

Given the low level of understanding of the details of free trade, there also was a recognition that it would be important for the average Canadian to look to various spokesmen, stakeholders and other observers and analysts to obtain more information about any specific free trade deal in order to form their own opinions about it. Several alternative sources were presented to participants, ranging from the Prime Minister and Premiers, to labour and business leaders.

Results show that there was no consensus as to any one group or individual whose opinion Canadians would consider most in determining whether they felt that a free trade deal was good or bad for the country. Cynicism was evident among a number of participants who were of the view that each of these groups had a bias, or a special interest vis-à-vis free trade. Among the more cynical expressions of this view was a statement that "You can't trust any of those groups. They see what they want to see." Therefore, while different people preferred different groups, overall there was a sense that the average Canadian should "read and listen to everything that's going on," and then form their own opinion.

Somewhat of a hierarchy of perceived credibility was apparent in the opinions expressed by group participants. Politicians (both federal and provincial) as a group were seen by most to be among those perceived as least credible and least likely to be among those whose opinion participants would consider most. One notable exception to this very clear consensus among group participants overall was the considerable credibility of Robert Bourassa as an information source on the merits of a free trade deal among Montreal group participants. (See report on Montreal groups in Appendix). Labour leaders also fell into this category, although some people (especially in Vancouver) still felt that their views should be considered as they were thought to be likely to have an appreciation of the employment impact of free trade.

Those groups or stakeholders that overall seemed to be accorded greater credibility consisted of business people, "detached" observers such as economists, financial writers and political analysts, and the media. Even with regard to these, however, several participants noted that each of these groups had some failings as a source of