

The G-7 Employment Conference April 1-2, 1996, Lille, France

Group of Seven (G-7) ministers responsible for employment, finance and industry are meeting in Lille, France, on April 1 and 2 to discuss ways of creating jobs and reducing unemployment. The timing and topic of this conference fit in well with Canada's own agenda. Job creation and growth remain Canada's top priority. As outlined in the federal Budget, Canada has an integrated strategy to encourage economic growth and create more jobs. The different perspectives of the G-7 ministers will give rise to different approaches to the problem. Some will emphasize policies that will put their economies on a long-term path of sustained growth; others will emphasize policies more specifically targeted to the needs of the labour market. The common objective is to foster an environment conducive to job creation.

The conference is a follow-up to the 1994 Detroit Jobs Conference and an outcome of the Naples (1994) and the Halifax (1995) G-7 summits. At the Halifax Summit, the G-7 leaders accepted President Chirac's offer to host this ministerial conference before the Lyon Economic Summit in June. In their communiqué, the G-7 leaders asked ministers "to review the progress made in job creation and consider how best to increase employment in all of our countries."

The 1994 Detroit Jobs Conference provided a unique forum for G-7 ministers responsible for employment, finance, industry and trade to discuss, from their various perspectives, the challenges of reducing unemployment and creating jobs. Recognizing the importance of preparing G-7 economies for change, ministers outlined several policy approaches to sustain growth, create more and better jobs, and reduce unemployment. The policies formed the basis for commitments made by leaders at the Naples Summit and subsequently reinforced in Halifax. These commitments are:

- to work for growth and stability and accelerate reforms so as to improve the job-creating capacity of economies;
- to undertake structural reforms for more flexible labour markets, and to help individuals adjust to change;
- to increase investment in people through education, training, and lifelong learning;
- to encourage and promote innovation and the spread of new technologies;
- to promote international trade and investment as generators of growth; and
- to promote competition and remove impediments to growth, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The commitments constitute a strategy for jobs and growth that remains valid for all G-7 countries. Member states have already made considerable progress and experienced some of the benefits. These benefits promise to be greater in the longer term. Nevertheless, the G-7