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Council of  
Ministers  
of Education,  
Canada

Conseil des  
ministres  
de l'Éducation  
(Canada)

## **G20 Education Ministerial Meeting and the Education and Joint Education and Employment Ministerial Meeting**

September 5–6, 2018

Mendoza, Argentina

### **Report of the Canadian Delegation**



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## Introduction

The G20 Education Ministerial Meeting and the Education and Joint Education and Employment Ministerial Meetings took place on September 5–6, 2018, in Mendoza, Argentina.

The G20 was created in 1999 after G7 finance ministers and central bank governors saw a need for a more inclusive body with a stronger impact to address the world's financial challenges. Argentina holds the G20 presidency for 2018, and it is the first year that education has been included in the G20 agenda. It is therefore the first time that CMEC was represented at this international table.

Discussions at ministerial-level meetings, such as the G20 Education Ministerial Meeting and the Education and Joint Education and Employment Ministerial Meetings, will contribute to the discussions that will take place during the G20 Leaders' Summit, on November 30–December 1, 2018, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The G20 Education Ministerial Meeting and the Education and Joint Education and Employment Ministerial Meetings were opportunities for ministers of education and employment to discuss the future of work as well as best practices in educating and training future workers with the necessary skills.

## Canadian delegation

The Canadian delegation was co-led by the Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor, Minister of Advanced Education, Saskatchewan, as provincial co-head and representing CMEC, and the Honourable Patricia A. Hadju, Minister of Employment, Workforce, and Labour, as federal co-head. The Canadian delegation included eight delegates in total.

### CMEC

- Tina Beaudry-Mellor, Minister of Advanced Education, Saskatchewan
- Antonella Manca-Mangoff, Director, International, CMEC Secretariat

### Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)

- Patricia Hajdu, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour
- Daniel McKenzie, Policy Advisor

- Stephen Johnson, Director General, Labour Market Information, Skills and Employment Branch
- Jacinthe Arsenault, Manager, International Relations, Strategic and Service Policy Branch
- Annie Boudrias, Communications Advisor, Public Affairs and Stakeholder Relations
- Beatriz Ventura, Public, Cultural and Academic Affairs Officer, Canadian Embassy (Argentina)

## Key discussion points

Representatives from G20 member and guest countries reiterated their commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular to Sustainable Development Goal 4 – to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

During the education meeting, ministers shared their views on the role of education in equipping students with the necessary skills for the current and future labour market. They shared key policies being implemented in their respective countries related to curriculum reform, teacher training, innovative education strategies, and education financing, both domestic and international.

Minister Beaudry-Mellor highlighted CMEC’s work on global competencies and noted they were emphasized in last year’s Dusseldorf Ministerial Statement on the Digital Economy ([http://unctad.org/meetings/en/Contribution/dtl\\_eWeek2017c02-G20\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/meetings/en/Contribution/dtl_eWeek2017c02-G20_en.pdf)). She also discussed how this curricular reform is well aligned with global education initiatives and is built on a solid foundation of literacy and numeracy. Ministers reiterated the importance of teaching youth foundational skills, as well as training them in digital technologies, including the ability to analyze and evaluate large amounts of digital and on-line data. Ministers also underscored the need to develop attributes such as resiliency and self-motivation in today’s students, given the unpredictable future world of work.

Argentina emphasized the importance of promoting multiple and variable pathways into lifelong education and adopting curriculum programs that are responsive to evidence-based practices and employment trends. In this context, the education minister for Argentina indicated that it is important that “education keeps pace with societal and technological innovations such as artificial intelligence, big data, and the Internet of things.”

There was also considerable discussion about the important role of applied learning. Minister Beaudry-Mellor highlighted the important position that polytechnic institutes play in this regard. She also noted the important relationship between our provincial/territorial education systems and economic and labour markets, and that investing in skills is a tripartite responsibility between industry, educators, and government. She mentioned that in 2017, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) adopted the CMEC Reference Framework for Successful Student Transitions to support continued success in student transitions and the development of skills for life and work.

Training teachers with the appropriate set of digital knowledge and skills is a key issue for all countries. Minister Beaudry-Mellor emphasized the importance for teachers to prepare for developments digitalization. She also discussed how a number of provinces and territories are responding both to calls for digital literacy and a shortage of skilled labour, by introducing coding and financial literacy in the K–12 systems, with particular attention to engaging girls in these subjects. In addition, in keeping with the theme of inclusion, she shared that her home province, Saskatchewan, has delivered robotics and coding pilot projects for Grades 4 to 8 on two First Nations Reserves. She also noted that there has been an expansion in the number of programs in computer science and software engineering that facilitate connections between academics, postsecondary students, and members of industry. These programs foster collaboration and innovation, through research parks, and accelerate the transfer of research findings from public sector research to markets.

Ministers, particularly those from Argentina and Russia, also underscored the need to re-skill older workers in view of shifting retirement ages. The USA stressed the importance of coordinating employment and education. To solidify this alignment, their education and employment departments will be merged into one in the coming months. In summer 2018, they also announced federal funding of \$150 million to provide job training to those who have been impacted by the opioid crisis and help them reintegrate society.

The inclusion of lifelong learning as a priority was particularly accentuated by Singapore. Singapore launched the SkillsFuture Series in 2017—a list of short, industry-relevant training programs that focus on emerging skills. The program identifies eight categories: data analytics, finance, tech-enabled services, digital media, cyber security, entrepreneurship, advanced manufacturing, and urban solutions. This initiative is targeted at Singaporeans who are keen to gain a basic understanding or deepen their skills in these emerging areas.

Japan continues to develop a number of teacher training courses. New guidelines for their teacher training curriculum, to be implemented in 2025, will emphasize business-management knowledge.

The Republic of Korea is extending training to people through their polytechnic institutions, in particular to 50–60-year-olds, with an aim toward continued employability. Saudi Arabia, by contrast, with 60 percent of the population under 25 years old, wants to ensure that their students acquire strong foundational and soft skills, as well as language competencies.

Minister Beaudry-Mellor spoke of the progress we are making in Canada in responding to the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, noting that many provinces and territories have developed pre- and in-service opportunities to incorporate Indigenous knowledge, history, perspectives, and cultures into classroom practices, and enhance educators' capacity to support Indigenous education.

Finally, countries committed to strengthening international cooperation and collectively addressing common challenges by learning from each other's experiences, sharing knowledge and promising practices, and developing joint initiatives at regional, bilateral, and multilateral levels.

## Key Outcomes

### *Education Declaration and the Joint Education and Employment Declarations*

Agreed upon by all G20 member countries, both the Education Declaration and the Joint Education and Employment Declarations reaffirm the unique role of education as a key driver of fair and sustainable development, and acknowledge the need to place education at the centre of the global agenda. Ministers stressed the transformative power, positive results, and broad influence of education. They also noted that education is an essential tool with which to address global challenges and contribute to dialogue, consensus, cooperation, and collaboration.

Provinces and territories were consulted on both the Education Declaration and the Joint Education and Employment Declarations (APPENDICES I and II), and most comments had been integrated into the declarations before the meetings. However, the preparatory meetings on September 4 and 5 provided another opportunity for Canada to successfully negotiate additional language in both declarations. The most significant negotiations resulted in the inclusion of the following terms: safe-learning environments, work-based learning and experiences, and a minimum of 12 years of schooling, the latter of which is particularly important for girls in developing countries. Some countries expressed opposition to this last inclusion (e.g., India, China, USA), although the changes requested were supported by UK and UNESCO.

Prior to the meetings, Argentina had sent out a request to member countries to contribute to a database they were developing, titled Global Campus, which they presented during the meetings. The platform aims to provide information by country on international scholarships available for students, researchers, and teachers. Canada has yet to agree to contribute to this project; however, CMEC will circulate a memorandum to ministers to determine Canada's potential participation.

### *2019 and 2020 G20 meetings*

During the G20 Education Ministerial Meeting, Minister Beaudry-Mellor congratulated Argentina in making education one of the G20's priorities and underscored the close alignment between education and the world of work. Minister Beaudry-Mellor's statements were supported by the majority of countries, and, as a direct result of the minister's comments, Japan announced that they now plan to host a symposium on education in the months leading up to the G20 in late fall 2019. Japan will hold the 2019 G20 presidency, and, significantly, had not been intending to include education in the agenda before this meeting. Further, Saudi Arabia will hold the G20 presidency in 2020, and announced that it will include an education-specific meeting in their G20 agenda.

### ***Bilateral meetings and meet and greets***

During bilateral meetings with India and China respectively, both high-level officials urged Canada to send more Canadian students to study abroad.

Argentina's Secretary of Education, Mercedes Miguel, asked whether Canada could assist them with their upcoming curriculum reform in math by sharing Canadian expertise in teaching and learning mathematics.

Finally, CMEC had the opportunity to speak with the newly appointed UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education Stefania Giannini, who is looking forward to hearing more about CMEC's work on Indigenous education and proposed activities to highlight this work in the near future.

### **Conclusion**

As the first country to hold the G20 presidency, Argentina has been credited with being bold by making education a priority of the G20 and by bringing the issue to the forefront for world leaders and international institutions. The G20 Education Ministerial Meeting and the Joint Education and Employment Ministerial Meetings marked a turning point in the G20. The G20 Education Ministerial Meeting and the Joint Education and Employment Ministerial Meetings will help world leaders recognize the fundamental role of education in creating healthy societies and an educated workforce that can meet the challenges of the future. Canada's voice in ensuring that education continues to be a priority for the G20 was demonstrably influential. It is recommended that CMEC attend the education symposium in Tokyo, Japan, in 2019, and the G20 education meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2020.