

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE - ONTARIO

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## **Family Guide to Exchanges**

**And Related Policies**

2022

## INTRODUCTION

We at ISE ONTARIO are very pleased that you are about to embark on this exciting educational and cultural adventure with us. Once the exchange begins, it is up to you to make the most out of your own experience. Remember that the planning, effort, care, and commitment that you put into the exchange will determine what you get out of it and how successful your exchange will be. This is *your* exchange!

This manual is designed to answer frequently asked questions regarding the exchange, to advise on how you can make your partner's stay more enjoyable for them as well as for you and your family, and to assist you in planning and preparing for your departure and stay in your exchange partner's home and school. To help prepare you for both the hosting and visiting portions of your exchange, your Regional Exchange Support Coordinator will additionally arrange a pre-arrival meeting and pre-departure meeting to help answer any questions.

There are several important items that need to be tended to throughout the exchange year. This manual contains information detailing these items, and we ask that you pay attention to timelines, due dates, rules, and policies for exchange participation, and other specific instructions which will help ensure that documents for all participants can be processed efficiently.

If a concern arises at any time during the exchange program which is not addressed in this manual, please contact your Regional Exchange Support Coordinator or the ISE office.

ISE ONTARIO, along with your Regional Exchange Support Coordinator, are the contacts for Canadian parents both during the hosting period and while the Canadian students are abroad.

Wishing you an enriching exchange experience!

Best Wishes,

The ISE ONTARIO Team

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## **I - PROGRAM INFORMATION**

### **Organization**

ISE ONTARIO administers its programs in co-operation with participating school boards throughout the province. It is a school-based program with the primary goal of developing language skills and increasing the cultural awareness of participating students.

ISE presently offers exchanges of 3 & 9-week duration to France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Elementary and secondary students can participate in either a 'Host First' or 'Go First' school-year exchange or one of our Summer Exchange Programs. The summer programs are for a 3-week duration while the school-year exchanges are 9-weeks.

ISE works closely with reliable, experienced exchange partners in each country. ISE ONTARIO programs are opportunities for students to:

- develop language skills through complete immersion
- increase cultural awareness through direct experience
- enhance understanding and tolerance of others
- gain confidence, responsibility, and self-reliance
- come home with a new appreciation of their own country and/or home community

### **Program Fees:**

The cost of the exchange requires a registration fee due on the application deadline, followed by 1 or 2 payments depending on the chosen program.

These fees cover:

- International air travel in economy class on regular airlines, accompanied by Canadian chaperones
- Unaccompanied connecting service travel within Ontario and/or in the host country, where required
- All-inclusive travel insurance\*: exceptions and limitations apply
- ISE administration fee

These fees do not cover:

- Personal spending money
- Domestic flights or shuttles for the Canadian students to/from Toronto Pearson Airport and any associated fees or costs (i.e., checked luggage)
- Excess or overweight baggage charges imposed by the airlines
- Expenses resulting from travel changes caused by events beyond the control of ISE Ontario
- Visas and supporting travel documentation where necessary
- Any additional costs (e.g., Immunizations, covid testing, etc.)

## **School**

Elementary students must discuss their absence with their teachers in advance.

Secondary students must plan in advance with their teachers and Guidance/Student Services for their upcoming selection of courses. It is usual for secondary students in semestered schools to take four courses in the first semester and generally four or at least three in the second semester of their exchange year, and for exchange participants in non-semestered schools to complete seven or eight courses during the year.

Secondary students are advised to discuss the arrival of their exchange partner when they are talking about their own courses and schedules with teachers and guidance. To be clarified are the procedures for arranging a timetable for the partner and whether this can be done prior to school opening or if the partner should accompany the Canadian student for a few days until a timetable can be arranged. It is recommended that you schedule a guidance appointment for after the arrival of your exchange partner in August. It is critical that the visiting students be attending classes from the outset.

During the fall term, parents should make every attempt to attend the parents' night at school to ensure that the appropriate teachers are aware that the Canadian student will be attending school out of the province for nine weeks the following spring. Parents and secondary students should discuss with Guidance how staff will be informed and discuss directly with teachers how course work and assignments will be covered.

## **In Case of a Problem**

Should any concerns arise, please contact your Regional Exchange Support Coordinator or the ISE office as soon as possible. Open communication with the visiting student and their parents is the best way to resolve problems.

The visiting students are provided with the contact information for our office and when the Canadian students leave, they will also be given the contact numbers for the exchange office in their applicable destination. If an ongoing problem cannot be resolved through discussion with the partner and host family, the exchange organization in the host country must then be contacted.

Every effort will be made to provide an opportunity for exchange completion. It is imperative that we are advised of situations that may arise during the exchange period so our office can correct any arising problems. Serious concerns and/or violation of the rules of the exchange program must be dealt with during the student's stay. These can lead to the termination of the exchange.

ISE Ontario, along with your Regional Exchange Support Coordinator, are the contacts for Ontario parents both during the hosting period and while the Canadian students are abroad.

## **Withdrawal from the Program**

If you decide for any reason not to proceed with this exchange once a match has been accepted, you must immediately advise the ISE office. Make sure that you inform your partner of your decision to withdraw. Please see our Refund and your insurance policies regarding what/if portions of your fees are refundable. Reminder that our program fees are based on reciprocity and there is an expectation of our hosting requirements being met or additional charges may apply.

## **Contact Information**

Changes in family structure and situation do occur. You are required to notify the ISE office immediately of such changes, including change of address or telephone number, social habits (smoking), boy/girlfriends, health, parental separation, etc.

## **Rules for All Exchange Participants**

All participants are expected to behave responsibly and act as good ambassadors during the program. Disregarding the rules of the exchange will lead to expulsion from the program and an early return home at the family's expense.

The following rules apply to the Canadian student and to their exchange partner and are in effect for both the hosting and visiting portions of the exchange.

1. Attendance at school is mandatory except for legitimate reasons such as illness. Exchange participants must be attentive during classes and make every effort to do the work assigned. Unauthorized absences will result in termination of the exchange. School policies and regulations must be adhered to. Any breach may also result in expulsion from the program.
2. The house rules of the host family must be obeyed whether they are similar or different from those of the visiting student. The host parents assume parental responsibility for the visiting student and must know the student's whereabouts at all times. Participants and their families must respect the host family's direction.
3. Use of illegal substances is absolutely forbidden and will result in immediate termination of the exchange.
4. Attitudes toward alcohol and smoking vary greatly from country to country. In all cases, irresponsible use by Ontario or visiting exchange students will result in the immediate termination of the exchange. The legal drinking age in Ontario is 19. The legal age to purchase cigarettes is also 19. Visiting students must accept this. In Europe, the majority ages are lower, and it is of cultural acceptance to have wine with dinner. It is important you discuss this for understanding with both families.
5. Driving a motorized vehicle and hitchhiking are strictly forbidden both for the visiting student and Canadian student while in the visiting country on exchange.
6. Travel during the exchange is restricted to excursions with the school or a member/members of the host family. Where such excursions with the host family or school involve travelling outside the host country, a letter of authorization from the visiting student's parents is required, with a copy for each exchange organization and the host family. In some cases, a visa may also be required by the country being visited and must be obtained in the exchange student's home country prior to departure. The embassy or consulate of the country to be visited should be contacted for requirements.
7. It is absolutely forbidden to receive, create or distribute information that is unlawful, including but not limited to, materials or images which are racist, pornographic, dangerous, obscene, or inconsistent with the values of the host family. Any derogatory social media posting towards the host family or host school will result in immediate termination from the program. Any disclosed social media posts portraying illegal/inappropriate behaviour in contrast to our participation guidelines may result in termination of the program at the family's expense.
8. Students must abide by the laws of the country they are visiting.

### **Health Form & Immunization Record**

All participating exchange students require a current Health Form with Immunization Record. Participants are asked to submit their Health Form with Immunization Records along with their completed application. Proof of immunizations is required to enroll in school in Europe. While immunization exemptions are approved in Canada, European schools will not accept non-immunized participants.

Visiting students will bring an up-to-date record of immunizations to be presented for registration in schools. Requirements may differ from school board to school board, and admission can be delayed should additional immunization be deemed necessary. Canadian parents may wish to inquire about the requirements specific to their local health authority so that the visiting student can be advised prior to arrival in Canada.

Proof of covid inoculation is a requirement for this program. Requirements and regulations surrounding covid will differ depending on the final destination.

### **Visiting Students' Insurance Information**

Visiting exchange students are all covered by individual or group medical insurance plans. The parents of the visiting student should be advised as quickly as possible that medical attention will be required or has occurred. They will immediately open an insurance claim with their insurance company. Typically, upfront payment is required at any clinic, hospital, or doctor's office. If the visiting student does not have the means to pay this upfront (i.e. a credit card), the host family will be required to pay on their behalf and submit the detailed receipts to the visiting student's parents within 48 hours of the medical attention. Detailed receipts from the hospital or medical office must include information regarding the patient's illness, diagnosis, and treatment. This is a mandatory requirement for insurance reimbursement.

The visiting student's parents should reimburse you as soon as possible for this expense. Using the receipts you provided them, the student's parents will then submit a claim to the insurer and await reimbursement from the insurance company. The specific details for each exchange group will be provided to Canadian parents prior to the arrival of the visiting students. The same applies in reverse to your travel overseas. European families will pay, you work on reimbursement with insurance but must provide reimbursement for European families immediately. Each host family is responsible for notifying the child's parents immediately, initiating a claim, covering any expenses at the time of the occurrence, and providing the child's family with proper documentation for insurance purposes. It is expected that the child's family reimburse the host family for any charges. Family reimbursement will occur (when applicable), through insurance. Any delay in providing proper documentation will result in reimbursement delays.

### **Canadian Students' Insurance Information**

Travel insurance is provided as part of the exchange program's all-inclusive pricing. Limitations and exceptions do apply. Please ensure you read and understand the coverage included. Any insurance questions are to be directed to the policy provider. For any insurance-related matter, families must deal with the provider directly.

## **ISE Policies**

### **Vulnerable Sector Screening Policy**

It is the policy of ISE Ontario to require a Vulnerable Sector Screening for anyone 18 years of age or older who will have overnight contact with young people under the age of 18 while residing with a host family. This includes family members and any visitors that partake in overnight stays with the host family. A similar screening process is required from our partner organizations.

#### Procedures:

- 2-1 Various jurisdictions in Ontario refer to this process by different terms. It may be called a Police Vulnerable Sector Check (PVSC), Vulnerable Sector Screening Programs, or something similar.
- 2-2 Persons required by this policy to obtain such a check, should inquire of their local police authority as to how they should apply for the screening and at what cost. Some jurisdictions will waive the fee for a volunteer with a non-profit organization which could include the hosting family. ISE offers (on the website) a Volunteer Letter to verify the volunteer nature of those associated with the programs whether as workers or hosts.
- 2-3 The ISE Ontario website will clearly indicate the need for VSS for all families, or anyone else living in the home, applying for an exchange. No application will be processed or matched until a clear record is provided. In cases where the record is not clear, permission to participate will be done on an individual basis. The VSS will be one of the items on the checklist of things to be submitted with the Application Form.
- 2-4 The Executive Director will be responsible to do due diligence in examining any records submitted in confidence that require an objective decision regarding the nature of the incident recorded in the report received from the police and whether or not it poses a threat to a visiting student.
- 2-5 Those required to obtain a VSS to volunteer with ISE or to host a student include:  
**All persons, 18 years and older**, who are in contact with young people as part of their role in providing or promoting ISE programs. Parents and family members, 18 years and older, who will be residing in the home where visiting students will live during their exchange. This includes family members who do not live within the hosting home but who have the right to keep the exchange student and his or her partner overnight as the result of a custody sharing arrangement.
- 2-6 Any adult with overnight access, not limited to, grandparents, older siblings returning from school, girlfriend/boyfriend, etc. during the hosting period will require a VSS. For further information, please contact our office.
- 2-7 If there are special circumstances, ISE may require a letter (Appendix B) indicating that the person or persons in question do not have a criminal record or charges pending. In such cases, a decision, at the discretion of the Executive Director, will be made.
- 2-8 ISE Ontario will only accept a VSS which has been obtained by applying in person to the local police authority within one year of the start of the hosting period.
- 2-9 If a family is experiencing a lengthy delay in receiving the results of a VSS, parents may submit the receipt showing the check has been applied for with the Application, along with a letter of expected clearance (conditions to be supplied by our office), until the document arrives. Failure to provide a VSS report will result in the Application being rejected by ISE Ontario. No hosting can occur until a clean VSS has been provided to ISE Ontario.

## **Hospitality Obligation Policy**

It is the policy of ISE Ontario that ISE Ontario families understand their obligation to follow through with the reciprocal nature of the exchange. Lack of reciprocity may result in additional fees being charged in order to find new accommodations for your original partner.

Procedures:

1. As part of the Conditions of Participation, parents will be advised that they are committing to the reciprocal nature of the exchange program.
2. By signing this document, families will be obliged to host a student after their son or daughter has completed the first phase of an exchange as a 'Go First' participant.
3. Families that refuse to host the original partner of their son or daughter will be expected to host another student from the country where the exchange was arranged. Should a family not host a child and fulfill in completion the reciprocity expectation, additional fees may apply as payment towards an alternate host-only family.
4. In 'Host First' situations, a family that does not complete the hosting period but still wants their son or daughter to be placed in a different home, will be expected to host another European student.
5. School board authorities must be advised of the 'one in, one out' status of these situations and ISE Ontario is obliged to recognize the balance and see that it is maintained in terms of placing students in aboard.

## **Travel Documentation Policy**

It is the policy of ISE Ontario to inform parents that it is their responsibility to obtain the necessary travel documents in order to participate in a European exchange.

Document requirements:

1. For entry into countries in the Schengen Area (26 European countries) which includes the countries with which ISE Ontario has exchange programs (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland), exchange students, who are Canadian citizens, require a valid Canadian passport with an expiry date of at least 3 months after the return date to Canada.
2. For travel to countries outside of the Schengen Area, families are advised to check the visa or other document requirements by contacting the appropriate consulate, at least 3 months before departure for Europe. The passport expiry date must be at least 6 months past the return date to Canada.
3. Students who hold a passport from another country, and do not have a Canadian passport, are required to tell ISE Ontario and to provide complete information about the passport by scanning a copy of the passport when applying for an exchange.
4. Families are responsible for any additional travel documentation required including parental approval as required, ETIAS, ArriveCan, and proof of vaccinations and/or testing. Any additional registrations required while overseas, are to be addressed with the host family.
5. Students who are not Canadian citizens must take their Canadian Permanent Resident Card in order to re-enter Canada. Families are required to determine if the student requires a visa or other documents to travel to the European countries involved. Non-Canadian families must be aware of travel documents needed for any of the exchange countries involved, including transit countries with flight connections to the final destination.

6. Clear, colour photocopies of all travel documents including passports and visas must be taken by the student and stored in a place other than where the passport is kept
7. Lost documents will result in the student being denied boarding by the airline. Any delays requiring the purchase of a new ticket or a change fee, hotel and meals, and the cost of replacing documents will be the financial responsibility of the family. Should a chaperone be required to stay with child, those expenses would also be the family's responsibility.
8. It is the responsibility of the family to ensure that all documents are in their child's possession at the time of travel, correct, and the date of expiry meets the necessary timeline. This is particularly important for non-Canadian passport holders. This also includes any travel authorization letters for any custody related matters.
9. Canadian families who are planning to take a visiting student to the United States of America or another International destination must assure that the student has the necessary documentation and a letter of permission to travel from their parents. ISE Ontario cannot assume responsibility for the documents required.
10. ISE Ontario and our travel agent, Planet France, will not be held liable for incorrect or insufficient travel documentation.

### **Internal Travel Policy**

It is the policy of ISE Ontario to pay for international flights and internal European flights

1. As part of the fee charged, ISE Ontario will pay return airfares to the countries in which exchanges are arranged.
2. Connecting flights within Europe are also paid by ISE Ontario where required.
3. All travel begins and ends at Toronto Pearson airport. ISE does not pay for connecting travel within Canada i.e. Domestic flights to Pearson
4. Parents are required to arrange transportation to and from Toronto. Participants must be at Toronto Pearson at least 3 hours before flight time.
5. Connecting flights from other Canadian airports must arrive 4 hours before departure time and must land at Toronto Pearson. ISE representatives will assist upon your child's arrival for their international connection.
6. Parents are financially responsible for any missed flights, for whatever reason that is not covered by insurance or cancelled in time to arrange a change of flight. It is important that parents contact the ISE Ontario office as soon as they know that a connecting flight has been cancelled or delayed. Any flight change fees, both for internal and overseas flights, are the responsibility of the families.
7. Summer Exchange students, who return to Canada with a partner, must be picked up at the Toronto Pearson airport or arrangements must be made by the Canadian parents and the partner organization for connecting travel. ISE Ontario does not arrange this but will coordinate it with our partners.
8. Parents must familiarize themselves with insurance coverage and read related ISE policies on trip cancellation, additional fees charged, and early returns from the exchange location. Many of these could result in additional costs.
9. In the event of inclement weather, strikes, mechanical failure, or other unforeseen events that result in the cancellation or delay of a connecting flight from Toronto, ISE Ontario will support the care of students until they depart. This may result in an overnight stay at the expense of the airline or of the parents until the flight is re-scheduled. ISE Ontario will ensure you child is cared for until they have safely departed.

## **Travel Deviation Policy**

It is the policy of ISE Ontario not to permit travel deviations that alter the scheduled program.

1. Exchange departure and return dates are established one year prior to the start of a program and must be adhered to. While travel dates are subject to change, they will generally only fluctuate about a week. In case of any changes, please keep a clear schedule.
2. The beginning and end destinations for European international travel must remain the same.
3. All students must depart and return with the group. The ISE Ontario program ends once deviation to original travel has occurred and parents assume all responsibility, including insurance coverage.
4. Personal, individual travel is not permitted during the exchange. We do not allow exchange interruption and visits by family/friends are strongly discouraged as it impacts the exchange adversely.
5. Travel arrangements made outside of the group return date are the responsibility of the parents. If the student does not return with the group, this will be treated as personal holiday time and they are no longer part of the program and ISE Ontario, its partners, and school boards are not responsible for that student.
6. Any personal or family travel will not be managed by ISE or the travel agency. A separate ticket will be required for liability reasons.

## **CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

**I/WE CONSENT** to my/our child's participation in this exchange program and understand that the participant and their family must abide by the Conditions of Participation as outlined for the duration of the reciprocal exchange program. This includes both the travel period and the hosting period. This also includes following the rules and conditions of both the European school and the host family. Any breach of the conditions of participation will result in immediate termination of the program and the return of the child to Canada at the Canadian family's personal expense. Please ensure you refer to the Family Guide, outlining our policies and procedures, provided to you for additional reference.

**I/WE AGREE** to host the visiting student during the exchange period and treat the European participant as a member of our family; to provide all three daily meals, a warm, safe, and friendly atmosphere, and a safe means of travel to and from school. Where school bus transportation is necessary the host family will be responsible for making these arrangements. The host family is to support the European participant in adjusting to their new surroundings; to **assume parental care** for the exchange student; to ensure that the student is immersed in the target language (English) and given full opportunity to hear and use English at home (any language other than English should not be used during the hosting period of the European student to maximize that child's exposure to English) as well as at school; and to ensure that the participant is exposed to as many cultural activities as possible, all of the foregoing at no cost to the visiting exchange student. Family participation is imperative for the success of the exchange.

**I/WE DECLARE** that the hosting home is free of substance abuse, physical abuse, or any other form of abuse; that no one living in the host home(s) where the visiting student will be living has been convicted of a criminal offense or has criminal charges pending; and that a **clear vulnerable sector check** from the local police department has been provided for each person aged 18 and over living in the host home(s), as required by ISE ONTARIO. This includes anyone over the age of 18 that may visit overnight, including but not limited to: grandparents, partners, and other children returning from university or college. This includes the primary home and any secondary households.

**I/WE UNDERSTAND** that by accepting an offered match, I/we are agreeing to the child's partner. ISE matches are made with the best efforts based on the applications provided. Filling out the application honestly is essential for this process and for ISE records. Families are encouraged to engage in conversations with their host family in order to better understand family dynamics, rules, meals, etc. Changes to partners will occur under circumstances where medical issues arise or a situation where a child's safety may be threatened. Any other change request will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

**I/WE UNDERSTAND** that student exchange participants must consider their exchange partner to be their first priority during the hosting period. Everyone involved in the hosting, including friends and family, should make an effort to include the European student in daily activities. Neither partner will overuse cell phones, email, or social media. Overuse reflects a lack of consideration for the exchange partner. Due to the expense of repairing or replacing electronic devices, we will not allow exchange students to borrow or lend devices while on exchange. ISE will not assume any responsibility for damage/loss in these situations.

**I/WE UNDERSTAND** that a student exchange participant may need to work part-time or engage in another commitment (sports, clubs, etc.) and that while hosting their exchange partner, hours are to be reduced and weekend shifts avoided in order to maximize the time available to be with the exchange partner. Arrangements should be made to ensure the exchange partner is not left alone during the times of these commitments.

**I/WE UNDERSTAND** that this is a RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE and that the Canadian family has an obligation to host a visiting student for the time designated. Should the Canadian family not fulfill the said obligation, additional fees will apply to find an alternate family for the remainder of the timeline. I/we understand that the exchange of partners will only be made in extreme cases and will be managed on a case-by-case basis.

**EXCLUSION OF LIABILITY: I/WE UNDERSTAND** that the Canadian child's host family, the education and/or school authorities and exchange officials in the host country, the school and/or school board where the Canadian child is a resident student, and ISE Ontario together with its directors, officers, employees, and volunteers assume no legal responsibility or liability for participating students.

**MEDICAL AND DENTAL AUTHORIZATION: I/WE AUTHORIZE** all medical and dental attention for the Canadian child judged necessary by medical authorities in the host country or the host family in the event of an accident or serious illness. I/We understand that every attempt will be made to reach the child's family by telephone in case of emergency.

**GROUP TRAVEL: I/WE UNDERSTAND** that the Canadian child is expected to travel to and return from the exchange country with the exchange program group. I/We confirm that the child has permission to travel with ISE-designated chaperones and with their host family and their school during the duration of the program.

### **TRAVELING IN THE HOST COUNTRY**

- a) **I/WE UNDERSTAND** that exchange program participants must attend school and therefore travel during the exchange program is restricted to excursions with the host school or member/members of the host family, without exception. Where such excursions involve travel outside the host country, a letter of authorization from the Canadian parent(s) is required.
- b) Exchange families are encouraged to discuss outings provided by host families, schools, or other organizations for acceptance. Exchange families assume any and all risks and responsibilities associated with outings provided by the above and understand communication should be had to discern comfort level and skills needed for participation in such activities.
- c) The beginning and end destinations for European international travel must remain the same. Any personal travel will not be managed by ISE or the travel agency. A separate ticket will be required for liability reasons.

**I/WE PERMIT** ISE ONTARIO to videotape and/or photograph my/our child while participating in program activities with the understanding that these materials will be used only for promotional purposes.

**EXPULSION FROM THE PROGRAM:** The exchange program authorities reserve the right to immediately withdraw a student from the exchange program and arrange for an early return home, with no liability or cost to the exchange program authorities or to the host family, for any of the following:

- withholding information and/or failure to tell the truth on the application
- failure to disclose any past or present medical treatment for physical or psychological conditions or disorders (including anorexia or bulimia)
- any concern or threat to personal harm/emotional and physical wellbeing
- use of illegal drugs or abuse of alcohol
- driving a motorized vehicle OR hitch-hiking
- unauthorized absence from school; unwillingness to be attentive or participate during classes and to do the work assigned
- failure to accept the authority of school and exchange officials AND/OR failure to comply with the house rules of the host family
- undertaking independent travel that is not with the host school or the host family members
- breaking the law of the host country, including, without limitation
- receiving, creating, or distributing information that is unlawful including but not limited to materials or images which are racist, pornographic, dangerous, obscene, or inconsistent with the values of the host family
- use of social media to promote any derogatory statement to host family or school or posting of images that reflect a breach of participation conditions
- failure to abide by the Conditions of Participation of the program
- failure to abide by the Policies and Regulations of the host school

**PRIVACY WAIVER: I/WE PERMIT** ISE ONTARIO to share this application in part or in whole with partner organizations, staff, volunteers, host families, and host schools in Canada and Europe. ISE has permission to use the Canadian child's contact information to follow up as needed. This can occur before, during, or after the travel period.

## **Refund Policy**

It is the policy of ISE Ontario to refund participation fees in certain circumstances, to withhold some portion of the fee in others, and to charge additional fees for ticket changes. Please ensure you have familiarized yourself with the insurance coverage provided to understand its coverage, limitations, and maximum amounts. ISE recommends any family seek additional coverage should they prefer coverage beyond the provided policy. In order to maintain cost-conscious program offerings, it is the practice of ISE to purchase group travel. Group travel is not the same as individual travel bookings. This may change the process or limit any claims made to the airlines or insurance companies.

- i. Fees will be refunded at any time if the student has not been matched or a proposed match has not been accepted and the student withdraws from the program. Once the matching has been completed, the registration fee is non-refundable. After the insurance has been purchased, the reasons for the withdrawal may be eligible for reimbursement by the insurance company, if the reasons for withdrawal meet the insurance company's criteria for reimbursement.
- ii. As per section 1, if a candidate withdraws from an exchange after the match has been accepted and prior to the purchase of an airline ticket, the application fee will be retained for any additional monies spent, e.g., travel / medical insurance, administrative expenses. Any remaining funds will be returned. Reimbursement for fees retained may be paid by the insurance company if the insurance criteria are met. As an insurance policy includes limits and restrictions, any family can opt to purchase additional insurance to supplement as needed.
- iii. Once the airline tickets have been issued, refunds from ISE will not be issued, regardless of the circumstances. A claim must be put through the insurance provider to determine eligibility and amount for compensation based on policy coverage provided. Should your child not be able to travel, ISE will work to support an alternate timeline and only charge for the cost of a new ticket and new insurance policy. Both must be provided through our travel agent.
- iv. No refund can be made by ISE if any of the above occurs while the candidate is away on exchange and must return home. The travel/medical insurance purchased may cover costs as outlined in the policy. Should a candidate be required to return home while on an exchange, if not covered by the insurance policy, the family is responsible for repatriation.
- v. No refund will be given if the candidate is experiencing homesickness and decides to come home, nor in cases where Canadian family has determined the host family is not to their preference and/or a second placement with another family is presented, depending on the circumstances, and is refused. If the candidate returns home and the family claim that the experience was not to their liking and not worth the fees paid, no refund will be given.
- vi. In the event of a passport being lost or reported stolen, every effort will be made to re-issue tickets using the new passport obtained by the family. Fees for making ticket changes will apply.
- vii. ISE takes any discussions regarding emotional health and wellness seriously. Any concerns to a participant's well-being or threats to personal health/harm are considered very serious. Should such matters arise, the candidate will be required to return home. This may or may not be covered by insurance, and any pre-existing condition will not be supported through insurance.
- viii. In extenuating circumstances such as catastrophic events including acts of war, acts of terrorism, pandemics, strikes, natural disasters, or any other matters beyond the control of ISE, support will be provided to ensure your child's safe repatriation. ISE cannot be held responsible for any extenuating circumstances beyond the normal parameters of an exchange. ISE will do its utmost to actively support, where possible, any opportunities at a later date for those exchanges impacted by such events but cannot guarantee a second exchange option. ISE will provide documentation required for any insurance claim, but for confidentiality purposes, cannot be responsible for the management or outcome of the claim. Any decision made by the insurance company is beyond the control of ISE.

## **Cancellation Policy**

It is the policy of ISE Ontario to anticipate and be prepared for the unexpected need to cancel or postpone a program due to circumstances beyond the control of the organization such as, but not limited to, catastrophic events including acts of war, acts of terrorism, pandemics, strikes, natural disasters, and other upsets which prevent travel to another country. This includes the need to cancel a program after commencement should these types of matters arise.

### Procedures:

- i. Prior to departure, if a warning is issued by the Canadian government regarding a catastrophic event in a destination for which ISE Ontario has already collected fees and booked travel, the airlines, and land travel suppliers may void changing fees or cancellation fees to this specific destination.
- ii. If such a situation occurs while students are abroad, the airline will do its best to bring the students back as seats become available. As a group, ISE students will not have priority and may return home in smaller numbers on different flights. Depending on airline and air travel advisories, emergency return flights may not be chaperoned. Where necessary, participants will be flown as unaccompanied minors. Should families choose to arrange their own emergency travel home, it is imperative ISE is notified of the new arrangements. ISE will provide supporting documentation to assist with any insurance claims opened.
- iii. In extenuating circumstances such as catastrophic events including acts of war, acts of terrorism, pandemics, strikes, natural disasters, or any other matters beyond the control of ISE, support will be provided to ensure your child's safe repatriation. ISE cannot be held responsible for any extenuating circumstances beyond the normal parameters of an exchange. ISE will do its utmost to actively support, where possible, any opportunities at a later date for those exchanges impacted by such events but cannot guarantee a second exchange option.
- iv. ISE Ontario works with reputable suppliers of air travel, land travel, and hotel accommodation (if required). In situations where cancellations or delays arise, ISE will work in partnership with our travel agent, airlines, and consulate to make every effort to organize alternate arrangements where travel is permitted and possible.
- v. ISE Ontario cannot be held responsible for delays, loss of property, injury, accident, death, damage, inconvenience, loss of enjoyment, upset, distress, or frustration, whether physical or mental, resulting from any catastrophic event or the negligence of our suppliers.

## II THE PERIOD AWAY

### A. Before Leaving

#### Personal Objectives

Prior to your departure, establish a few personal goals, for example, open-mindedness, tolerance, flexibility, patience, willingness to try new activities and foods. Focus on these throughout your exchange. Be aware that you will be spending nine weeks in the home of a family that will most likely have very different values, attitudes, and lifestyles from your own. Open-mindedness is the key to a successful exchange relationship. Remember to not voice judgments; describe things as being “different” rather than “better” in Canada. Your purpose for this exchange is not to recreate a Canadian experience in Europe; be open to your new ‘norm’!

#### Correspondence

You must communicate regularly with your exchange partner between the hosting and visiting period. You must continue to build on your relationship throughout the exchange year, especially when you are apart. This will support the success of the exchange during its stages of progression.

#### School

Remind your teachers as early as possible that you will be away from school the following winter. Make sure you have come to an agreement with your teachers about what must be done before you leave, during the time away, and upon your return.

With careful planning, it is possible for secondary students in semestered schools to take four courses in both the first and second semesters of their exchange year. The majority of exchange participants do complete eight courses during the year, in semestered and non-semestered schools. Working with your guidance counsellors will support your schedule while away. Proper planning will provide for better management of your schoolwork while away.

#### Language

While not required, it is expected that students will acquire some knowledge of the language of the exchange country prior to departure. In cases where the language course is not offered at school, you should investigate any independent study options available (tutoring, online courses, language apps, etc.).

#### Being Informed

Represent your province and country well by being informed so that you can answer any question you may be asked. Plan ahead to be informed about the country and/or region you will be visiting so that you can benefit more fully from your stay.

#### Glasses, Dental Work, Medication

Bring an extra pair of prescription glasses/contact lenses. Visit your dentist before you leave.

If you require prescription medication, bring enough of the medication to last for the duration of the exchange and a copy of the prescription with you. Your Health Form must verify the need to take such medication, as well as any allergies and immunizations.

## **Money**

The amount of money your son or daughter should bring with them depends on their age and spending habits. At least \$100 per month is generally advisable. Speak with your bank to determine what form of money will be right for your child (i.e. debit card, prepaid credit card) and about the use of the card in your host country and region.

You should plan to buy a small amount of foreign currency before your child's departure, enough to last until they have access to a bank in the host country. You may wish to buy currency from your partner when they are wanting to purchase Canadian dollars. Wear a security pouch or belt to secure your money!

## **Passport**

Your passport is the only proof of your citizenship and identity while you are abroad. Keep your passport in a safe place at all times. An ISE passport pouch will be provided for your use while traveling.

You **MUST** save a colour photocopy copy of your passport prior to your departure. You and your parents should both have easy access to this image as this information may assist in replacing a lost or stolen passport. In case of loss while abroad, you must call the nearest Canadian Embassy AND the local police authority immediately. Consult [Passport Canada](#) for more information about passports and travel abroad.

## **Customs**

For duty-free allowances on goods brought into Canada, please visit the [Canada Border Services Website](#). To avoid delays on your return, you should register any expensive items with Canada Customs prior to your departure.

Students under 19 years of age cannot bring any alcoholic beverages or tobacco products back into Canada. You should inform your host parents about this in advance to avoid their giving you a gift you cannot accept.

## **Emergency Contacts**

Contact information for the exchange officials in each destination will be provided to students on the day of departure.

## **Clothing**

Ask your exchange partner what the weather is usually like during the time you will be there and take appropriate clothing. Resist the urge to overpack as you will have access to laundry. Be mindful of luggage amounts and restrictions while packing. Select thoughtfully and remember that you must be able to handle your own luggage during travel throughout the airport. Travel time to gates, connections, etc. can exceed 30 minutes of walking; 4-wheeled luggage is strongly recommended.

## **Gifts**

You may wish to take a small gift to your host family, perhaps something made in Canada and representative of Canadian culture. Think back to what your partner liked when they were visiting Canada and select a gift for your partner accordingly. Reminder, liquid restrictions apply with carry-on luggage; it is best to secure these items in your checked-in luggage.

## B. Travel Information

### **Departure Information**

The travel dates are listed on our website and if a change is required, generally fall within the same week.

Regional pre-departure meetings will be held to prepare students and parents for the departure and the second part of the exchange. Past participants and parents are sometimes present to provide first-hand information about their own experiences. All participants must attend their pre-departure meeting.

### **Travel Information**

- Canadian chaperones accompany students on international flights to and from each exchange destination.
- All students should have a copy of the international e-ticket with them in Toronto on the day of departure.
- Airlines require that all passengers arrive at the airport at least three hours prior to the scheduled time of departure for international flights.

### **Luggage Allowance**

- ONE piece of checked luggage is included on the international flight
- In addition, students are allowed ONE carry-on piece when travelling to and from the exchange destination. You must confirm weights with the airlines for compliance.
- The airline will charge a fee for any additional or overweight checked luggage, which participants are responsible for
- Each student will be given an ISE passport pouch for group identification. This must be visible at all times.
- Some airlines will charge for checked-in luggage, especially with domestic connections. If applicable to you, we recommend you pay this in advance online.
- The luggage allowance is determined by the airline and is subject to change.

**For the most accurate, updated baggage-related information, we recommend you consult the airline's website.**

**For travel arrangements, ISE Ontario is registered with TICO # 4023792 under Planet France Inc.**

## **C. While on Exchange**

### **School**

The degree of difficulty of your courses will vary depending on the type of school you attend and the program and level of placement. Whereas you may be accustomed to selecting from a wide range of courses, your program will likely consist of a block of courses. Individual course selection is not usually possible. Student/teacher interaction is generally more formal than in Canada. Schoolwork is taken very seriously by teachers, parents, and students, and the same degree of seriousness is expected of Canadian students.

Your daily attendance at school allows you to hear the language in a controlled setting, to develop your comprehension, and thereby attain a higher level of proficiency by the end of your stay. Yet you may on occasion feel unwelcome as teachers and students focus on completing courses and preparing for final examinations. Your daily attendance is nevertheless mandatory, and absence or lack of effort is a reason for your early return to Canada.

### **Energy Conservation**

Practice energy conservation even more than you do at home. Energy costs in Europe are much higher than in Canada. Be conscious of this when doing laundry and taking showers; turn off unnecessary lights and expect to wear a sweater and slippers around the house. An adapter and/or voltage converter will be necessary to use small appliances in Europe.

### **Local Transportation**

Many local bus systems operate on the honour system which means you do not have to show your ticket or pass each time you board the bus or train. However, bus and train checks do occur regularly and if you should be caught without a valid ticket/pass, you will be subject to a fine. Train travel is considered a safe and common mode of transportation in Europe. With that being said, Canadian participants should always travel using a 'buddy' system while in a foreign country.

### **Food**

Be conscious of the time your host family expects you home for meals and do not be absent at mealtime without having made prior arrangements with your host parents. Remember that mealtimes are very special and important events in most families. Be willing to try unfamiliar foods. A fundamental part of the cultural experience is trying new things. You must also be prepared to suggest items you enjoy to help the family and ease mealtime pressures.

### **Telephone and Internet Communication**

We recommend you speak with your phone provider prior to your departure if you plan to send your child with a cell phone. Your child should speak with their host parents prior to or when they arrive regarding WI-FI access. Ask the host family's permission and discuss time restrictions for technology use.

An important factor in the personal growth that develops through an exchange is the "separation" from family, friends, and all that is familiar. This separation clearly can be difficult at times but results in tremendous independence and increased self-confidence. Constant, daily communication has a definite negative impact on the benefits of the overall experience for students and often affects integration and involvement in family activities. The hosting parents often question the constant communication with parents at home in terms of the degree of confidence there is in their hosting of the exchange student. Overuse of social media and connection to family and friends at home often causes conflict during the exchange.

## **Travel**

Travel for the Canadian students is restricted to excursions with the school or the host family (see Rules for All Exchange Participants and the Conditions of Participation). No exceptions will be made for independent travel.

## **Homesickness**

It is quite normal to experience a period of homesickness. Rest assured that feelings of homesickness do pass within a short time; it is important to keep busy and to share your feelings with your exchange partner, host family, or friends. Try not to phone home too often and give yourself time to adjust to the new environment. Too much connection to your family and friends at home is actually detrimental to your integration into the European experience.

## **Speaking the Target Language**

One of the main objectives of the exchange is to practice the language. At first, you will find yourself listening to a great deal - this is an important part of learning a language. You will find that you may speak hesitantly at first, but as your confidence increases, you will become less conscious about speaking. Practice as much as possible.

You and your partner must resolve not to speak English together while you are abroad. It is now your turn to work on language learning. Also, try to avoid speaking English with other Canadian exchange students and spending your free time with them. Doing so reduces the opportunities for making other friends and for using the target language.

## **Being a Good Ambassador**

As a visiting exchange student, you will be noticed by your classmates; you may even be the first Canadian they have met. Make a conscious effort to create a good impression. Encourage students coming to Canada on the exchange by sharing your knowledge of the country with them.

## **Keys to Success**

- acquire a basic knowledge of your exchange destination before your departure
- be flexible and open-minded when faced with new ideas and practices that may not be what you are used to
- understand that some things will seem “strange” because of different (not necessarily better or worse) social or cultural values
- be prepared for your relationship with your partner to be different in the hosting and visiting period
- maintain open communication with your exchange partner and host family; ask questions, express interest, show appreciation, be honest!
- the more curious you are about all aspects of life in your host family and country, and the more questions you ask, the more you will be appreciated and given added opportunities to see and do things
- remember the goals you had when you first applied for the exchange and determine to achieve them
- expect to have good, bad, and homesick days; have the courage to move on to making your short stay the once in a lifetime experience it can be

## **D. Coming Home, Advice to Parents & Checklist**

### **Evaluation**

You will be asked to complete an online evaluation form at the end of the exchange. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome to assist us in improving the program for future participants.

### **Period of Readjustment**

You may experience a period of disorientation or culture shock when you first return home to Canada. You should anticipate this and allow yourself time to readjust. Do not expect all your friends and classmates to share your enthusiasm for your exchange experience for a prolonged period.

### **Advice to Parents**

Encourage your child to make the most of the exchange, to participate fully at school and in other activities.

Arrange a day and time when you will communicate with your child but avoid contacting them too often. Frequent communication can make the adaptation process longer and more difficult. Excessive communication in any of its forms can seriously affect the integration of the student into the host family and community.

Please note that the appropriate use of technology cannot be “legislated” or controlled by the exchange authorities.

Students and parents must arrive at responsible behaviour through open discussion.

We recommend that you do not plan on visiting your son/daughter during the exchange. It can be disruptive to the host family, and even more so to the students.

If your child tells you about an ongoing problem with the exchange partner, family, or school which cannot be resolved through discussion with the parties concerned, remind them that the proper procedure is to contact the hosting exchange officials. ISE Ontario, along with your regional Exchange Support Coordinator, are the contacts for Canadian parents both during the hosting period and while the Canadian students are abroad.

### **Checklist**

- ✓ Passport valid 3 months past the return date (*and electronic copy*)
- ✓ STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT CANADIAN CITIZENS are solely responsible for ensuring that they are carrying the proper documents for entry into the host country as well as documents proving landed immigrant status to ensure re-entry into Canada; please contact the applicable Embassy for clarification.
- ✓ Supporting legal documentation (including parental authorization if required)
- ✓ Spending money
- ✓ Planned for missed schoolwork/ credits with your teachers/ guidance counsellor

**BON VOYAGE!**

## **THE HOSTING PERIOD**

### **A. Before Arrival**

#### **Personal Objectives**

Prior to the arrival of your exchange partner, establish a few personal goals, such as flexibility, openness to new experiences, patience, and tolerance. Open-mindedness is key to a successful exchange!

#### **Correspondence**

You and your family must communicate regularly with your exchange partner and their family in order to establish a relationship before they arrive. Try communicating in English as well as in your partner's language. Describe for your partner everything about your life; your family, friends, school, typical routines, community, important events, and what they would have access to.

Correspondence between parents should include details about the following:

- your home life - chores, curfew, smoking, alcohol, religious practice
- family customs and activities
- weather and clothing for the period of the exchange
- allergies and diet - meals and preferred foods\_

#### **Preparation by the Family**

Every member of the family must agree to participate in the exchange by supporting the presence of a new family member during the hosting period. Prior to the visiting student's arrival, it is necessary to prepare their room or some private space. In homes where there is not normally a guest room, it is strongly recommended that a room be shared by siblings so that the exchange partner can have their own room.

#### **Planning Activities**

It is generally assumed that you and your family will want to share some provincial or local sights and events with your exchange partner, and that your partner's family will do the same for you; there is, however, no guarantee of reciprocal treatment during the second half of the exchange. Planning for activities should be a topic of discussion between students and parents prior to and during the hosting period.

The planned activities should also be communicated to the partner and parents in advance of arrival. This will help to determine interest, to clarify expectations, and to set a reasonable budget for hosting on both sides.

#### **Friends**

Canadian students should be very supportive of their partners with fitting in and making new friends. Encourage your partner to try to make their own friends in addition to befriending yours. This will allow both of you to spend some time apart enjoying some different activities. Understand that it is normal that your exchange partner will be the focus of attention since they are new here.

## **B. While Hosting in Canada**

### **Arrival at the Home**

Try to make your exchange partner's arrival a special event. Help your partner unpack and settle into your home; give your partner a tour of your home and explain certain features, e.g., how the shower works, how to operate your appliances, and how to make a telephone call home. Establish how your parents may be addressed (first names are usual).

Within the first few days, take your exchange partner around the neighborhood or community for a tour. Introduce your partner to your friends (easier in a one-to-one situation rather than a group).

When you are learning a second language you tire very quickly. Allow for lots of sleep, sports, non-conversational activities, and private space and time for your exchange partner, especially during the first days and weeks.

### **Family Rules**

Parents should establish the house rules and expectations early. Understand that the student may be tired and may not comprehend everything the first time. You may need to go over the house rules slowly again two or three days later, and further reminders may still be needed.

Travel for the visiting students is restricted to excursions with the host school or member/members of the host family (see Rules for All Exchange Participants, Part I, page 3). This information has been provided to all exchange families prior to departure. No exceptions will be made for independent travel requests.

### **Getting Along**

The 9-week hosting period is usually too long for anyone to have a 'guest' in their home. Treat your exchange partner as a member of the family. Assign chores and accept help around the house.

Do not be surprised if your exchange partner becomes homesick. It is a normal reaction when one is far away from home, family, and friends. Phoning home usually intensifies the sadness. Encourage your partner to keep busy, involve themselves with your family, and participate in activities. Reassure them that the homesickness will pass.

Your exchange partner must be encouraged to communicate with you if there is a concern at any time. Your partner must see that you and your family care. In many cases, a gesture of affection will break the barrier. *Don't hesitate to talk openly when you think something is wrong!* In the early days of the exchange, verify that your partner understands and is not just saying yes to be polite. While good communication with your exchange partner is always important, remember to allow for some private time as well.

If the Canadian parents want the exchange partner to do something or to modify behavior, they should tell them directly; problems can occur if the Canadian student is used as an intermediary.

It is important to find out early about your exchange partner's eating habits. Ask about favorite foods and foods that they cannot eat. Encourage your exchange partner to try things that may be new.

### **School**

It is important that your exchange partner feels welcomed by your school.

Introduce your exchange partner to the staff at school; the school exchange contact (if applicable), head secretary, principal, and for secondary students, the guidance department. They will all appreciate the reminder.

It is essential that secondary students take their exchange partner to school for a tour and to the Guidance office during the week prior to school opening in order to arrange a suitable timetable. It is not necessary for your exchange partner's timetable to be the same as yours. Ask your Student Council to issue a complimentary student card to your partner.

You are responsible for arranging transportation to/from school for the visiting student. Eligibility for school bus transportation is determined by each individual school board. We recommend you make an inquiry with your local busing consortium as early as possible. Where public transportation is required, you are responsible for making the arrangements and for the cost.

Encourage your exchange partner to take courses which satisfy their personal interests and requirements. Appropriate courses may include Canadian History or Geography and English. Through your guidance counselor, ensure that the level of difficulty is also suitable. Introduce your partner to each subject teacher and explain that they are an exchange student and will be in the class for only nine weeks. Introduce your exchange partner to a friend in each of their classes to help ensure that the teacher's instructions are understood.

Your exchange partner is expected to attend school regularly, except for illness or to take part in school field trips. Try to arrange for your exchange partner to go on as many school field trips as possible, even if they do not belong to the class going on the trip. Encourage your exchange partner to become involved in extracurricular activities so that they will make new friends. The exchange becomes more meaningful if your exchange partner becomes involved with other people and in as many activities as possible.

Remember that the first week of school can be overwhelming for any new student, especially for one who is used to an entirely different system and unaccustomed to all the daily procedures. Do not abandon your exchange partner at school in the first few days! This will only increase their sense of isolation and may lead to serious problems in your relationship.

If serious school problems develop, contact your Regional Exchange Support Coordinator or the ISE office.

### **Language Learning**

The frustration period while learning a second language may last for a few weeks. The strength of the motivation to learn the second language and the family environment will determine the rate of progress. When an exchange student becomes capable of expressing him/herself in a second language it is a wonderfully satisfying accomplishment.

Remember that your exchange partner is here to learn English! Give them ample opportunity to practice it. Your turn to practice your partner's language will come during your stay with their family! You can help by asking questions that require more than a simple yes/no response, and by suggesting that your partner:

- answer the phone once having been shown how
- write the grocery lists and go along to the grocery store
- write something daily in English
- label items with post-it notes for reference
- participate in or observe all types of social games, cards, scrabble, English television, videos, music etc.

Keep in mind that even when language skills are limited, a person knows if one is being talked about rather than spoken to. Do not treat your exchange partner as a third person when conversing in the family or with friends. Your partner may use their newly-acquired language inappropriately, completely unaware of the meaning of the vocabulary. If this should happen, they must be told what is unacceptable in a polite but firm way.

### **Part-Time Jobs**

While your partner is here, you will have to balance your school and social life as well as your role as host. It is expected that you will limit/avoid working during your exchange partner's stay with you. You should discuss with your partner to ensure they will limit/avoid working during the hosting period and discuss how much time will be devoted to their studies. Keep in mind that you are to treat your exchange partner as a priority throughout their stay.

You should ensure that your exchange partner is involved in activities when you are otherwise occupied. Discuss with your partner about how you can keep occupied, when your partner is busy with homework.

## **Telephone and Internet Communication**

Frequent contact with other exchange students should be discouraged in the interests of the objectives of the exchange program. It is necessary to have a clear understanding of payment of local/long-distance telephone calls and computer usage. Review with the student the format of telephone and internet billing, pointing out the details that are provided. Establish with him/her a procedure for keeping a record of usage. It is recommended that each student pays for all personal expenses while in the host country.

## **Technology Use**

Excessive use of technology has proven to seriously hinder the benefits of the student exchange experience both in language learning and cultural growth. Discuss time restrictions and then ensure that everyone is adhering to the limits. Set boundaries for technology usage from the outset and provide frequent reminders, if necessary.

Participants are strongly advised not to borrow or lend electronic devices during an exchange. These devices can be extremely expensive to repair or replace if damaged or lost.

Please note that appropriate use of the internet and social networking sites cannot be “legislated” or controlled by the exchange authorities. Students and parents must arrive at a reasonable limit through open discussion.

## **Money**

During each half of the exchange program, the hosting family must provide for the daily needs of the exchange student including accommodation and all meals (including packed lunch or lunch money), tuition-free schooling, school uniform where required (usually borrowed), and transportation to and from school. It is understood that if the family goes out for dinner or on an excursion, the costs for the exchange student will be paid by the family, as for their own children. When the partners are out socially, however, the visiting student should pay their way, just as Canadian friends do when they are out together.

While a guest in your home, the exchange partner should not be expected to pay for standard products like toothpaste, shampoo, soap, etc. If they require something expensive regarding products of this type, then they should pay for it. Unlike family outings, special programs such as lessons or activities can be negotiated with the parents of the guest student. Participation in these things should not be required of the guest but should be agreed to and done willingly.

## **C. General Observations & Helpful Hints**

Many visiting students are used to very direct and frank communication. Try not to mistake the student’s choice of words or openness for discourtesy or rudeness. Try not to be offended if your exchange partner does not say “please” and “thank you” as often as might be expected. This can often be attributed to language and cultural differences. A gentle reminder of when “please” and “thank you” should be spoken is entirely appropriate.

### **Helpful Hints**

- You must learn to adapt to having an exchange student living in your home. Be willing to bend a little, and perhaps sacrifice a few habits in order to make your exchange partner feel at ease.
- Be open-minded and flexible. Be prepared for cultural differences such as greeting with a kiss on both cheeks.
- It is natural for your exchange partner to make comparisons between their country and Canada, sometimes not very positive ones. Try not to take them too seriously.
- Television can be a good language-learning medium, but it is also very tiring to watch for long periods and concentrate in another language.
- Find out about special occasions (birthdays) and celebrate them accordingly.
- Go out of your way to do little things for your partner. It will make the exchange more pleasant for both of you.
- Although great care is taken in matching and all the information submitted in the application forms is considered, these steps may not ensure “a perfect match”. It is unrealistic to expect that partners will necessarily become best friends. Our hope is that students will be sufficiently compatible to benefit from and enjoy the exchange experience. It is a bonus when students do become good friends, but do not be disappointed if you and your partner do not.