

Innovation Policy Briefing

Inclusive and responsible innovation coming full circle

As Canada prepares for the 2018 G7 Summit in Charlevoix, Que., it should build on this ongoing attention to inclusive innovation and knowledge creation.



Paul Dufour

Opinion

OTTAWA—To say that trendy titles for creative ideas are making a comeback in policy circles would be an understatement. The semiotics surrounding this embrace for knowledge, innovation, and technology are quite rich. Inclusive, sound, responsible, open, transparent, citizen-led, human-centric are just some of the monikers now appearing on the global stage.

Take, for example, the recent statement of G7 Industry and ICT ministers (all men incidentally) issued out of Torino, Italy, last week. The 15-page declaration, “Making The Next Production Revolution Inclusive, Open, and Secure,” covers considerable policy ground, including digital futures, IPR, SMEs, start-ups, human-centric AI, cybersecurity, and related matters. The opening section opines that: “The pace of change is accelerating. The Next Production Revolution is now. The combination of a variety of digital and other technologies, new materials and new processes is already transforming production in our countries, with pervasive effects on our lives. This transformation has the potential for far-reaching effects to productivity, employment, skills, economic growth, trade, well-being and the environment. It brings opportunities,



Innovation Minister Navdeep Bains and Business Council of Canada CEO John Manley, pictured Oct. 18, 2016, at the Public Policy Forum’s Growth Summit. There is much to build on, ranging from the federal government’s Innovation and Skills Plan, to the recommendations issued by the Naylor review, and the work of science organizations and academic research now underway, writes Paul Dufour. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

as well as challenges for our economies and societies.”

The declaration was followed by another from G7 science and research ministers (not all men) on training and research infrastructures, including a central issue on the role of the education and research system in ensuring that the so-called new technological paradigm might bring social and economic growth, create social cohesion, and reduce inequalities. Considerable effort on this subject is ongoing in academic and policy environments, including work at the University of Ottawa’s Institute for Science, Society and Policy.

But there is a history to all this. After Canada first joined the group in 1976 (making it formally the G7), these summit meetings have always addressed emerging and transformative global issues underpinned by the pace of knowledge and technology.

For instance, 35 years ago, the G7 heads of state and government commissioned a working group on technology, growth, and employment in June 1982 to explore the opportunities problems and challenges presented by emerging technologies. Their 80-page report in January 1983 outlined the role of science, technology, and innovation in revitalizing economic development and growth.

Future potential for new technologies such as robotics, remote sensing ICT, biotechnology, and renewable energy was underscored, with a reminder that fundamental scientific research is one source of technological progress in industry and should be given special support by governments, along with a tellingly cautionary note that: the fate of our scientific and technological innovations is largely a function of the willingness of the public to accept them.

The report went on to make a series of recommendations on regulatory, patent, and trade policies, capacity building in the developing world, greater international cooperation in science and technology, and impacts of new technologies in mature industries. It concluded by noting that G7 leaders take science, technology and innovation into account in their policy decisions and continue to include these on their agenda at future summit meetings. Hence, innovation, growth and employment have indeed benefited from CPA, continuous partial attention.

So as Canada prepares for the 2018 G7 Summit in Charlevoix, Que., it should build on this ongoing attention to inclusive innovation and knowledge creation. There is much to build on ranging from the federal government’s Innovation and Skills Plan, to the recommendations issued by the Naylor review of fundamental science along with the strategies of provincial governments, along with work of science organizations and academic research now underway. But it should also be prepared to answer the key issue of responsible innovation for what purpose—paying special attention to the social, environmental and economic engagements and impacts.

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