

However, while international trade was viewed as an opportunity, most respondents deplored the fact that Canada is still exporting, to a large extent, its natural resources - because they are non-renewable, keep Canada segregated as a resource supplier as opposed to product manufacturer for world markets, and may be significantly and negatively affecting the environment in the longer term. There was a view that Canadians should develop manufacturing in some specialized areas where other countries are less competitive -- in short, if there is a soft spot in the marketplace, Canadians should seize the opportunity and "corner" the production of these goods.

It was also noted that global trading and competitiveness is linked in respondents minds to perceptions of national identity: in order to compete, we must not only make good quality and distinctly Canadian products, but that we must be proud: "it is an attribute, just as the United States is aggressive".

With respect to key issues in international trade in the 1990's, respondents felt that getting "our own economic house in order" was important -- and that a plan for making Canadians better prepared, trained and positioned was an imperative to meet world market challenges. Some of those challenges identified included competition against lower paid ("cheap" "foreign") labour (Japan, Korea, Mexico) which would be accomplished only through a concurrent lowering of Canadians' wage expectations and making better quality products/being more productive; being part of the world market place where Canadians could trade "21st century" products i.e., health care, technology, etc. and not "old world" resource based products; and, how to forge new alliances with other trading countries where foreign investment in Canada was encouraged and welcomed -- but balanced so that Canadians would not lose control over their own economy or their ability to make decisions.

Perceptions as to the threats to Canada in international trade tended to focus not so much on the ultimate effects but rather on structural inadequacies which could lead to "not being in the game" -- noting that Canadians were generally unprepared, without a game plan, and not exploiting new or growing areas of non resource based manufacturing and technology for international consumption. Also, as noted above, modest concern was voiced over potential loss of sovereignty unless government kept "tabs" on foreign investment.