

## I. INTRODUCTION

Decima Research is pleased to present this report to the Department of External Affairs (DEA) on the results of the May 1988 nation-wide survey of Canadians' attitudes toward the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The objective of this survey is to monitor the evolution of Canadian public opinion toward the FTA, since the deal was signed in January of this year. To facilitate the tracking analysis, reference is made throughout this report to the results of several previous surveys of Canadians' opinions on free trade, which were conducted for the Department by Decima Research.

The survey upon which this report is based was conducted May 7 to May 12 among a randomly selected sample of 1,500 Canadians drawn disproportionately to the national population. The sample was constructed in this manner so as to facilitate reliable analysis on a province-by-province basis.

Consequently, some of the provinces are "over-represented" in the total sample of 1,500 interviews. Nation-wide results for the Canadian population as a whole are reported on the basis of results for a proportionate, weighted sample of 857 cases. Results for a sample of this size are accurate to within  $\pm 3.3\%$ , 95 out of 100 times.

This report is structured in a similar manner to those previously completed for the Department of External Affairs dealing with the free trade issue. The report begins with a discussion of Canadians' attentiveness to, understanding of and familiarity with the FTA. It continues with an analysis of levels of public support and opposition to the deal, followed by the perceived economic, political and independence effects of the deal, as well as the anticipated need for federal government assistance to business and individuals in order to facilitate change. Assessments of the federal government's management of the issue and perceptions of the various free trade opinion leaders are also explored.

Where applicable, regional differences in opinion regarding free trade issues are explored. Major socio-demographic differences in opinion are also summarized.