

B. Provincial Impact (I) Ontario

As in the quantitative results, the views as to the overall effect of free trade on Ontario among participants in the focus groups held in Ontario centres were mixed. Those who expected more negative consequences were somewhat more vociferous in expressing their views. They pointed to expected job losses, an influx of U.S. products flooding the Ontario market and the possibility of U.S. companies "pulling up stakes." Those with more-positive views of the effect on Ontario felt that because of its geographic location in the industrial heartland of North America and some inherent competitive advantages such as a skilled labour force, the province would likely benefit.

Among those who expressed a view, most opinions on the effects of free trade on Ontario were based on expectations of the effects on specific sectors. This is in contrast to views apparent among participants in the groups conducted in Vancouver, Halifax and Montreal to a certain extent, among whom there seemed to be a greater sense of what the overall impact of free trade on their province might be. This difference may be a reflection of the relative diversity of the structure of industry and the economy in Ontario, as compared to British Columbia and Atlantic Canada, in which particular resource industries are of overriding or disproportionate importance to the provincial economies.

People did not express views on the anticipated effect of free trade on manufacturing in general, but rather spoke immediately about their perceptions of the likely effects on jobs or the automotive sector primarily. A majority of comments about the effect of free trade on both the cars and car parts sectors asserted that the effects of free trade on them would be negative. This is somewhat consistent with the June survey results, which show that 49% of Ontarians feel that the sector will be worse off under free trade, compared to 39% who think it will be better off. Similarly, in regard to agriculture, 59% of Ontarians surveyed in June expect that agriculture and farming will be worse off under free trade.

Reasons stated for the expectations regarding the auto sector basically stressed the perception that the Americans could produce a greater volume of cars, more cheaply than can be done in Canada. As a result, these people thought that American cars would