

How do we enhance the job-creating potential of our economies?

This challenge is not one that governments can address alone. The implementation of a successful jobs and growth strategy requires continued active involvement and co-operation among government, business, labour and individuals through effective partnerships based on shared goals.

The Lille conference will focus on three themes: the macro-economic environment for jobs and growth; the role of technology, innovation and productivity in creating high-quality jobs; and labour market and social policy issues.

The discussion of the macro-economic environment will focus on the role of appropriate monetary and fiscal policy, as well as the role of trade and investment, in establishing the foundation for job creation. Canada believes the key to strong job creation is a strong economy: a healthy economic climate encourages the private sector to create jobs. This conference discussion will also provide the context for the subsequent discussion of the other issues.

The second theme concerns the positive contributions of technology, innovation and productivity in creating high-quality jobs. The discussion will touch on entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized businesses, new forms of work, and human capital investment — that is, investment in education, training and lifelong learning. This discussion fits in well with Canada's own priorities. The federal government has re-allocated money for new investments in youth, technology and trade. Such investment is essential to the creation of more and better jobs — particularly the investment in young people, upon whom the future of our economies depends. There is a clear role for government in helping young people to acquire the right skills and in providing them with opportunities to gain work experience.

The discussion of labour market and social policy issues will focus on labour market policies, especially as they affect vulnerable workers. Ministers are expected to discuss the reasons for stubbornly high unemployment rates in the G-7 countries, and policies that would enable all to participate in economic growth. Canada wants to see faster progress throughout G-7 economies in addressing structural problems and encouraging innovation and productivity. Strength in one economy spills over into others.

The G-7 Ministerial Conference on Employment in Lille should be seen as one step in a continuing process. Other steps include the annual Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Ministerial Meeting, to be held this year in Paris in May, and the annual G-7 Economic Summit, to be held this year in Lyon, France, in June.