

A. Credibility of Stakeholders and Others Involved in the Free Trade Issue

One of the keys to understanding the origins of public opinion on an issue is knowing which spokespersons or "stakeholders" have the greatest credibility. This was explored in the most recent survey.

Economists and other specialists (40%) and business leaders (20%) are most frequently mentioned as those whose opinions Canadians would consider or rely upon most in making up their mind about free trade (Table 10). Thinking specifically about business leaders, 74% would rely most upon the views of "people who run businesses throughout Canada," rather than of "people who run businesses known mainly in the area where you live."

Table 10

CREDIBLE SPOKESPERSON OF FREE TRADE

	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Economists and other specialists	40
Business leaders	20
Businesses well-known throughout Canada	74%
Business known mainly in local area	25%
News media	13
Federal government leaders	9
Labour leaders	8
Provincial government	6

In contrast, percentages are quite low for those opinion leaders who have a tremendous vested interest in free trade such as federal government leaders (9%), provincial government leaders (6%), and labour leaders (8%), as the public appear to have a degree of skepticism about whether these vested interests will be consistent with their own interests. The news media are mentioned by 13%.

The tendency to look to economists and other specialists is evident across all segments of the population. Even unionized employees are more likely to look to economists and other specialists (38%), as opposed to labour leaders (13%).