

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview

Decima Research is pleased to present this report to the Department of External Affairs (DEA) on the findings from a series of focus groups dealing with free trade which were conducted across Canada from July 13 to July 16. Locations for the groups were Halifax, Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto, London and Brantford. In each city, one group consisted of higher socio-economic status (SES) participants whose annual family or household income exceeded \$40,000 per annum. Most of those recruited for the other group held in each city were lower SES individuals, most of whom had annual incomes below \$40,000 per annum.

A report on the results of the groups conducted in Montreal is appended to this document. The report deals with the results from the groups conducted in the other centres across Canada. The major conclusions stemming from the focus group research and presented in the Conclusions segment of this report do, however, draw upon the findings from all of the groups conducted, including those in Montreal.

Perhaps the most basic conclusion that can be drawn from the group discussions is that Canadians do not know much about free trade. They claim not to know much about what is going on and many have difficulty defining what free trade means, especially Canadians of lower socio-economic status (SES). Many think they will not know or will not be able to form an opinion on it until they see "what's on the table." People feel they need more information in order to formulate an opinion on free trade and what it might mean for Canada.

As for Ontario and why opinion on free trade in that province (as revealed through the nation-wide telephone survey conducted by Decima in June) is more skeptical, some further indications of the reasons for this emerged in the groups. As revealed in the quantitative work, there are concerns about the implications of free trade in terms of control over Canada by the U.S. over time, as well as concern about potential job losses. These findings were confirmed and reflected in more detail by the focus group participants.