

These data reveal essentially the following conclusion. Over the course of the three waves of research, the balance of public opinion appears to have shifted from the clear majority evident in wave I who were of the view that sales of energy to the U.S. "would weaken Canada's control over its energy resources." By wave III, the relative distribution of opinion has become indecisive. The data from the December 8-16 survey shows the public split roughly 50/50, between coming down on the side of guaranteeing access to the U.S. market and ensuring Canada's control over its energy resources.

This trend in opinion may be gratifying for the proponents of free trade in the oil and gas industry. At the same time, it is clear that the public are not of one mind as to the issues of guaranteeing access to the U.S. for Canadian energy resources and the potential effects this may have in economic terms and in terms of Canada's control over its energy resources.

The significant regional differences with respect to the free trade deal's effect on Canada's energy are centred in Ontario and Quebec. As with many other segments of the deal, Ontarians (46%) are much more pessimistic than Canadians on average (37%) about the effects free trade would have on the energy sector. Although this pessimism about the FTA's effect on Canada's energy has been most prominent in Ontario, the intensity of this sentiment has been declining steadily since the first wave of the study (52% in wave I to 46% in wave III).

In Quebec, in the third wave of the study just over one-in-five of the respondents feel that the free trade deal is bad (16%) or very bad (7%) as far as energy is concerned (as opposed to 37% of all Canadians who are of this opinion). At the same time, fully three-quarters (76%) of Quebecers in the third wave of the study, indicate that they believe the free trade deal would be a good deal for Canada with respect to energy.

Given the above situation, it is not surprising that the data reveal that Ontario residents are also more likely than other Canadians to be of the opinion that encouraging the sale of Canada's energy to the United States would result in a weakening of Canada's control over its own energy resources (63% versus 51% in the wave III). It is also not surprising that Quebec respondents, those most optimistic of