

G-7 Employment Ministerial Conference

G-7 ministers responsible for employment, finance, industry and trade met in Lille, France, in April to discuss ways of creating jobs and reducing unemployment. The meeting fit well with Canada's own jobs and growth agenda.

The Lille Jobs Conference was a follow-up to the 1994 Detroit Jobs Conference and was an outcome of the 1994 Naples and the 1995 Halifax G-7 summits. In Halifax, G-7 leaders accepted French President Jacques Chirac's offer to host this ministerial conference before the Lyon Economic Summit in June. In their communiqué, 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."

At the Detroit conference, ministers for employment, finance, industry and trade outlined 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 were reinforced subsequently in Halifax.

With this as background, the Lille conference focused 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. Industry Minister John Manley and Human Resources Minister Douglas Young represented Canada.

After the conference, the French co-chairs, ministers Jacques Barrot and Jean Arthuis, released their conclusions, which generally reinforce the Canadian approach to jobs and growth.

The conclusions stressed that the challenge facing the participants of the Lille conference was "to encourage economic institutions and policies that ensure that all citizens can seize the opportunities to compete in the global economy and to master the technologies of the new century."

While noting that there was no single solution for the varied situations of the G-7 countries, the conclusions outline some key elements necessary to meet this challenge, including:

- creating the conditions for sustainable growth through appropriate fiscal and monetary policies,
- ensuring well-functioning markets,
- encouraging the emergence of the jobs of the future, and
- making sure that growth benefits everyone.