

For some groups, environmental and developmental issues converge with a "social" agenda, including labour and human rights, the status of women, the protection of children, poverty eradication, Aboriginal advancement, public education and public health. Of these groups, the most vocal in the trade debate are environmental, developmental and human rights NGOs, and labour unions. As noted above, their arguments are more concerned with the conditions for trade and investment than with the activities themselves. They question whether the current framework for international trade and payments is appropriate for developing countries, where the lack of strong governance structures means that trade may benefit only a commercial oligarchy. Many of them favour a carrot-and-stick approach, using trade agreements to drive desirable changes more forcefully than facilitative approaches such as those favoured by Canada. Some also suggest that they speak for the citizens of the developing world—with whose NGOs many are partnered—and that their groups' views should be heeded before those of developing-country governments, which in their eyes do not necessarily enjoy democratic legitimacy.

As for **Canadians in general**, polls show high confidence in the benefits of trade and trade agreements: they strongly favour further trade liberalization and support the Government's trade policy. But Canadians have heard the criticisms—trade negotiations and agreements are the lightning rod for concerns about globalization—and want reassurance that our trade and economic policies do not put growth ahead of social well-being, either in Canada or globally. Like the citizens of many other countries, Canadians are not comfortable with the lack of certainty about the future. On the other hand, given our long history as a trading nation, they understand intuitively that trade policy can only promote, it cannot guarantee, favourable conditions for Canada or for any other country. What they ask for, in essence, is reassurance that, true to the themes articulated in the most recent Speech from the Throne, the federal government is finding a balance between social/environmental concerns and economic growth; that it has foreseen and mitigated risks of undesirable impacts on Canada's society and environment; and that both social and economic progress will continue internationally and domestically.