

Growth, Employability and Inclusion

Growth and employment policies will be addressed by G-8 leaders as one of their main themes at Birmingham. The discussion will be premised on the concern that all citizens should have opportunities to participate in the social fabric of their society. Canada leads its G-8 partners in employment growth, creating some 1.2 million net new jobs since October 1993.

In the lead-up to the Birmingham G-8 Summit, several events have contributed to international thinking about employment issues. These include the Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) meeting of labour ministers in October 1997, the European Union's Luxembourg Summit in November 1997, the G-8 Kobe jobs conference in November 1997 and the G-8 London conference on growth, employability and inclusion in February 1998. Previously, ministerial meetings on employment took place in Lille in 1996 and in Detroit in 1994. With global economic integration and interdependence on the rise, these meetings have focused on sharing information and experiences and on achieving consensus on common employment issues.

G-8 finance and employment ministers took part in the London conference in February and achieved a consensus on the need for sound management of the economy and effective measures to increase employment. Ministers emphasized the importance of integrating economic and social policies, and they proposed seven principles, dubbed the "seven pillars of wisdom," for the leaders to consider at Birmingham. The principles are

- Pursuing sound macroeconomic policies
- Achieving structural reforms in labour, capital, and product markets
- Fostering entrepreneurship and an economic climate favourable to the growth of small and medium enterprises
- Enhancing employment, education and training, particularly for young people
- Reforming tax/benefit systems to provide incentives to foster growth and employment and transition from welfare to work
- Encouraging lifelong learning
- Promoting equal opportunities and combating discrimination

These principles closely match Canada's approach to employment, as outlined in *Canada's Jobs Strategy*. Canada has focused on strengthening its economy by balancing the budget and getting its fundamentals right to set the stage for growth and job creation; on creating jobs by expanding exports and stimulating investment; and on facilitating access to the education and experience that young Canadians need for the jobs of tomorrow and helping Canadians to prepare for the knowledge-based economy of the future. For Canada, a discussion on opportunities for youth will be a top priority at Birmingham.