

## Summary of a Memorandum to Cabinet – Modernizing Canada's Approach to Addressing Threats from Hostile Activities by State Actors

[This document contains a summary of the Memorandum to Cabinet (“**MC**”), *Modernizing Canada’s Approach to Addressing Threats from Hostile Activities by State Actors*. 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 May 2022, a MC called “Modernizing Canada's Approach to Addressing Threats from Hostile Activities by State Actors” was presented to Cabinet.

The MC assessed whether to take initial steps to modernize Canada's approach to counter Hostile Activities by State Actors (“**HASA**”) by enhancing policy approaches, strengthening coordination, improving legislative tools, and developing new capabilities in departments and agencies to counter threats in a manner that is forward-looking, lays the groundwork for future action, adaptable to an evolving security environment, and aligned with Canadian principles, values, and priorities.

The MC described HASA as actions by hostile states or their proxies that are deceptive, coercive, corruptive, covert, threatening or illegal, yet fall below the threshold of armed conflict, and which undermine Canada's national interests. These activities include conventional and well-known efforts, such as espionage and foreign interference, and other threats, such as disinformation, sabotage, the use of licit and illicit means to acquire intellectual property, coercion and malicious cyber activities, among many others.

The MC explained that Canada's security and intelligence community considered HASA to be one of the greatest threats to Canada's national security. It described HASA as a multi-faceted threat that targets Canada's strategic interests, the integrity and security of Canadian institutions and democratic processes, and the ability for members of the public to exercise their Charter-protected rights and freedoms. The MC noted that HASA threats emanate from states such as the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Though these threats were not described as new to Canada, the MC noted that Canada’s security and intelligence community had observed an increase in both volume and complexity of such threats in recent years. The MC affirmed that Canada possesses tools and levers to counter HASA, but these tools require better coordination, and in some cases, modernization to address an increasingly dynamic, complex threat environment characterized by emboldened and aggressive threat actors. The MC also noted that in some cases, additional resources to bolster Canada's ability to respond to this threat are required.

The MC stated that Canadians expect their federal government to protect their safety and security by meaningfully and proportionally addressing threats in a manner consistent with Canadian values and laws. It underscored the importance of safeguarding democratic processes and institutions from HASA, as these institutions provide the foundation for Canada's democratic system of government and protect sensitive personal and government information that could be exploited by foreign threat actors.

The proposal sought to implement various elements, including:

1. endorsement of the principles, priority sectors and pillars set out in the Counter-HASA Strategy to guide current and future federal actions on HASA. The Strategy is country agnostic and framed by the following four key principles: (1) making Canada a harder, more resilient target by taking a whole-of-society approach; (2) remaining adaptable and nimble; (3) acting in an open and transparent manner that upholds Canadian law, values, rights and sovereignty; and (4) taking concrete measures to deter HASA.
2. the Department of Public Safety implement a whole-of- government strategic communications approach which would include undertaking engagement with domestic stakeholders, including members of diaspora communities, who are vulnerable to the malign impacts of HASA;
3. exploring enhancements to counter-HASA legislative tools to ensure Canada's ability to detect and counter HASA threats by consulting on potential amendments to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) Act, the Criminal Code and the Security of Information Act; and on the scope of a potential foreign agent registry; and
4. the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) develop new capabilities and undertake new activities and PS expand its coordination of Government of Canada counter-HASA activities for the purpose of implementing the Counter-HASA Strategy.