

3.0 CANADA AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

3.1 Overall Views on Trade

The focus group findings outlined in this section of the report deal with the participants' general reaction to and impression of international trade and more specifically, its impact on Canadians and on the economy. During this initial part of the discussion, the participants were also asked to give their views on: Canada's ability to compete internationally, free trade and the extent to which globalization is a factor affecting Canadian competitiveness. The participants' views and concerns served to provide a context within which to interpret specific reactions and opinions to a free trade agreement involving Canada, Mexico and the United States.

The Group A participants' reaction to and impression of trade were that trade is an essential function for Canada in a global economy. There was a strong sense that the country no longer has a choice and cannot isolate itself from the international trade market. In both Toronto and Montreal, these A groups were aware that Canada cannot afford to continue exporting natural resources and importing finished goods. Both groups felt that there might be "some short term hardships with trade or free trade", but that there would be "long term gains". They indicated that placing restrictions on trade would only lead to a lack of initiative on the part of industries who "aren't motivated to develop".