBAN is an occupation-specific language assessment, it allows IENs to demonstrate their proficiency within a context that is both familiar and relevant to them.

October 2015 marks the one-year anniversary of the launch of The CELBAN Centre as the national administrator of the test. The CELBAN Centre operates within Touchstone Institute, a non-profit organization that facilitates entry to practice for internationally educated health professionals through competency evaluation and education. The organization comprises experienced assessors, responsible for a number of high-stakes assessments, including the IENCAP assessment for nurses.

The CELBAN Centre administered its 2,000th test on October 28, 2015, just over a year after we started. During this time, we have been working hard to gather data about the CELBAN, evaluate its reliability and sustainability, and understand and meet the needs of IENs by tackling key challenges in test capacity and access. This report examines the trends, challenges and milestones of the first year of The CELBAN Centre.

Understanding the needs of IENs

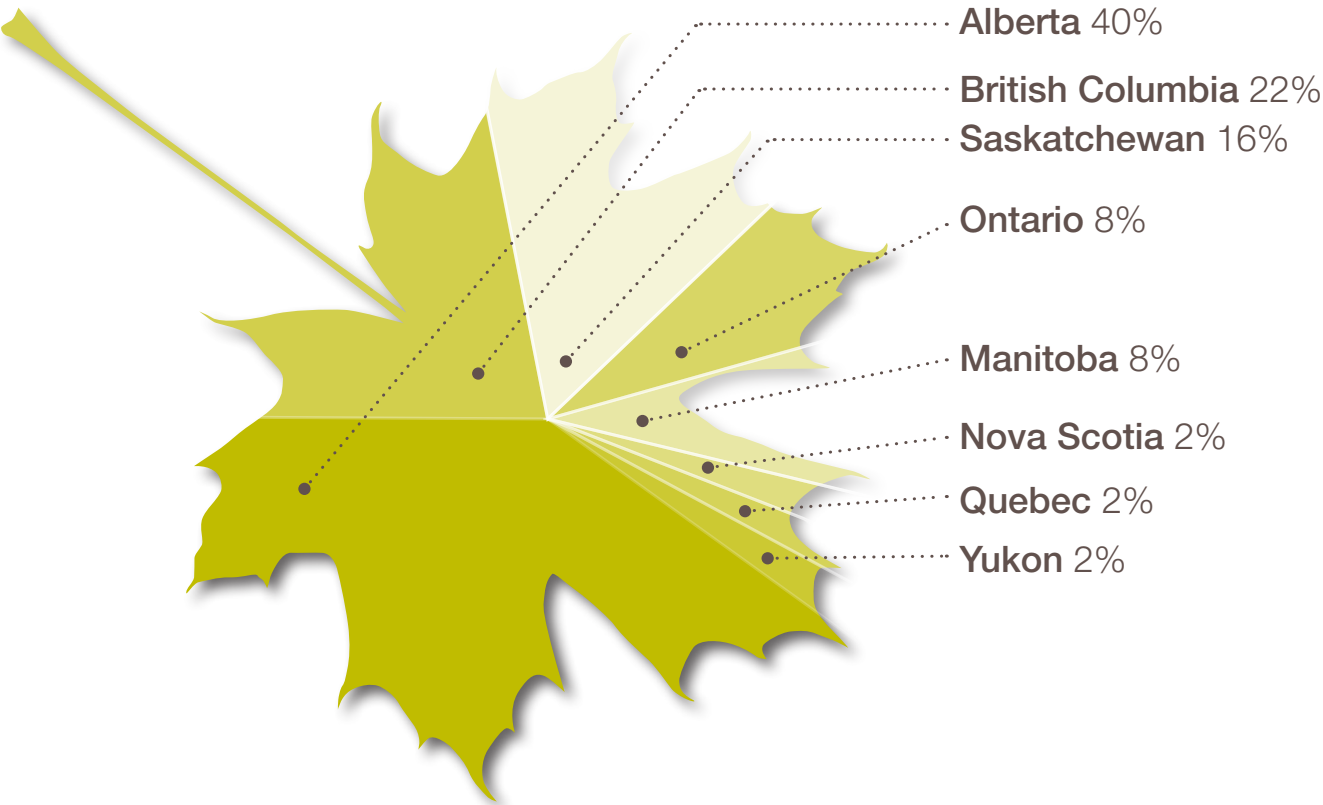
The CELBAN Centre endeavours to understand and serve the needs of IENs who are striving to meet language fluency requirements set by regulators for licensure in Canada. Our administrative team responds daily to calls and emails from IENs seeking test sessions across Canada and test support material to ensure they are ready for the assessment.

In late 2014, The CELBAN Centre launched an enewsletter to communicate key updates regarding the reinstatement of test administrations post-transition. This bulletin now reaches over 2,000 IENs across Canada and beyond. IENs receive monthly updates about test availability, supportive tips and strategies for the test, and opportunities to participate in pilot tests or other projects, which provides them with valuable practice and feedback from CELBAN assessors.

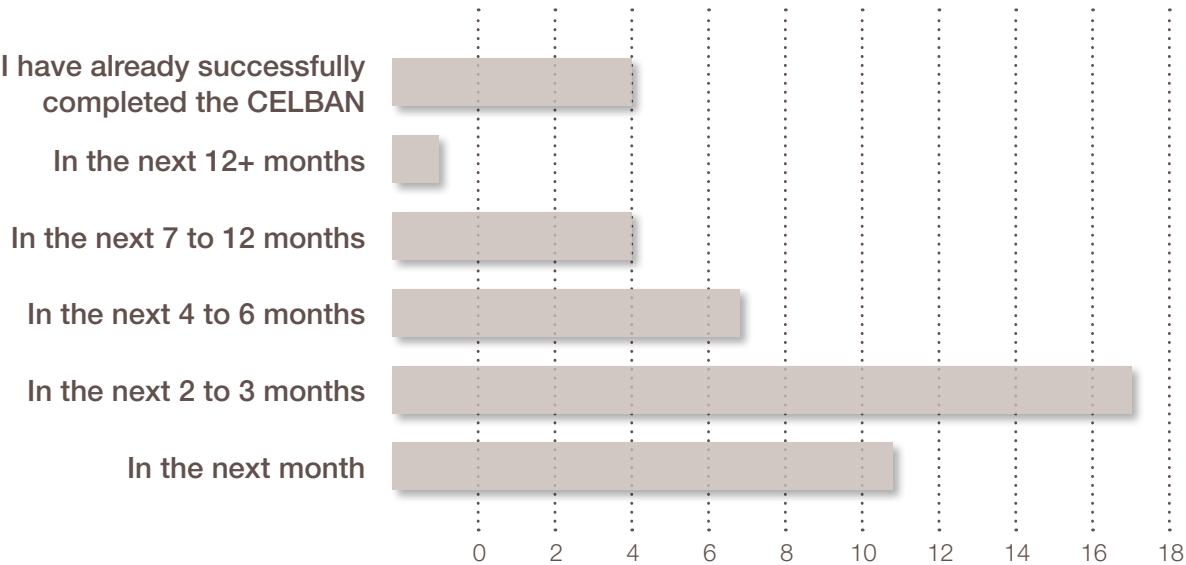
In July 2015, The CELBAN Centre surveyed approximately 45 IENs from various provinces about their experiences and preferences around the CELBAN test. The demographic of respondents reflected areas of the country where we currently see high-demand for the test. The majority of IENs who completed the survey live in Alberta, British Columbia or Saskatchewan; we received no responses from IENs in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Northwest Territories or Nunavut.

Survey-takers were asked questions about their current location and preferred test site, their plans for preparing and taking the test, and their experiences at the test site (if they had taken the test already).

IEN Survey: Home Province



IENs Preferred Timeframe for Completing CELBAN



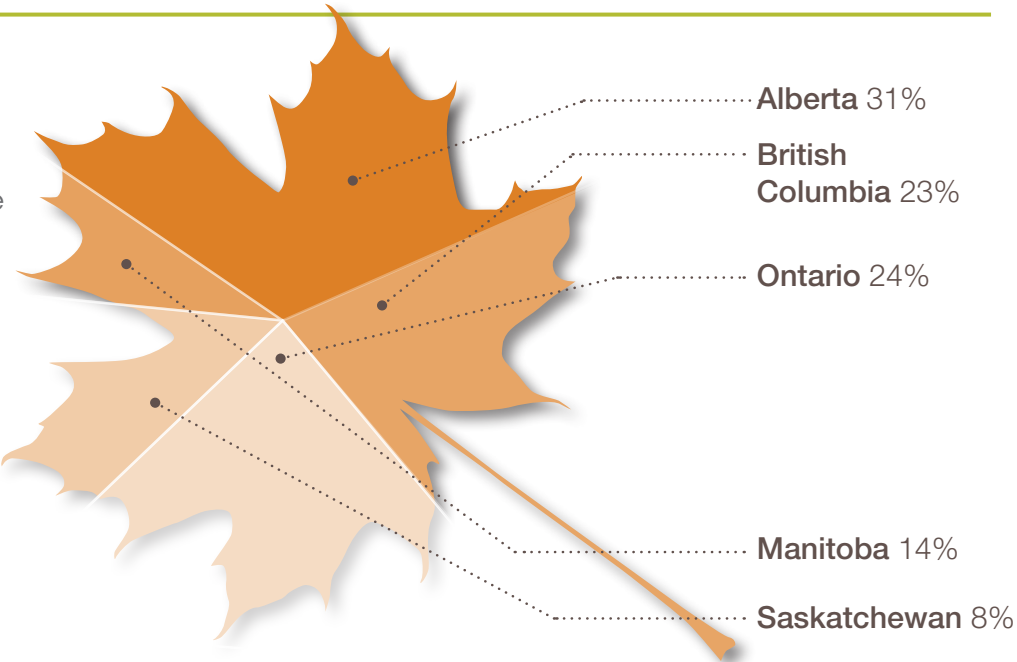
What We LEARNED

The survey helped us identify a need for...

- More test sessions/higher capacity test sites
- Test sites or itinerant sessions in high-demand and under-served areas
- One-day test sessions
- Preparation material for test-takers
- Practice opportunities for test-takers

Building Capacity

Demand for the CELBAN test is currently the highest in the Western provinces. When The CELBAN Centre launched in late 2014, we were faced with the challenge of increasing availability of the test to IENs in all provinces.



INCREASING TEST SITES

Over the years, demand for CELBAN increased at a rate that was not matched by the test’s expansion. In 2014, the existing list of IENs waiting to take the test was exacerbated by a four-month transition period between national administrators, during which CELBAN was not available. When The CELBAN Centre launched in October 2014, IENs were understandably eager to complete the assessment and proceed along the registration pathway.

Our first priority post-transition was to establish contact with existing sites and assessors to re-establish test dates as soon as possible. Then we focused on identifying potential new sites and creating an infrastructure to support the expansion of the test to meet IEN demand.

Current CELBAN Test Sites

City	Test Site	Capacity Per	Administration	Started on
Vancouver	Ashton College	24	2x/month	Continuing
Calgary	Immigrant Language & Vocational Assessment Referral Center (ILVARC) (back-to-back days of 8)	16	1 to 2x/month	Continuing
Edmonton	Grant MacEwan University	18	2x/month	Continuing
Winnipeg	Winnipeg English Language Assessment and Referral Centre (WELARC)	24	1 to 2x/month	March 2015
Winnipeg	Red River College (back-to-back days of 24)	48	3 to 4x/year	February 2016
Toronto	Touchstone Institute	48	1x/month	January 2015
Saskatoon (itinerant)	University of Saskatchewan	60	2x/year	December 2014

Touchstone Institute benefits from dedicated assessment facilities and is home to The CELBAN Centre. WELARC signed on in March and Red River College followed in October 2015 to meet the needs of IENs in the Winnipeg area. Itinerant sessions at the University of Saskatchewan were run by the IEHP Provincial Project, Saskatoon Health, to meet the demand of IENs in that province, while we work on finding a permanent test site.

We are in discussions with several other test sites across Canada and expect more sites to open in 2016.

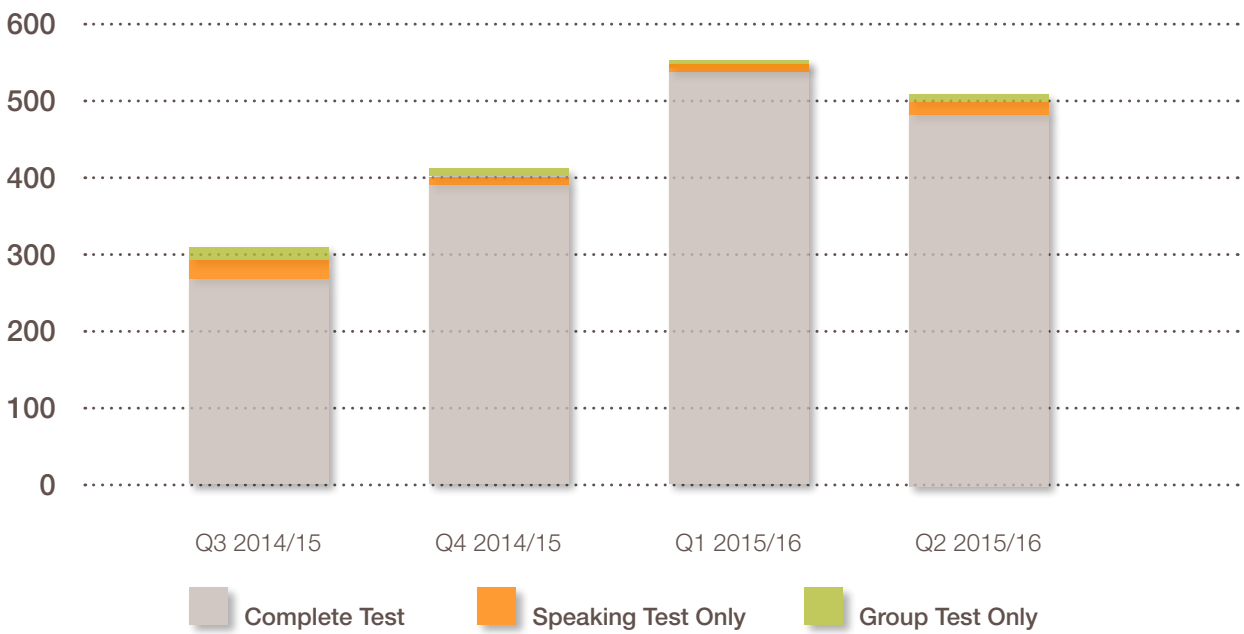
IMPROVING TEST ACCESSIBILITY

Test administrations – and internationally educated nurses (IENs) served – have increased significantly over the last 10 months. In 2013, the previous test administrator conducted tests for 1,148 IENs over the 12-month period. As a comparison, The CELBAN Centre has administered 2,052 tests to IENs from

October 2014 to October 2015 – an increase of 78.75% over the previous year. A number of other factors have also improved accessibility:

- Addition of Touchstone Institute as a test site in Toronto. This large facility can administer 48 tests per session.
- Addition of WELARC as a test site in Winnipeg in March 2015, adding 24 test seats per session.
- Itinerant sessions run at the University of Saskatchewan, which has the ability to accommodate 60 test-takers for each session.
- Starting in 2016, ILVARC will move to single-day test sessions, as well as increase their capacity by 25% for a two-day testing period.
- Red River College agreed to become the second site in Winnipeg beginning in October 2015, with sessions beginning in February 2016. They will run three large sessions over a few days at critical points during the year.

CELBAN Test Sessions Across Canada



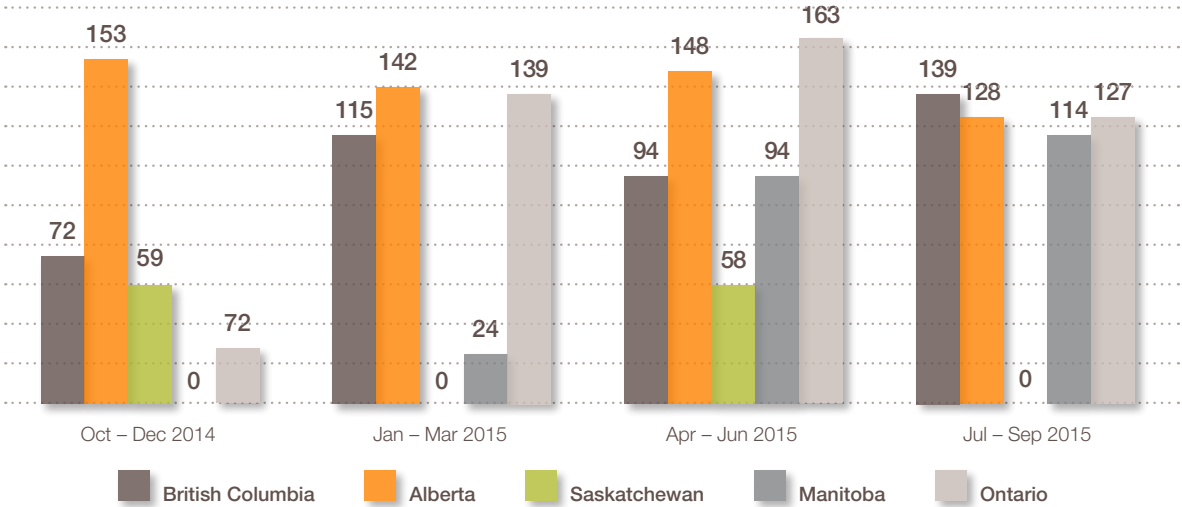
Partial Tests

Policy inherited from the previous administrator has, to-date, allowed IENs to take partial tests. This means that candidates who do not meet the regulator-required cut score on one part of the test (i.e., CELBAN 8 on the Speaking Test; CELBAN 8, 10, or 7 on the reading, listening or writing, respectively) have been able to re-take only that portion of the test on which they needed a higher score.

Between January 1, 2015, and September 15, 2015, we received 65 partial test requests, approximately 5% of the total tests we administered in this period (1,315). We have observed that the vast majority of partial test registrations take up one complete spot at a session.

The number of test sessions increased steadily in the first nine months of administration. We witnessed a slight slowdown in August due to a reduced number of test sessions to accommodate holiday schedules, resulting in a dip in the second quarter of 2015/16 (July to September).

CELBAN Test Sessions Across Canada



Demand for the test has been steady across Ontario and the Western provinces over the past year. Some minor variations appear between different quarters:

- British Columbia saw a 48 percent increase from July to September over the previous period. There was a slight drop in BC during April to June, which can be attributed to the fact that there was no itinerant session during that period, as there had been in February. Starting in July, Ashton College (Vancouver) increased its session capacity from 16 to 24 for all remaining 2015 dates. This created 88 additional seats in BC for 2015.
- Itinerant sessions in Saskatchewan allowed us to accommodate almost 60 seats per administration in December 2014 and May 2015. An additional session was also run in October 2015 for 58 test-takers (not shown in the chart above).
- A new test site was successfully launched in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in March 2015. The number of sessions and available seats have increased steadily since.
- In Ontario, the launch of Touchstone Institute drastically increased the number of seats available in the province, which has seen steady numbers since.
- In contrast to other provinces, seats in Alberta at Grant MacEwan University and ILVARC remained relatively stable throughout all four quarters.

ASSESSORS

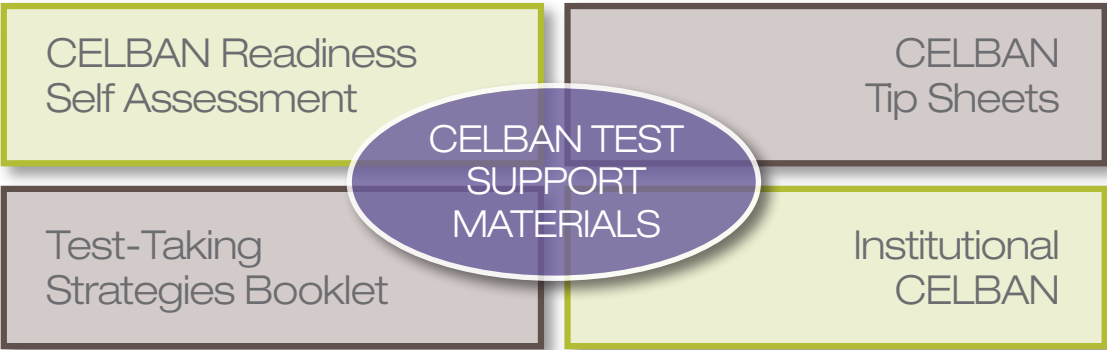
To meet the demand for CELBAN and support our test sites, we almost doubled our assessors across the country from October 2014 to October 2015. We now have a group of 72 highly trained occupation-specific language assessors. The most dramatic growth took place in Ontario, where the number of assessors grew from 6 to 21, representing an increase of 250 percent.

Supporting Test Takers

CELBAN TEST-SUPPORT MATERIALS

Evidence suggests that IENs are actively seeking support material. CELBAN is a proficiency assessment, so preparing for the test is not a requirement; however, it is helpful for IENs to understand the structure of the test, what is being tested, how they will be evaluated and what to expect on test day. CCLB developed the CELBAN Readiness Self-Assessment (CRSA) and a test taking strategies booklet to help test takers understand CELBAN. The test taking strategies booklet was updated by The CELBAN Centre in 2014. Both resources are available on The CELBAN Centre website.

The CELBAN Centre initiated the development of a series tip sheets that offer IENs key strategies for each part of the CELBAN test – reading, writing, listening and speaking – plus helpful suggestions for studying and test-taking. The tip sheets are available free to IENs at events and through celbancentre.ca. These sheets may also be useful to instructors in CELBAN preparation and IEN bridging programs.



INSTITUTIONAL CELBAN

In fall 2015, The CELBAN Centre launched a revised second edition of Institutional CELBAN, a version of the test designed to replicate the high-stakes testing environment of the official CELBAN. Scores achieved on Institutional CELBAN are not accepted as proof of language proficiency by regulators; however, the test can be used very effectively for high- or low-stakes purposes in non-regulatory settings.

To maintain test integrity, only approved not-for profit organizations and publicly funded post-secondary institutions and school boards may administer Institutional CELBAN.

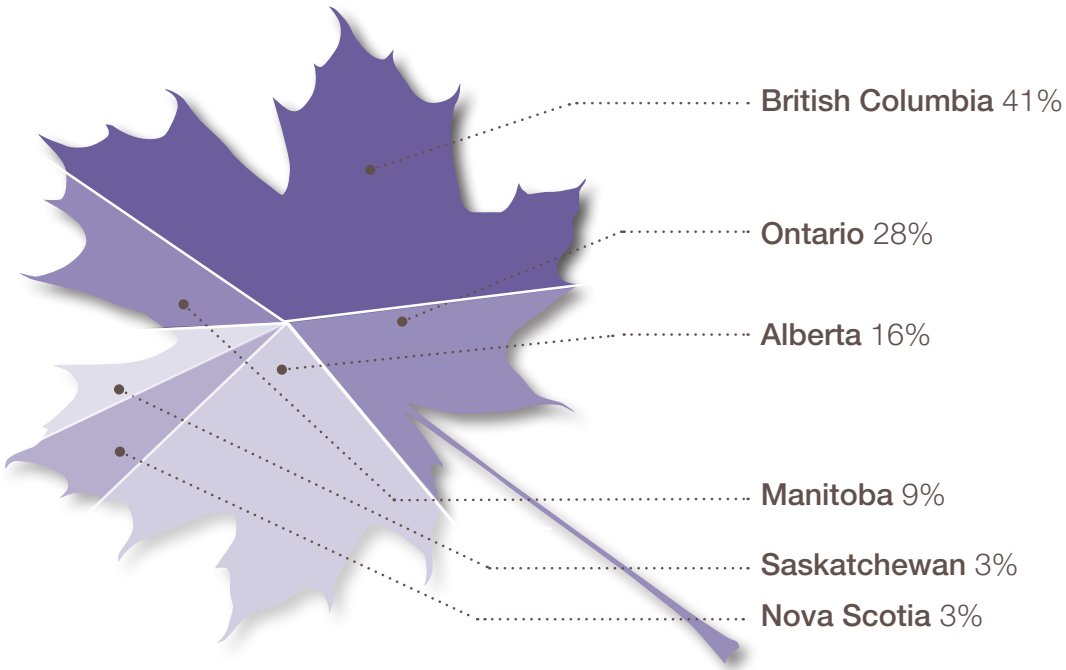
Purchasing organizations are required to meet eligibility requirements, including but not limited to:

- Demonstrated ability to maintain test security and client confidentiality
- Demonstrated commitment to client confidentiality
- Demonstrated history of working with newcomers
- Demonstrated knowledge of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)
- Appropriate space and resources to carry out the test

Accredited educational institutes must also commit to ensuring that appropriate staff is selected to facilitate the administration, interviewing and rating of this unofficial version of the CELBAN test.

Since 2007, Institutional CELBAN has been purchased by organizations in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia.

Institutional CELBAN by Province



Institutional CELBAN can be helpful in determining test readiness in IENs, conducting pre/post testing for bridging programs, providing diagnostic assessments for curricular purposes, assessing readiness for pre-clinical and experiential placements and building test inoculation.

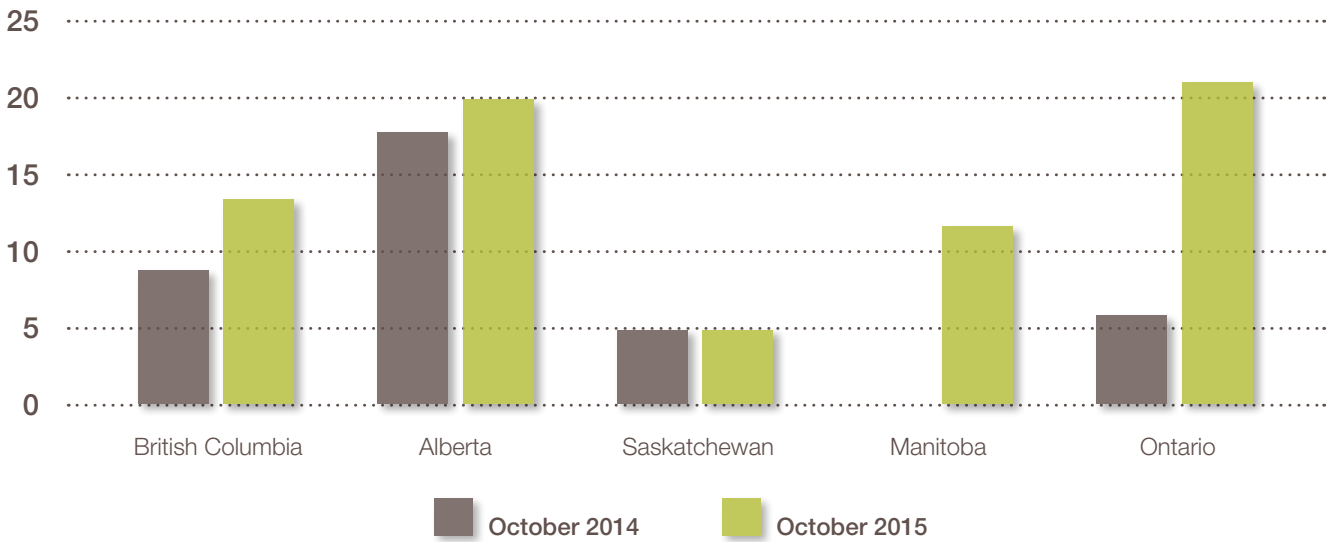
The second edition of Institutional CELBAN was revised to include CLB 2010 referenced rubrics; stand-alone modular components for easy administration; invigilator and assessor guides; new rating, feedback forms and test-taker reports; and printable test materials. The test’s scheduling models and best practices are validated by The CELBAN Centre. In 2016, original CELBAN audio and video content will be re-staged and recorded for improved quality and performance. The re-produced versions will be made available to organizations.

Quality Assurance

SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR TEST SITES

When launching a new CELBAN test site, our team guides the site through all steps of an administration. The site has access to a roster of trained assessors, and administrative staff are briefed on CELBAN policies and procedures for exam day. Existing sites participate in regular check-ins with The CELBAN Centre to identify and address any needs or challenges.

Number of CELBAN Assessors by Province



When The CELBAN Centre assumed administration of the test, we quickly established contact with and reinstated CELBAN assessors at all test sites. In October 2014, we began operating with 38 assessors in four provinces. In December 2014, we trained 12 new assessors in Ontario to accommodate Touchstone Institute as a new test site. We have continued training assessors throughout 2015 and now have access to a roster of 72 assessors, an increase of 89%.

TEST RENEWAL

Test data, analysis and renewal were key priorities for The CELBAN Centre in our first year as administrators of the test. A CELBAN database has been developed to record test data at the item level and increase capacity for appropriate test maintenance. To date, enough data has been captured to analyze 300 tests for each version of the test. The results of the psychometric data analysis inform the next steps for test renewal.

Renewal of the speaking test will focus on changing the content and updating the scoring grid while maintaining the existing blueprint. To date, three new versions of the speaking test have been drafted in collaboration with nurse subject matter experts (SMEs), field tested with assessors and IENs and piloted with 46 IENs in November. Preliminary pilot test results are very positive and a launch is likely in the spring 2016.

New content for the group test (reading, listening and writing) is also being developed by language assessment specialists in consultations with nursing SMEs.

ASSESSOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Quality assurance, standardization and consistency among assessors are all vital to the successful administration of a pan-Canadian test. The CELBAN Centre has developed an assessor certification program to ensure all assessors are trained and regularly calibrated to provide a reliable, valid evaluation of each CELBAN candidate.



CELBAN Facts & Figures is a biannual report series is prepared by the Communication Competency Program at Touchstone Institute.

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The CELBAN Centre is the national administrative centre for the Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses (CELBAN).


CELBAN CENTRE