



CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO
COMMISSION CANADIENNE POUR L'UNESCO

For immediate release

**CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO LAUNCHES FIRST-EVER
INTERNATIONAL ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK**

September 5, 2002 (Gatineau (Hull), Quebec) Today's launch of the first-ever International Adult Learners' Week in Canada challenged everyone to look at education and learning in a new way. According to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and experts in the field, adult learning lies at the very heart of meeting many of the challenges we face today.

"Learning has the power to change our lives," said Max Wyman, President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, at the pan-Canadian launch event in Gatineau (Hull), Quebec. "It affects everything we do - from being able to adapt to the new economy, to welcoming and integrating immigrants, protecting our environment and our health, understanding scientific breakthroughs and their ethical implications, recognizing the unique values of diverse cultures, fulfilling our individual human potential and abolishing the scourge of illiteracy." Ms. Michèle Jean, Vice-President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, added: "Learning throughout life also equips us to face problems that arise in our personal, family or vocational lives. It allows us to strengthen our skills and understand our past to better grasp the present and participate in the development of the future."

With today's launch, Canada joins a growing international movement for adult learning throughout life, now representing more than 30 countries. International Adult Learners' Week takes place from September 8 to 14, 2002, in conjunction with International Literacy Day (September 8). Established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Adult Learners' Week is a vehicle to promote a culture of education and learning throughout life, critical to the development of society and a knowledge-based economy. It aims at promoting and highlighting the diversity of places to learn, people who learn and ways of learning.

Under the leadership of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, International Adult Learners' Week is the result of a successful partnership between federal and provincial/territorial governments, the education sector, civil society and others. Partners include: Human Resources Development Canada; the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC); l'Association canadienne d'éducation des adultes des universités de langue française (ACDEAULF); the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE); the Canadian Network for Democratic Learning (CANDLE); la Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF); l'Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes (ICEA); and the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL).

In addition to the launch event, activities across Canada for International Adult Learners' Week include mobilization campaigns in the provinces and territories. These campaigns will continue throughout the year. Efforts will also be devoted to the creation of additional partnerships between the private, public and non-governmental sectors. A calendar of events is provided on the International Adult Learners' Week Website at www.adultlearning.unesco.ca, hosted by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

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The new vision for adult learning was drawn from the Declaration and Agenda for the Future of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education of UNESCO (Hamburg, 1997). It reflects the diversity of the groups concerned by adult learning – women, community and literacy groups; labour, education, culture, health, environment, media, new information and communication technologies, human rights and international cooperation communities; and seniors, marginalized groups, Aboriginal groups, immigrants, people with disabilities, inmates, refugees and the homeless.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO is an arm's length consultative forum that advises the Canadian government on its relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and coordinates its activities in Canada.