

## II. OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF THE IDEA OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING DEALING WITH CANADA-U.S. FREE TRADE

Group participants' views regarding the degree of acceptability of federal government advertising dealing with Canada-U.S. free trade stems from an over-riding concern for information. There appeared to be a consensus among a majority of participants that government advertisements are an appropriate and legitimate expenditure of public funds. If done in a balanced way, the advertising was thought to be likely to contribute to filling a perceived void of information.

In fact, consistent references were made by respondents in most groups to the notion that the federal government has an obligation to inform Canadians about free trade. Such an obligation, however, was also thought to entail an equally important obligation on the part of the government to present information to Canadians about "both sides" of free trade -- the opportunities and the potential problems. Representative comments articulating this view include the following:

- o The government has an obligation to ask for our opinions but doesn't have an obligation to publish a one-sided point of view.
- o If they show both sides, it's fine, but it needs to be balanced though.
- o I would like to see information on government plans for dealing with the problems of free trade.

The issue of when the appropriate timing for such advertising would be was also addressed. Most participants did not have any problem with the advertising appearing during the debate in Parliament over the enabling legislation for the Canada-U.S. FTA. To sum up, most people accept as legitimate and appropriate the expenditure of public funds on advertising dealing with Canada-U.S. free trade. It should be recognized, however, that for many people this acceptance appears to be tied to the requirement for advertising which is informational and balanced.