

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following are the key highlights and directional conclusions of the focus groups held April 17, 18 and 19, 1990:

(i) Key Highlights

- a) Respondents are generally not very optimistic about the economic outlook for the next 2 to 3 years -- noting that the GST, high interest rates and the FTA will not help. Further, respondents indicated that Canada is gradually going through a restructuring of the economy, and that the Meech Lake Accord is the big unknown for the time being.
- b) Respondents indicated that some of the big issues faced by Canadians currently concern the GST, housing, high interest rates, health care, education, free trade, and the deficit.
- c) In this era of globalization, respondents opined that we must have confidence in ourselves, be more aggressive and specialize in order to be more competitive and attract foreign investment. "Europe 1992", the FTA, Eastern European countries liberalization etc. are all seen as opportunities for hard working, motivated, determined and well-trained Canadian players.
- d) International trade is well understood by the majority of respondents and most deplored the fact that Canada is still exporting, to a large extent, its natural resources (non renewable). It was indicated that Canadians should develop their own manufacturing in some "specialized areas" where others are less competitive, noting that this is how "jobs can be created for all".
- e) Respondents suggested that it is difficult for Canada to be competitive -- that we produce high quality goods but salaries are high ("we are spoiled") and we need better trained people. In order to be competitive, respondents indicated that we need to have something "unique", and nothing really exists to make us so. Further, Canadians need to produce "high quality goods" -- which we can do -- noting that the fundamental issue is really "who can best keep Canada competitive and Canadian in the 1990's".