

**Summary of a Memorandum to Cabinet – Protecting Canada’s Democracy:
Securing the 2019 General Election and Beyond**

[This document contains a summary of the Memorandum to Cabinet (“MC”), *Protecting Canada’s Democracy: Securing the 2019 General Election and Beyond*. MCs are a minister’s vehicle for proposing and explaining a proposed measure on a substantive policy issue to Cabinet and for obtaining its approval.]

In October 2018, a MC called “Protecting Canada’s Democracy: Securing the 2019 General Election and Beyond” was presented to Cabinet. The proposal assessed how best to defend against threats to the 2019 General Election.

The MC was prepared in response to a series of high-profile attempts to interfere with democratic elections around the world, notably in the United States (2016), United Kingdom (2016), France (2017), and Germany (2015–2017). The MC noted that these incidents underlined a new reality where interference in Canadian democratic processes and institutions emanates not only from longstanding covert foreign human intelligence operations, perpetrated primarily by China, but also from emerging cyber threats, including those which leverage digital platforms, perpetrated primarily by Russia. The MC underscored that protecting Canada’s democratic institutions and processes from threats was a fundamental responsibility for any government and stated that Canadian security officials assessed that the threat of foreign interference from both human and cyber operations was real and growing in advance of Canada’s 2019 General Election.

The MC examined various options to best defend against threats to the 2019 General Election. It identified a framework for action, which was intended to serve as architecture for Canada’s efforts to combat foreign electoral interference operations. The framework was made up of four pillars: (1) combatting foreign interference; (2) promoting institutional resilience; (3) building citizen resilience; and (4) establish rules of the road for digital platforms.

The MC recommended that the government approve additional policy authorities to enable the implementation of urgent policy and programmatic measures to safeguard and mitigate threats to the 2019 General Election. It recommended that:

- setting out a protocol for elections interference incident response, including determining if, when, and how to communicate with Canadians;
- approaching digital and social media platforms with a list of actions that the Government could request be implemented ahead of the 2019 General Election, to be followed by a Prime Minister-led Summit with platform representatives early in the new year;

- the Canadian Security Intelligence Service make sustained investments in its capacity to investigate, analyze, and provide advice on foreign influenced activity targeting Canada's democratic institutions, and raise awareness of threats to key stakeholders involved in the democratic process;
- The Royal Canadian Mounted Police form a team dedicated to foreign interference activities;
- Canadian Heritage lead implementation of election-centric digital, news and civic literacy programming in partnership with academic and civil society organizations, as well as undertake research and engagement;
- The Communications Security Establishment provide technical advice, guidance, and services to Canadian political parties and elections administrators;
- Global Affairs Canada further operationalise the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, serve as the Canadian focal point among G7 partners, and establish the Canadian-led RRM Coordination Unit;
- The Communications Security Establishment enhance the GetCyberSafe public awareness program to include greater linkages to cyber threats to Canada's democratic processes; and
- The Privy Council Office Democratic Institutions Secretariat dedicate additional capacity to ensuring whole-of-government governance and coordination with respect to threats to Canada's 2019 General Election and democratic institutions.