

IX. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- o There has been an increase in the number of Canadians identifying free trade/Canada-U.S. relations as the most important problem facing the country today. Nonetheless, unemployment continues to be the top-of-mind concern with the public.
- o The August data reveal evidence of an increased or heightened sense of anxiety among Canadians regarding free trade and its possible consequences for Canada, despite the apparent stability in aggregate levels of support for the initiative.

Many Canadians appear to be withholding or suspending judgment on a free trade deal. Concern is centred around the following expectations:

1. That there will or will not be job and consumer price benefits (in one's own region);
2. That there will or will not be an erosion in our ability to determine our own national economic and social policies; and
3. That the free trade agreement will or will not be fair and balanced for both Canada and the United States, that the United States will keep to the terms of the agreement, and that Canada's negotiators are capable of obtaining a fair and balanced agreement.

- o While more Canadians think future U.S. protectionism is "very likely," two-thirds of the public believe a free trade deal will be effective in preventing such action.
- o Most Canadians think the government is clear in its own mind about why it is pursuing a free trade agreement, namely to improve Canada's trade situation with other countries around the world. The public are less inclined, however, to believe the government has a plan about what it wants or is prepared to give up, and how to deal with the changes which a free trade agreement would bring to Canada.