

For Public Release

## Briefing Note

To: Minister LeBlanc

From:

CC:

Date: January 24, 2024

Subject: Canadian Digital Media Research Network – Nov 2023 Report

**PURPOSE:** To brief you on the Canadian Digital Media Research Network's (CDMRN) November 2023 Report.

**BACKGROUND:** In June 2023, you announced the \$5.5 million investment in the CDMRN, a research initiative co-led by McGill University and the University of Toronto. This report addresses the current state of the Canadian information ecosystem and is based on survey data as well as a CDMRN-developed tool to map out social media activity. The tool tracks the few thousand most politically influential individuals and organizations across major platforms.

The overall finding of the report is that low levels of news consumption and reduced political knowledge renders Canadians vulnerable to foreign information manipulation attempts. Other key findings include:

- There is disproportionality in the online discourse—ie a small number of Canadian creators captured at least half of all views on Canadian YouTube and TikTok.
- Canadians are inattentive to politics (40% reported avoiding political news).
- News consumption and attitudes have been generally stable in the last five years.
- The past five years have seen a decline in media trust and more news consumption on social media.
- Online discourse among provincial and federal politicians is geographically fragmented and not highly segregated on partisan lines.
- 69.5% of Canadians believe that disinfo threatens democracy and 65.6% believe it fuels polarisation.
- 53.2% of Canadians think that the government should take a more activist approach to disinfo.
- Linguistic differences (English / French) contribute to distinct awareness and subsystems of the Canadian information ecosystem.

### **POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS/ADVICE:**

The CDMRN is well regarded by researchers and civil society (eg academics, DisinfoWatch, etc.).

The policy of supporting independent research on disinfo remains crucial to the CDMRN's success.

PCO-DI has also engaged the CDMRN on three immediate priorities: (1) a public facing monthly product on the state of the Canadian media ecosystem; (2) the incident response protocol; and (3) a potential approach for briefing officials and others on the CDMRN's work and findings. With the funding for this organization coming up for renewal next year, these are key deliverables.

### **RECOMMENDATION/NEXT STEPS:**

- It is recommended that PCO-DI continue to engage the CDMRN on the three priorities noted above, and that PCO-DI start to consider the process for funding renewal.

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