

Participants were asked to define the attributes of a good or bad trade deal from their perspective. Responses were not focused on the precise content of a deal, so much as on the likely effects of it and the existence of various forms of "safeguards." Of primary concern, however, was that people thought that to determine if a free trade deal was a "good" one, it would be important to know what was in it and what it was going to cover. The concern for information was again paramount. As one participant put it, "You can't make an intelligent decision until you have all of the facts."

A good deal was seen to have to be to Canada's advantage economically, in terms of employment, lower prices, the dollar and the economy overall. Specifically, concern was expressed about protection for Canada's natural resources and environment. There also was a sense among participants that for a deal to be good, it had to be fair and balanced, and that Canada should not have to make all of the concessions. Maintenance of control over social programs was also raised, as was the issue of exclusions. One Brantford group participant remarked that "It's not the inclusions but the exclusions that matter." In this context, some Ontario group participants pointed to agriculture and the automotive sector (Auto Pact) as areas that should be excluded from a deal for it to be good for Canada.

Descriptions of the attributes of a bad deal were presented with reference to the attributes of a good deal. Absence of these attributes would mean that the deal was a bad one for Canada.

1. The average Canadian and stakeholder credibility

Reflecting their own perceptions as noted above, focus group participants felt that the average Canadian will be able to tell if a free trade deal is good or bad by knowing or determining how it is going to affect them personally. Once again, jobs, the security of one's own job, wages, and whether goods will be cheaper or more expensive for the average Canadian, were mentioned. Several also pinpointed the effect on the value of the Canadian dollar as an important factor. In short, as one Brantford participant said: "Is it going to make all that much difference when you go to buy something?"