Annex A.

Headings Used in Briefing Notes for the Minister
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Classic Format

You will find a classic format for briefing notes [here](#), along with notes on how to use it. Note how it covers all the bases but economizes on space, particularly in not using too many headings.

Summary of Headings Used

**Sequence**

Note that the sequence in which the headings appear varies widely from one department to another.

**Most Commonly Used Headings**

Here are the headings used most commonly in the guidelines from the different departments:

- **Summary**
- **Issue**
- **Background**
- **Considerations**
- **Conclusion** or **Recommendations** or **Advice** or **Strategic Advice** or **Recommended Position**

**Other Headings Used by Some Departments**

These are other headings used by some of the guidelines. These headings can give you ideas for material that you might include in the most commonly used headings above – particularly considerations.

- **Analysis / Departmental Comment**
  This is the same as Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

- **Context**
  This is the same as Background in the most commonly used headings.
Communications Implications
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

Consultations Conducted
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

Current Status
This material could fall under either Background or Considerations in the most commonly used headings. On its own, it can form a good transition between the two.

Departmental Position
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

Discussion
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

Implications
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

Key Findings
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

Next Steps
This would form part of the Conclusion in the most commonly used headings.

Options
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

Outlook
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

Parliamentary Implications
This would form part of Background or Considerations in the most commonly used headings. This would deal with procedural matters, not political matters.

Purpose
Try to express the purpose in terms that would also serve as an Issue statement.

Required Action
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.

Resource Implications
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.
Timeframe
In most cases, this should be built into the Summary and/or the Recommendation in the most commonly used headings. It could also be part of Considerations.

Transformation Considerations
This would form part of Considerations in the most commonly used headings.
The headings below are drawn from AAFC’s guidelines as of August 2009. However, the guidelines AAFC provided were restricted to notes written as backgrounders and to provide talking points. The guidelines specify that recommendations do not appear in briefing notes. It is likely, then, that recommendations are delivered by another type of document.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. AAFC may also have templates to ease the task of formatting.
The CBSA stated only that briefing notes are provided for information, advice, signature or decision. The agency did not provide other headings that are used in a briefing note. It does, however, have templates that likely provide the other headings.
The following are headings that the CRA suggests for briefing notes for the Minister, as of September 2009. However, the guidelines appear to permit considerable flexibility in choosing headings.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines for the issue at hand. The CRA may have templates to standardize formatting.
The following are the headings that the CEAA uses in briefing notes for the Minister, as of August 2009.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines for the issue at hand. The CEAA has templates to standardize formatting.
The CFIA has detailed guidelines on the layout and editing of briefing notes. However, it did not provide the headings that are used. The CFIA may have templates for briefing notes.
The headings below are drawn from CIDA’s guidelines for general-purpose memoranda to the President or the Minister, as of August 2009. However, CIDA has very detailed guidelines for a wide variety of other briefing notes.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines for the issue at hand. CIDA also has Word Pro templates to standardize formatting.
The following are headings that CIC uses for briefing notes for the Minister, as of July 2009. Purpose and Background are required. Other headings are used at your discretion.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines for the issue at hand. The CIC has templates to standardize formatting.

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

File Number

MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

SUBJECT

(For Information) or (For Signature) or (For Approval) or (For Decision)

PURPOSE

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

CURRENT STATUS

ISSUES

CONSIDERATIONS

IMPLICATIONS

OPTIONS

NEXT STEPS
RECOMMENDATION
The following are headings that CSC uses for briefing notes for the Minister, as of August 2009. Issue is a required heading. The others are provided only as examples. You may use other headings.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines for the issue at hand. CSC may have templates to standardize formatting.

### TITLE

**Issue:**

**Background:**

**Summary:**

**Current Status:**

**Discussion:**

**Analysis:**

**Implications:**

**Key Findings:**

**Options:**

**Recommendation:**

**Next Steps:**

**Required Action:**

**Transformation Considerations:**

**Conclusion:**

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MEMORANDUM TO THE HONOURABLE LAWRENCE CANNON

SUBJECT
(For decision) or (For signature) or (For approval) or (For information)

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

CONSIDERATIONS

NEXT STEPS or OPTIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS
The headings below are drawn from Environment Canada’s guidelines for memoranda to the Minister, as of July 2009. The guidelines state: “Not all headings are required, and different ones may be used as appropriate.”

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. Environment Canada may also have templates to ease the task of formatting.
Finance Canada

Finance Canada did not provide guidelines on the headings used in preparing briefing notes. It does, however, have templates for them.
The headings below are drawn from DFO’s guidelines for memoranda to the Minister, as of August 2009. DFO also has a separate concept of briefing notes for the Minister. Their format is almost identical to that shown below.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. DFO has templates to ease the task of formatting.

CLASSIFICATION

File Number

MEMORANDUM FOR THE MINISTER

TITLE
(Decision Sought) or (Information Only) or (Signature Required)

SUMMARY

Background

Analysis / DFO Comment

Recommendations / Next Steps
The following is drawn from DFAIT’s guidelines for briefing notes, as of August 2009. It appears that the following headings are dealt with in a separate attachment, whose format was not provided:
- BACKGROUND
- CONSIDERATIONS
- RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
- COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS/ACTIONS
- PARLIAMENTARY IMPLICATIONS/ACTIONS

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. DFAIT has templates to ease formatting.
MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

Subject

SUMMARY (in memos FOR INFORMATION or FOR CONCURRENCE)
KEY MESSAGES (in memos FOR A MEETING)

BACKGROUND:

CURRENT STATUS:

CONSIDERATIONS:

PORTFOLIO CONSIDERATIONS:

OPTIONS AND RATIONALE: (used in memos FOR CONCURRENCE)

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: (used in memos FOR CONCURRENCE)

COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS: (used in memos FOR CONCURRENCE)

NEXT STEPS: (used in memos FOR INFORMATION or FOR A MEETING)

RECOMMENDATIONS: (used in memos FOR CONCURRENCE)
The headings below are drawn from HRSDC’s guidelines for memoranda to the Minister, as of July 2009. However, the guidelines are not clear on the order of presentation of the headings.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. HRSDC has templates to ease formatting.

MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER OF HRSD

SUBJECT

FOR INFORMATION or FOR DECISION or FOR APPROVAL

PURPOSE

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

CURRENT STATUS

CONSIDERATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS or NEXT STEPS
The headings below are drawn from INAC’s guidelines for briefing notes for the Minister, as of October 2009. However, the guidelines are not clear on the layout of the headings.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. INAC may have templates to ease formatting.

TITLE
(Information for Minister) or (Decision by Minister)

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

CURRENT STATUS

ISSUES

CONSIDERATIONS

NEXT STEPS

RECOMMENDATIONS (for Decision briefing notes)
ADVICE TO THE MINISTER

Subject

ISSUE

BACKGROUND

CONSIDERATIONS

ADVICE or CONCLUSION
The headings below are drawn from Justice Canada’s guidelines as of June 2010. Justice Canada also has more specialized formats for meetings and recommendations to appeal court decisions.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. Industry Canada has templates to ease the task of formatting.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE MINISTER

Title

ISSUE

BACKGROUND

Sub-headings if needed

CONSIDERATIONS

CONCLUSION or RECOMMENDATION
As of August 2009, Parks Canada did not have any guidelines on preparing briefing notes.
Privy Council Office

The following are the headings PCO uses for an Information memorandum to the Prime Minister, as of August 2009. PCO did not provide examples of other types of memoranda.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. PCO may have templates to ease formatting.

CLASSIFICATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

TITLE

(Information Only)

SUMMARY

Background
The following are the headings the RCMP uses for a briefing note for the Minister, as of the fall of 2009.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. The RCMP may have templates to ease formatting.
The headings below are drawn from PHAC’s guidelines for memoranda to the Minister, as of August 2009.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. PHAC may have templates to ease formatting.

FOR CONCURRENCE or FOR INFORMATION

File Number Classification

MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

Subject

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

CURRENT STATUS

CONSIDERATIONS

PORTFOLIO CONSIDERATIONS

Option and Rationale

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS or NEXT STEPS
The headings below are drawn from PWGSC’s guidelines for memoranda to the Minister, as of July 2009. Most of the headings in the body are optional. You may also use the headings “Considerations” and “Conclusion”.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. PWGSC has templates for formatting in Word Pro.

File Number
ADM: Name, number
DG: Name, number
CO: Name, number

MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

SUBJECT

TITLE

FOR INFORMATION or FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

TIMEFRAME

BACKGROUND

ISSUE(S)

OPTIONS

NEXT STEP(S)
RECOMMENDATION
MEMORANDUM

DATE:

TO: The Honourable Tony Clement
    Minister Responsible for Statistics Canada

FROM: Munir A. Sheik

SUBJECT:

SUMMARY:
MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

Subject
For Information Only or For Decision or For Signature

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

CONSIDERATIONS or CURRENT STATUS

NEXT STEPS/OPTIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS or DEPARTMENTAL POSITION

COMMUNICATIONS ASSESSMENT (if For Decision or For Signature)
The headings below are drawn from TBS’s guidelines as of September 2010.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. TBS also has templates to ease formatting.

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT

SUMMARY

Background

Recommendation [for all memoranda except “For Information” and “Meeting”]
The headings below are drawn from Veterans Affairs Canada’s guidelines as of August 2009. The guidelines state that a covering memo to the Minister is also required.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. Veterans Affairs may have templates to ease formatting.

BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE MINISTER OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Issue

Background

Current Situation

Communications

Options and Recommendation (if the briefing note is for concurrence)
Western Economic Diversification provided guidelines on the layout, but not the headings, used for briefing material, as of August 2009.

Always check to make sure that you are working with the current guidelines. The department may also have templates for briefing notes.