

Such results may indicate that some of those people who oppose free trade are still willing to believe that the government is doing something that is considered an attempt to improve Canada's trading situation. An indication of this is found in the fact that 28% in wave III and 32% in wave I of those who oppose the agreement believe it is part of a general effort to improve Canada's international trading position. This may imply that although many Canadians do not support it, they nevertheless think that the government had good intentions and motives in attempting to reach a trade agreement.

In terms of views on the government's knowing how to deal with the changes the free trade agreement would bring in Canada, there is an even split between the percentage of Canadians who agree that the government is prepared and those who disagree.

As has been the situation in the past, Ontario residents continue to be more likely to disagree that the government has a good idea of how to handle the effects of free trade. In the first wave of the study, only 33% of Ontario residents agreed that the government has a good idea of how to deal with the expected changes; however, this has increased to 39% by the third wave. In contrast, fully two-thirds of the Quebec respondents in the third wave of the study think the government has a good idea of how to cope with the changes free trade would bring to Canada.

On a less positive note, the percentage of Canadians who agree that Canada gave too much to the Americans at the bargaining table continues to be substantial. Approximately six out of 10 Canadians agree with the statement: "From what I've heard or read, Canada gave away too much to the Americans in the free trade agreement." Almost as many agree that the free trade deal would increase tensions among groups and regions of the country (56%). Somewhat more encouraging to proponents of free trade is the fact there has been a steady decline from the first wave through the third wave of the study, in the percentage of respondents who do agree with these two statements.

Regional analysis identifies a substantial decline in the percentage of Ontario residents who agree that Canada "gave too much away to the Americans" occurred from the first wave to the third wave of the survey (68% to 60%). In Quebec, only 54% of respondents in the third wave agree that free trade would lead to an increase in tension among groups and regions in the country, as compared to 62% in the first wave.