



---

# news release

---

Date **July 3, 1992**

No. 145

For release

## **FOUR OUT OF FIVE CANADIANS BELIEVE CANADA SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE NAFTA NEGOTIATIONS**

A public opinion survey conducted on behalf of the federal government shows that a large majority of Canadians (79 per cent) says that Canada must be involved in three-way trade negotiations with the U.S. and Mexico in order to protect Canadian interests. International trade and related economic and adjustment issues were the focus of the Angus Reid Group study conducted in March.

On international trade agreements, 51 per cent favour Canada signing a new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and 57 per cent support the idea of freer Canada-United States trade. However, only 37 per cent support the actual Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA). On the other hand, 58 per cent of those opposed to the FTA said they would be more likely to back the FTA if they heard "Canada's exports to the U.S. have increased as a result of tariff elimination under the Free Trade Agreement." (Under the FTA, annual exports to the U.S. are up by over \$5 billion since 1988 and reached an all-time monthly high of \$12.8 billion in March 1992.)

While 79 per cent believe Canada must be at the table to protect Canadian interests in the three-way North American Free Trade Agreement negotiations, the survey found that only 29 per cent favour a trade agreement with the U.S. and Mexico.

Canadians believe the federal government should play a leadership role on the adjustment issue. When asked who had the greatest responsibility for helping Canadians adapt to global economic change, 39 per cent cited the federal government, 25 per cent named business, 13 per cent chose the provincial governments and 6 per cent said unions. (In fact, Employment and Immigration Canada will spend \$3.55 billion this year to help individual Canadian communities and employers respond to an increasingly competitive

marketplace. This help is delivered through a wide range of programs and services, including referral of individuals for training, provision of income support, individual counselling and other programs to help the unemployed back into the workforce.)

A strong majority (62 per cent) agrees that the best way for Canada to become more internationally competitive is to provide workers with stronger job skills through training. Only 35 per cent think that Canada will never be competitive because of low-wage economies abroad. (The federal government has placed more emphasis on training by amending the Unemployment Insurance Act to allow more unemployed Canadians to receive adjustment assistance. This leads to stable, long-term employment. Expenditures for training and other adjustment measures under the Unemployment Insurance Act more than tripled from \$500 million in 1990 to \$1.95 billion in 1992.)

The study indicates a high degree of awareness of the importance of international trade and competition. An overwhelming majority (81 per cent) believes that Canada must trade competitively to preserve its standard of living, while 79 per cent agree that a competitive economy is necessary for the preservation of a high standard of social programs. However, 87 per cent also think that we are falling behind our major competitors such as Japan, Germany and the United States. The survey also shows that only 16 per cent of Canadians know that Canada exports more than it imports. Sixty-one per cent believe that the country has a negative trade balance. (In fact, Canada runs a substantial surplus on its merchandise trade balance. Statistics Canada data show that, in 1991, Canada exported \$3.4 billion more to the world than it imported.)

Nearly two thirds of Canadians (63 per cent) support the federal government's policy of safeguarding Canada's long-term economic future by concentrating on developing the skills of Canadian workers, rather than relying on short-term job creation to deal with the recession (33 per cent).

Canadians also appear to be drawing a strong connection between continuing unemployment and a lack of skills training. While Canadians in general believe that many of the jobs lost during the recession will not come back with recovery, 6 in 10 Canadians agree that jobs are going unfilled because of a lack of qualified candidates, and 7 in 10 agree that many of the unemployed will not get jobs unless they get more training first.

The study, commissioned jointly by External Affairs and International Trade Canada and Employment and Immigration Canada, covered a wide range of international trade and economic adjustment questions. It was conducted between March 9 and March 17, 1992,

and was based on telephone interviews with a representative sample of 1,509 adults across Canada. It is considered accurate to within +/-2.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

- 30 -

For further information, media representatives may contact:

Media Relations Office  
External Affairs and International Trade Canada  
(613) 995-1874

For a summary of the results, please contact:

INFO-EXPORT  
External Affairs and International Trade Canada  
(613) 993-6435

or

1-800-267-8376 (toll free)

or

fax (613) 996-9709

Please quote Publication 71XA (version française 71XF).