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Government of Canada Gouvernement du Canada
Privy Council Office Bureau du Conseil privé

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0A3

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MEMORANDUM FOR MINISTER OF PUBLIC SAFETY, DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTIONS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

**COUNTERING DISINFORMATION:
A GUIDEBOOK FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS**

(For your approval)

SUMMARY

- You will find attached (**TAB A**), for your approval, the “Countering Disinformation: A Guidebook for Public Servants.”
- The guidebook provides guidance on how to address the growing threat of disinformation by offering public servants guidance on how to identify, build the public’s resilience to, and counter disinformation.
- The content draws from research commissioned by the Privy Council Office’s Democratic Institutions Secretariat (PCO-DI), as well as publicly available research and best practices. The guidebook builds on existing efforts and guidance already in use across the Government of Canada (GoC) and has been validated with over 22 GoC organizations connected to the disinformation file.
- The guidebook will deliver on a key deliverable for the Protecting Democracy Unit as well as your commitment in the April 5, 2023 report to the Prime Minister (Countering an evolving threat: Update on recommendations to counter foreign interference in Canada’s democratic institutions) to implement a counter disinformation toolkit building upon the United Kingdom’s RESIST model.
- The guidebook is one component of a broader strategy focused on awareness-raising and training efforts for the public service on disinformation and threats to democracy.
- Once approved, PCO-DI will roll-out the guidebook across the public service in collaboration with PCO-Communications.

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UNCLASSIFIED**Background**

- Countering disinformation is a global issue that affects all democracies and requires a response from all areas of society - governments, industry, civil society and citizens.
- In addition to the threat that disinformation poses to our democratic institutions, it also has the potential to interrupt and interfere with the Government of Canada's delivery of information, programs, policies, and services. This can affect Canadians' health, finances, and more. Further, in times of crisis, it can lead to serious harm to individuals, communities, and the country at large.
- Part of the answer to addressing the threat of disinformation involves how the public service communicates. To this end, the guidebook is a new tool available to public servants to understand the threat posed by disinformation as well as to frame an effective response.
- The guidebook is intended for all public servants and is meant to provide a baseline understanding of the threat of disinformation to our democratic institutions. It is a first step toward building capacity and formalizing a consistent approach within the Government of Canada to plan for, and mitigate, the threat of disinformation and false narratives.
- The final version of the guidebook will have the same look and feel previously used for public facing documents, such as the recently developed toolkits on disinformation and foreign interference. Visuals for the guidebook will be finalized in collaboration with your Office.

PCO Comment

- The guidance and best practices within the guidebook are drawn from research commissioned over the past year by PCO-DI as well as publicly available research and best practices from a variety of sources, notably the United Kingdom's RESIST model.
- The guidebook has been shared for input and validation with working-level employees and executives across policy, research, and communications areas within organizations either working on, or with a linkage to, the disinformation file.
- The guidebook benefited from the input and comments from PCO Communications and it has been and approved by the Assistant Deputy Secretary of Communications.

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- o Overall, there is positive support for the guidebook, and its development has sparked several requests for more in-depth information on topics such as the impact of disinformation on specific audiences, ways to measure success, as well as more examples of disinformation campaigns and how they were addressed.
- o The guidebook delivers a key priority of the Protecting Democracy Unit and on your commitment in the April 5, 2023 report provided to the Prime Minister by yourself and the former Clerk of the Privy Council, Janice Charette, to implement a counter disinformation toolkit building on the United Kingdom's RESIST model.
- o The guidebook provides an introduction to countering disinformation and more tools for public servants will be necessary. Based on the feedback received from the consultations, PCO-DI will explore what complementary tools could be developed, including future updates to the guidebook.
- o As part of these ongoing efforts, a commitment has been secured from the Canada School of Public Service to deliver an event to a wide cross-section of public servants on the topic of disinformation on January 11, 2024. Additionally, PCO-DI and the Canada School are developing an online, self-paced training module for public servants to be part of their training catalogue on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation

- o Should you approve the guidebook, PCO-DI will roll-out the guidebook across the public service in collaboration with PCO-Communications.
- o It is recommended that you approve the guidebook and the subsequent work to follow. **Do you agree?**



Paul MacKinnon
Deputy Secretary to the
Cabinet (Governance)

Attachment (1)

 Stinson

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Ministerial Decision:

- I agree
- I need more information
- I do not agree

The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, P.C., K.C., M.P.
Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions
and Intergovernmental Affairs

Date

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