

**Summary of a Memorandum to Cabinet – Protecting Canada's Democracy:
Rising to an Evolving Challenge**

[This document contains a summary of the Memorandum to Cabinet (“MC”), *Protecting Canada’s Democracy: Rising to an Evolving Challenge*. 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 advance of the 2021 General Election, a MC was presented to Cabinet, entitled “Protecting Canada's Democracy: Rising to an Evolving Challenge”, which assessed how best to protect Canada’s democratic institutions and processes.

The MC underscored the importance of building on the successes of the 2019 Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy in supporting Canada's democratic institutions and processes in the lead- up to, and during, the electoral campaign. While the 2019 measures to protect elections proved their relevance, the MC noted that threats to Canada’s democracy persist and continue to evolve. The MC noted that new or amended measures were now required to adapt to changes in the domestic and international context, and to draw on lessons learned both from the 2019 experience and from recent events internationally. In addition, successful measures from the 2019 Plan required renewal to remain in place for the longer term. The MC stated that key measures should be implemented as soon as possible in order to fulfil the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada's mandate-letter commitment to “strengthen Canada's whole- of-society preparedness, resilience and civic engagement in the face of evolving threats to democracy.”

The MC sought to further the government's efforts to protect democracy, electoral processes and democratic institutions. These efforts included recommended measures to enhance citizen resilience in light of increasing disinformation; improve the government's organizational readiness in the face of threats to electoral institutions and processes; combat foreign interference; and support a healthy information ecosystem.

The MC recommended that Canada build on the lessons learned from the 2019 Election and make key upgrades to three components of the 2019 plan—the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol, engagement with social media platforms, and the Rapid Response Mechanism. It also set out a leadership role for the Privy Council Office in supporting interdepartmental cooperation in countering disinformation. Elements included:

- The Critical Election Incident Public Protocol be amended to reflect assessments and lessons learned since the 43rd General Election;

- negotiating and agreeing to a renewed Canada Declaration on Electoral Integrity Online;
- The Rapid Response Mechanism be renewed;
- The Privy Council Office take a leadership role in supporting and enhancing interdepartmental cooperation and coordination in countering disinformation.