



cmec

Council of
Ministers
of Education,
Canada

Conseil des
ministres
de l'Éducation
(Canada)

**Education Commission of the
38th Session of the UNESCO General Conference**
Paris, France
November 4–7, 2015

Report of the Canadian Delegation

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1. Introduction

The Education Commission of the 38th Session of the UNESCO General Conference was held at the organization's headquarters in Paris, France, from November 4 to 7, 2015. The General Conference, which is held every two years, brings together representatives of the 195 UNESCO Member States.

At the meeting of the Education Commission, the members set priorities and adopted the 2016–17 education budget, based on the four-year 2014–2017 Major Programme I – Education program that was adopted at the 2013 General Conference. The commission also explored and made decisions on a number of specific issues.

It is worth noting that UNESCO celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2015. Founded on November 16, 1945, the organization currently has 195 Member States and is governed by the General Conference and the Executive Board. Irina Bokova has served as Director-General of the UNESCO Secretariat since 2013 and is responsible for implementing the decisions of these two bodies.

Education is one of UNESCO's five key sectors, along with Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, and Communication and Information. UNESCO is also the only United Nations agency whose mandate includes all aspects of education — from preschool-education development to postsecondary education, including technical and vocational training, non-formal education, and literacy.

This report will be included in the General Report of the Canadian delegation to the General Conference prepared by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCU). That is why it refers only to the Education Commission.

2. Canadian delegation

The Honourable François Blais, then Minister, *ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche du Québec*, attended the 38th Session of the General Conference pursuant to the Quebec-Canada agreement on UNESCO and also agreed to represent CMEC at the Education Commission and act as Chief Spokesperson for education. Other members of the Canadian delegation to the Education Commission included:

- Line Beauchamp, Government of Quebec representative, Permanent Delegation of Canada to UNESCO;
- Anne Rhéaume, UNESCO Affairs Coordinator, *Direction des organisations internationales et des enjeux globaux, ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie du Québec*;
- Isabelle Tremblay, Advisor, *Direction des relations extérieures, ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche du Québec*;
- Marie-Christine Lecompte, Program Officer, Education, CCU;

- Marcel Courchesne, Analyst, International, CMEC Secretariat.

The list of participants in the 38th Session of the General Conference, which includes the other members of the Canadian delegation, is available at:

[http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/GBS/38GC/pdf/Liste des Participants_38CG.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/GBS/38GC/pdf/Liste_des_Participants_38CG.pdf).

3. Main issues discussed that are relevant to CMEC and main messages conveyed by the Canadian delegation

The members of the Education Commission considered 13 items on the General Conference agenda, divided into seven debates.

The provisional timetable of the Education Commission's work is available at

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002352/235218e.pdf>.

The revised provisional agenda of the General Conference is available at

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002330/233081e.pdf>.

The organization of the work of the General Conference session is available at

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002330/233091e.pdf>.

High-level meeting on the Education 2030 Framework for Action

One of the most important outcomes of the 38th Session of the General Conference was the adoption and official launch of the Education 2030 Framework for Action at the high-level meeting on Education 2030.

Some 70 ministers of education, heads of UN agencies, senior officials, and representatives of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) took the floor. For Canada, Minister Blais and Her Excellency Elaine Ayotte, Ambassador and member of the Permanent Delegation of Canada to UNESCO, speaking on behalf on Canada's Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, shared the allotted speaking time. Their statements supported the framework for action, which advocates accessible, lifelong, quality education based on innovative educational approaches. Canada encouraged UNESCO and its partners to continue to play a leading role in monitoring the progress being made globally, notably through the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), headquartered in Montreal.

The aim of the framework for action is to rally all countries (including Canada) and their partners around an objective and an ambitious set of global targets; it also suggests ways of implementing, coordinating, financing, and reviewing the post-2015 education agenda — globally, nationally, and regionally — to guarantee equal educational opportunity for all.

The framework also proposes a series of indicators for measuring progress. However, no decision was made on the indicators, which are to be finalized and confirmed through a consultation process in 2016.

First debate – Preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2018–2021; Role of UNESCO in implementing the Education 2030 agenda; Conclusions of the Youth Forum with respect to education

Minister Blais, like many of the other representatives, encouraged UNESCO to implement the Education 2030 agenda by cooperating closely with its networks, particularly UNESCO institutes, national commissions, the Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), the UNEVOC network, and UNESCO chairs.

Several Members States, including Canada, encouraged UNESCO to build on its store of comparative information, thanks largely to UIS, which will remain the official source of comparable data on education between countries, and to the Global Education Monitoring Report, which will be the main monitoring mechanism. Many representatives, including Minister Blais, emphasized the fact that adequate financial and human resources would have to be allocated to UIS and to the report. The vast majority of Members States also encouraged UNESCO to fully assume its leadership and coordination role for Education 2030.

The conclusions of the 9th Youth Forum, held from October 26 to 28, 2015, were presented by two young delegates. The UNESCO Youth Forum has been an integral part of the General Conference since 2009. Its purpose is to establish ties between the work of UNESCO and that of youth organizations, allowing the latter to submit their recommendations to Member States. In Canada, CCU coordinated a consultation of 3,000 young Canadians. Canada's delegation to the Youth Forum consisted of three young people — two from Quebec and one from Manitoba. As in previous years, CCU also supported the participation in the Youth Forum of a delegate from a developing country, this year a young man from Haiti. In their recommendations,¹ the young delegates placed an emphasis on global citizenship education and the importance of taking traditional and Indigenous cultures into consideration.

Second debate – Preliminary report on the development of a global convention on the recognition of higher-education qualifications; Consolidated report on the application of the 1993 Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education (the “1993 Recommendation”)

Member States, including Canada, expressed their support for developing a global convention on the recognition of higher-education qualifications. During the debates, CMEC underscored the relevance of such an instrument, which would enhance university and professional mobility in all regions and strengthen international cooperation in higher education. CMEC emphasized

¹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002351/235185e.pdf>

the importance of having the instrument focus on transparency, equity, quality assurance, and institutional autonomy. Like Canada, many Member States also stressed the importance of building on existing regional conventions and emphasizing common values, taking into account Member States' context and regional capacity, and paying special attention to quality assurance. Some Member States said that they were concerned about the cost of developing and implementing such a global convention.

The draft resolution on developing a global convention was adopted with a number of amendments, including a request that UNESCO ensure the participation of specialists from other regions in the coming regional consultations. UNESCO will provide a schedule of work when it presents its progress report, accompanied by the draft convention, at the 39th Session of the General Conference in 2017.

Third debate – Implementation of 37 C/Resolution 67 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories

The resolution was adopted without debate.

Fourth debate – Consideration and adoption of the Draft Budget for 2016–2017, Major Programme I – Education

Canada supported the adoption of the draft program and budget, as did other Member States, and expressed its satisfaction with the adjustments made to line of action 3, considering them an accurate reflection of the priority given to education by UNESCO and its active role in coordinating the Education 2030 agenda.

Fifth debate – Proposal for the revision of the 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education; Proposal for the revision of the 2001 revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The revised versions of both recommendations received the support of most Members States, including Canada, considering that both reflect the current realities and issues. In terms of new international standards, both recommendations were deemed essential to the implementation of the Education 2030 Framework for Action. Moreover, Canada and several other Member States pronounced themselves satisfied with the innovative consultation processes and congratulated UNESCO on its efforts to align the two recommendations. Like many other delegates, Ms. Beauchamp, as the Government of Quebec representative, emphasized the need for flexibility in applying the recommendations in order to take into account the specific features and characteristics of the education systems in each Member State, including those in federated countries.

The two draft resolutions were adopted with a few amendments. UNESCO was asked by Member States to report on the implementation status of each of these recommendations at the 40th Session of the General Conference (2019).

Sixth debate – Management of the education-related category 1 institutes; Amendments to the Statutes of the International Bureau of Education (IBE); Establishment of category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO

Early on in the debate, the board chairs of the seven UNESCO education-related category 1 institutes,² or the persons representing them, reported on their activities in 2013–2015. Following this, Qian Tang, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, spoke about the continuing progress being made on improving the management of education-related category 1 institutes in three key areas: (1) program management and coordination, (2) financial and budgetary management, and (3) human-resource management.

Two category 2 centres were established without debate: one in Bangladesh (the International Mother Language Institute) and the other in China (the International Centre for Higher Education Innovation).

Seventh debate – Proclamation of November 5 as International Romani Language Day

The resolution was adopted without debate.

4. Main outcomes of the conference

Thanks to the close collaboration between the Government of Quebec, CMEC, Canada's Permanent Delegation to UNESCO and CCU, delegates were able to take an active part in the conference and achieve their objectives.

Over the course of the seven debates, more than 123 interventions were made by UNESCO Member States. The main issues addressed were:

- UNESCO's leadership role in implementing the new Education 2030 agenda;
- the promotion of inclusive, quality education;
- the promotion of global citizenship education;
- the development of cross-sectoral policies and the engagement of all parties in the process, including youth;

² The seven institutes are the International Bureau of Education (IBE), the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP), the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE), the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEPSD).

- consideration of the various different forms of learning and the promotion of information technology;
- the importance of promoting lifelong learning in education; and
- the use of existing structures such as national commissions, ASPnet, and UNESCO chairs in the promotion and implementation of UNESCO activities.

In concrete terms, with respect to UNESCO's activities for 2016–17, the General Conference approved a total budget of US\$667 million but an expenditure plan of US\$518 million, based on cash-flow realities resulting from the suspension of the US financial contribution (approximately 22 per cent of the total budget). Lastly, US\$83,258,500 was set aside for Major Programme 1 – Education, US\$14,820,000 of which is earmarked for education-related category 1 institutes. It is therefore clear that education remains a top priority for UNESCO.

The complete *Report of the Education Commission* is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002354/235480e.pdf>.

The *Oral Report by the Chairperson of the Education Commission* presented at the 13th plenary meeting on November 13, 2015, is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002355/235518e.pdf>.

5. Follow-up for CMEC

To sum up, members of the Canadian delegation felt that most of their education objectives had been achieved. Given the importance of UNESCO as a priority international organization for CMEC, as well as the very high conference attendance — a record 2,738 delegates from 191 delegations — it is strongly recommended that CMEC participate in the 39th Session of the General Conference in 2017 and be represented by a provincial or territorial minister. CMEC will coordinate its participation with the federal government, and with the Quebec government under the Quebec-Canada Agreement on UNESCO.

The delegation also recommends that CMEC closely monitor:

- the implementation of the Education 2030 Framework for Action, in view of its importance, scope, and the impact it will have on education globally over the next 15 years;
- the development of monitoring indicators (global, thematic, regional, and national) for measuring progress. Canada will have to report regularly on the progress being made in developing the indicators to be established over the course of 2016; and
- the development of the draft global convention on the recognition of higher-education qualifications to be prepared by the drafting committee and submitted at the next General Conference in 2017.

Lastly, the members of the Canadian delegation wish to highlight the outstanding cooperation of CCU, which consulted its members as well as civil society, and acknowledge the excellent

work of the staff at Global Affairs Canada, CCU, the Government of Quebec, and CMEC on the development of Canada's positions.