

## IX. CONCLUSIONS

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- In general, few regional differences emerged in participants' assessments of competitiveness, free trade and the North American Free Trade Agreement. Residents of Ottawa were more polarized and intense in their views than residents of either Winnipeg or Vancouver.
- Participants in all three cities were receptive to (if not fully supportive of) competitiveness as a means of ensuring Canada's economic well-being and perceived high standard of living. Both moderate supporters and moderate opponents conceded that there were clear links between the nation's ability to compete and its prosperity.
- Moderate FTA opponents expressed significant concern about Canada's ability to compete given the perceived high tax rate in Canada, the deficit and the high costs of consumer goods.
- While supporters and opponents of the Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement maintained their positions on the deal, most participants (including moderate FTA opponents) held the view that longer-term benefits might accrue to Canada as a consequence of the free trade agreement between the two countries. No consensus emerged on what constitutes the 'longer-term,' with responses ranging from as little as two to three years to twenty years or more.
- The same cautious view about the potential for longer-term benefits was applied to assessments of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Again, both moderate FTA supporters and opponents were of the view that there was at least potential for longer-term benefits. Not surprisingly, FTA supporters were more firm in this view, identifying such benefits as access to a larger market, increased opportunities to export Canadian goods and expertise (notably high-tech and

