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# Canada's plan to protect democracy

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## Plan overview

The Government of Canada is committed to protecting Canadians from foreign interference, protecting our democracy, and ensuring our elections are fair and free.

In 2019, Canada took concrete action to defend Canadian democracy by announcing the Plan to Protect Democracy, which includes measures to strengthen our electoral system against cyber and other threats. Elements of the Plan underwent internal and/or independent assessments, which confirmed the Plan's utility and relevance, in 2021.

Measures outlined in the Plan have been implemented, and key elements are being improved and renewed. The Government of Canada continues to act through this Plan and these efforts will continue to address the threats to Canada's democratic institutions and help to keep our democracy strong.

# Pillars of action to safeguard Canada's electoral system

The Plan to Protect Democracy is comprised of the following four pillars of action:

- Enhancing citizen preparedness
- Improving organizational readiness
- Combatting foreign interference
- Building a healthy information ecosystem

## Enhancing citizen preparedness

Foreign and malicious actors are always becoming more creative at using online platforms to manipulate opinions. By becoming better informed about the tactics they use online, Canadians can be the best line of defense in our efforts to fight foreign interference in our democratic processes.

The Government has established a number of measures to help enhance citizen's preparedness.

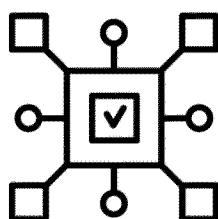
### 1. Critical Election Incident Public Protocol

The Critical Election Incident Public Protocol is a mechanism for senior public servants (the Panel) to communicate clearly, transparently, and impartially with Canadians during an election in the event of an incident or incidents that threaten the integrity of a federal election. First implemented in 2019, the Protocol underwent an independent assessment following the 43rd (forty-third) General Election and has been renewed and updated for future elections.

Updates to the Protocol include:

- aligning the Protocol's application period with the Caretaker Convention
- explicitly allowing for the Panel to consult with the Chief Electoral Officer and to receive information and advice from sources other than the national security agencies
- clarifying the Panel's ability to consider potential incidents of interference involving both foreign and domestic malicious actors.

Infographic on steps to be taken by the Government of Canada if there are interference attempts in a federal election



## 2. Digital Citizen Initiative

The Digital Citizen Initiative (DCI) aims to support democracy and social inclusion in Canada by building citizen resilience against online disinformation and building partnerships to support a healthy information ecosystem.

Among the initiative funded through the DCI (Digital Citizen Initiative) is the Digital Citizen Contribution Program, which supports DCI (Digital Citizen Initiative) priorities by providing time-limited financial assistance for research and citizen-focused activities.

## 3. Canadian Digital Media Research Network

Established in 2023, the Canadian Digital Media Research Network (CDMRN) will further strengthen Canadians' information resilience by researching how quality of information, including disinformation narratives, impact Canadians' attitudes and behaviors, and by supporting strategies for Canadians' digital literacy. The findings of this research will benefit all Canadians, including government policy makers.

The Media Ecosystem Observatory, a research initiative led by McGill University and the University of Toronto, will independently administer the CDMRN (Canadian Digital Media Research Network).

#### **4. Protecting democracy toolkits and guidebook**

In January 2024, the Government of Canada released Protecting Democracy Toolkits and Countering Disinformation: A Guidebook for Public Servants (the Guidebook). These tools will help community leaders, elected officials and public office holders, and public servants identify and combat disinformation and foreign interference. The Guidebook provides federal public servants with a baseline understanding of the threat of disinformation to Canada's democratic institutions and offers guidance on how to identify, build the public's resilience to, and counter disinformation.

#### **5. Get Cyber Safe**

The government is leveraging the Cyber Centre's Get Cyber Safe national public awareness campaign created to educate Canadians about Internet security, and including greater linkages to cyber threats to Canada's democratic processes.

The Cyber Centre also produces reports on cyber threats to Canada's democratic process. These reports on aim to inform Canadians about the global trends in cyber threat activity targeting national elections and their potential impacts on Canada.

Learn more about:

- [Get Cyber Safe](#)
- [Online disinformation](#)

## 6. Amendments to the *Canada Elections Act*

In March 2024, the Government of Canada introduced amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* (CEA) to enhance citizens' participation and trust in Canada's electoral process. The proposed amendments brought forward in Bill C-65, the *Act to Amend the Elections Act*, build on the Government of Canada's work to remove barriers to voting and encourage voter participation, better protect personal information, and further strengthen electoral protection measures, including against foreign interference.

More information:

- [Minister LeBlanc introduces legislation to further strengthen Canada's electoral process](#) (News Release)
- [Proposed amendments to the \*Canada Elections Act\*](#) (Backgrounder)

More information about this pillar is available in the [backgrounder on Enhancing citizen preparedness](#).

## Improving organizational readiness

To strengthen security practices, government systems will improve coordination to identify threats, emerging tactics and systems vulnerabilities.

The Government of Canada continues to:

- enhance coordination amongst government departments and agencies to identify threats, emerging tactics, and systems vulnerabilities to strengthen security practices and behaviours;

- work with political parties to improve their cyber security practices by offering thorough technical advice, including on online security measures and internal security practices;
- sensitize decision-makers to the nature of foreign interference; and
- provide classified threat briefings to political party leadership.

More information about this pillar is available in the [backgrounder on Improving organizational readiness](#).

## Combatting foreign interference

Canada's security agencies work to prevent covert, clandestine or criminal activities by foreign actors from interfering in our electoral processes.

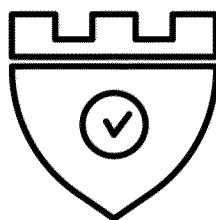
A number of measures have been put in place as part the Plan, to monitor and prevent these activities.

### 1. Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force

The Security Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force (SITE TF) is a whole-of-government working group that coordinates Government of Canada collection and analysis efforts concerning threats to Canada's federal election processes. The SITE TF (Security Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) consists of experts from:

- the Communications Security Establishment Canada (CSE)
- the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS)
- Global Affairs Canada (GAC)
- the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

[Infographic on SITE TF \(Security Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force\) partner roles and activities](#)



Each member agency works within their respective mandate to monitor and address threats to the election.

## **2. G7 (Group of Seven) Rapid Response Mechanism**

The G7 (Group of Seven) Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) is an initiative to strengthen coordination across the G7 (Group of Seven) in identifying, preventing and responding to threats to G7 (Group of Seven) democracies. The Government of Canada, as part of its role as G7 (Group of Seven) president in 2018, is leading on the commitments made by G7 (Group of Seven) leaders to protect democracy, by playing a coordination and leadership function for the broader G7 (Group of Seven) RRM (Rapid Response Mechanism) network.

More information about this pillar is available in the [backgrounder on Combatting foreign interference](#).

## **Building a healthy information ecosystem**

Disinformation online can create confusion and exploit existing social tensions. The government continues to support social media platforms in their efforts to increase the transparency, authenticity and integrity of their systems to help safeguard our elections.

For instance, the [Canada Declaration on Electoral Integrity Online](#) (the Declaration) is the result of ongoing discussions with social media platforms who share the government's commitment to fair, free and secure

elections. The Declaration establishes a set of common commitments with online platforms to safeguard federal elections from malicious interference and build a healthier online ecosystem.

More information:

- [The Government of Canada updates the Canada Declaration on Electoral Integrity Online](#) (News Release)

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