

there is a clear desire to promote a stronger Canadian presence in Europe and in important emerging countries of the developing world (with China, India, Brazil and Mexico among those most frequently mentioned). Canada, including the Canadian private sector working with governments at all levels, is urged to do more to take advantage of trade opportunities overseas.

Views on where additional trade and investment options should be pursued vary somewhat by region, with more focus on Euro-Atlantic relations in eastern Canada and on Asia-Pacific relations in western Canada. Many submissions detail how Canada should build on existing ties in these regions as well as with the rest of the Americas. For instance:

We should pursue our own trade agreements with Asian partners ... to constantly signal to sceptical Asians that we want to do business in Asia and with Asians. Our interest should be centred on next-generation bilateral agreements that focus not on tariffs and trade barriers, but on comprehensive liberalization that includes investment, services and the various facets of the knowledge economy.

Or in the words of another respondent:

Canada is a country that matters in the Americas and this advantage should not be forgotten. ... To turn away from the Americas would be a mistake at the strategic level.

Beyond regional concerns, a number of contributions emphasize the need for coherent domestic as well as international policies on issues from immigration to innovation, in order to ensure that Canada will have the educated and skilled work force needed in the competitive knowledge-based global economy of the future. Many argue strongly that we cannot afford to take a passive approach to this issue.

North American Economic Partnership

Canada is already taking tremendous advantage of our North American location as our trade with the U.S. proves. This should not be taken for granted, but rather looked upon as something to improve. Enhancing border security while allowing for the expeditious movement of goods and materials, should be our goal.

– Dialogue participant

Canada should take the initiative in proposing a North American strategy to Washington, because U.S. interest is currently focused elsewhere. ... Canada should work with Mexico as well as the United States in moving beyond the current plateau in the North American relationship. ... To what extent can we preserve our own freedom of action in light of our overwhelming reliance on trade with our southern neighbour?

– Dialogue participant

Participants acknowledge the importance to Canada's prosperity of the Canada-U.S. commercial flows governed by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and agree that strongly managed North American relations must be a central priority of Canadian foreign policy. Yet Canadians also express apprehensions about closer economic integration. While only a few would pull out of existing trade treaties, a considerable number believe that certain aspects of trade agreements (notably private investor rights, and impacts on labour, agriculture and environment) need to be more prominently considered in future negotiations. There are also concerns about perceived bilateral compromises being made on border or immigration policies. Business and provincial contributions tend to urge a more proactive approach to Canada-U.S. dealings, with some arguing for next steps beyond the NAFTA. While there is little consensus on "grand bargain" versus incremental approaches, many participants are concerned that the U.S. market not be taken for granted, and urge that