

Apart from these findings, another theme emerged in the discussion around this segment of the agenda which may be of significance for public communications. That is a theme of Canada and the U.S. working together for their mutual benefit. One participant spoke of a "deal that's beneficial to both Canada and the United States...working together to make things cheaper." The concerns noted above about the necessity for a fair and balanced deal and for controls on U.S. investment appear to be part of or reflect an overall sense among Canadians, of the importance of ensuring that any trade deal is mutually beneficial to both countries.

C. U.S. Protectionism

As evident in the June survey results, only among residents of British Columbia and Newfoundland, were a plurality more inclined to support free trade on the basis of an observation of the protectionist initiatives of the Americans over the past few years. Indeed, Ontarians (57%) and even more so Metro Toronto residents (61%), were less inclined to support free trade in light of recent U.S. protectionist initiatives. One of the objectives of the focus group research was to ascertain some of the underlying reasons for the fact that the linkage made by British Columbians and Newfoundlanders between U.S. protectionism and the need for free trade, is not made by other Canadians as well.

Apart from the expectations of the effects of free trade described above, the main reason or explanation which emerged from the group discussions is that many participants felt that the Americans were not prepared to reach a fair and balanced free trade agreement. This sentiment was most succinctly articulated by a participant in the lower SES Brantford group who said, "Since a lot of these things happened people become more turned off free trade because people began to realize that the U.S. was only out for themselves."

A lack of trust in the U.S. was apparent among many and there were worries and expectations that "free trade would not be free." Typical of statements made along these lines is the following comment by a Halifax participant: "If the U.S. protects its own industries and we have to keep everything and they ship theirs in, that's not going to do anything to help us. Free trade depicts being fair. It has to work both ways or it won't work at all."