

VII. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT

Respondents were presented with a number of what are referred to as "issue statements" concerning the government and its handling of the free trade talks. From these data, which are presented in Table 9 below, some of the major conclusions which can be drawn are as follows.

- o With regard to federal government management of the free trade negotiations and possible consequences or outcomes, there has been a slight decrease since June in the proportion of the population confident in the federal government's plans in this area. Just under half (49%) of the population now agree with the statement, "I think the government has a good idea of how to deal with the changes a free trade agreement would bring in Canada," as compared to 54% who held this view in June;

The well-educated, professionals and union members are among those who are more likely to think that the government does not have a good idea of how to deal with such changes;

- o Only 26% of Canadians agree with the statement: "The federal government has provided the Canadian people with enough information about what it wants to gain in the trade talks";
- o Just over half the public believe that the government has a clear sense of its objectives and what it is prepared to concede in the free trade talks, down slightly since June (from 56% to 52%). There continues to be a greater consensus (68%) about another government motive for entering into the trade talks, namely to improve Canada's trade situation with countries around the world;

In a related question, the majority of respondents (59%) believe that the free trade negotiations are part of a broader plan to change Canada's whole economy and get ready for the challenges of the future, as opposed to an isolated initiative which is not part of any overall economic plan (39%). Similar findings were obtained in the June survey.