

As in the other groups conducted across Canada, the credibility of "politicians" was assessed relatively negatively. Despite this overall view, Premier Bourassa stood out as an exception to this and was perceived as the most credible of present political party or government leaders, either provincially or federally. Several bases for this impression emerged, including respect for his credentials and background in economics, his past record as having "delivered" for Quebec on the James Bay hydro-electric power project, as well as acknowledgement of his demonstrated commitment to advancing and representing the interests of Quebec.

Among other political leaders, federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent was perceived as the most credible spokesman among the three federal leaders, but only by a slight margin among the participants. Almost everyone discredited these politicians as a main source of information for them and similar negative assessments were made of union leaders' credibility, except with respect to their comments regarding prospective job gains or losses from a free trade deal. Journalists were not seen as especially credible, except those who were considered experts in economic or legal matters. While many participants in the other focus groups held across Canada shared this view, there were also a considerable number who did consider the media as somewhat of a relatively balanced and unbiased source of information on the merits or debits of a free trade deal, if only in comparison to other potential information sources or spokespersons or spokesgroups.

Some people in the Montreal groups believed that there should be a public and fully televised First Ministers' Conference on free trade. This was seen as perhaps assisting them in determining how the different Premiers viewed the issues, what they saw as the major benefits and drawbacks, and so on. Such a debate was perceived by these participants as critically important in enabling them to "really know the issue."