

In sum, the dominant issues in the free trade debate for the period since April 1986 remain similar in order of priority for most Canadians. But a slight drop in correlation coefficient values indicates that any one issue has less influence on individual positions on free trade. This phenomenon may be a reflection of a broadening awareness of the complexity of issues at stake.

G. Conclusions

- o Levels of overall support for free trade, while remaining stable since April 1986, indicate a slight softening of resolve among supporters and opponents.
- o Canadians feel that bilateral relations have cooled. While the majority continue to be confident that Canadians can bargain effectively with the Americans, the level of confidence is eroding. The federal government is not perceived to be managing negotiations well. The consensus among 44% of all Canadians was that the federal response to the United States tariff on Canadian cedar "shakes and shingles" was not strong enough. The controversy, however, has little impact on overall views of free trade.
- o The strongest provincial supporters for free trade continue to be British Columbia, Alberta, and Newfoundland. The weakest supporters are found in Manitoba and Ontario -- particularly Metropolitan Toronto. The case for free trade appears to be gaining ground in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and the Ontario region outside of Toronto. While the provincial consensus continues to be that Ontario industries will gain more from free trade than industry in other provinces, the perception of Ontario as an automatic winner is losing ground.