

year. The "top-of-mind" presence of this issue is fairly consistent across regions, but is relatively more pronounced among men and more affluent Canadians.

- ♦ **The Economy in General** – The overall state of the economy was mentioned by more than one in five (23%) survey respondents as an issue warranting the country's undivided attention right now, with this figure rising to one in three Quebecers (32%), and similarly among the middle-aged and the most affluent.

- ♦ **Deficit/Debt** – Canada's fiscal situation was also cited by 23 percent of those interviewed as the most serious issue facing the country. This represents a marginal 2-point rise from the 1996 low recorded in April. The federal deficit/debt engenders comparatively greater "top-of-mind" concern in the two western-most provinces as well as among men and higher income Canadians.

- ♦ **Health Care/Medicare** – The availability and quality of health care was named by just over one in ten (13%) surveyed Canadians as one of the most acute issues in the country today, echoing the total mentions received by this issue in soundings taken since the start of the year. Unaided mentions were relatively higher among residents of Manitoba/Saskatchewan, women, older Canadians and the least affluent.