

v. 2019 05 17 SECRET

## Critical Election Interference Public Protocol Panel

### Workplan

The *Cabinet Directive on the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol (CEIPP)* sets out the expectations with respect to the general direction and principles that should guide the process for informing the public during the writ period of an incident that threatens Canada's ability to have a free and fair election.

If a serious incident of interference occurs during the writ period, and it does not fall within Elections Canada's area of responsibility, the Panel may convene to determine if there should be a public announcement. The threshold for the public announcement will be very high, and limited to exceptional circumstances that could impair Canada's ability to have a free and fair election.

During the four months prior to the dropping of the writ, the Panel will meet a minimum of five times to:

1. develop a common understanding of the threshold;
2. participate in a number of scenario exercises;
3. identify any gaps in communication or process;
4. discuss a potential communications/engagement plan; and
5. determine how the Panel will govern themselves during the writ period in the event of the incident, including how they wish to receive briefings.

### Developing the Threshold and Scenario Exercises

The Panel will participate in three tabletop scenario exercises that present possible situations for consideration. The exercises objectives are to:

- assist in the development of a common understanding of the considerations that go towards determining if the threshold has been met;
- identify any gaps in the process, or lines of communication that need to be established; and,
- develop a procedure(s) in the event of an actual incident(s) that requires the Panel to convene.

### Engagement and Communications Plan

A media engagement and awareness strategy should be completed as soon as possible to allow the public to become familiar with the process prior the writ period. In addition, proactive communications should be in place, including a plan in case an announcement is required.

An additional consideration is whether the Panel should be known to the public as individuals, or simply be known as the office holder. The pros and cons of this should be included after a discussion with Comms.

v. 2019 05 17 SECRET

**Annex A****Meeting One (Agenda Complete)**

- Format and frequency of meetings
- Approval of proposed workplan, including future meeting dates and agenda items/goals
- Presentation of Protocol
- Preliminary briefing of the current threat environment and overall governance

**Meeting Two - Mid June (for approval\*)**

- Threat briefing – Cyber and Human
- Threshold Deliberations (see Annex B)
- Presentation from Elections Canada

**Meeting Three - Late June (for approval)**

- Threat Briefing
- Tabletop Exercise Number One – Cyber Incident
- Proposed strategic communications plan – for public engagement

**Meeting Four - Late July (for approval)**

- Threat Briefing
- Table Top Exercise Number Two – Sensitive Foreign Intelligence Scenario
- Presentation on the Writ Period

**Meeting Five - Late August (for approval)**

- Threat briefing
- Table Top Exercise Number Three – Disinformation and Communications
- Discussion on Post Writ Operational Posture
- Revisit threshold deliberations

**Meeting Six - Late September (for approval)**

- Threat briefing
- Update on Operational Posture

v. 2019 05 17 SECRET

**Annex B**

**Questions and Consideration Towards Determining Threshold (Meeting Two)**

Determining whether the threshold for a public announcement has been met will require considerable judgement and there are different considerations that could be included in making this decision:

*what does that mean*

*Make to realistic*

- the degree to which the incident(s) undermine(s) Canadians' ability to have a free and fair election; (2)
- the potential of the incident(s) to undermine the credibility of the election; and *appearance - you should go further, public trust*
- the degree of confidence officials have in the intelligence or information. (1)

One prevailing principle is that a public announcement would be an extraordinary event that could in itself, significantly influence the overall results of the election and possibly undermine the credibility of the electoral process. There are risks associated with making an announcement (i.e. not being seen as impartial or serving the interest of a particular party) and not making an announcement if clear evidence of an attack or other incident emerges after the election.

Recognizing that these decisions require nuanced judgement and are highly dependent on context, some questions to possibly consider when assessing if the threshold has been met may include:

- To what extent is the incident(s) vote changing? *✓ victory level?*
- To what extent has disinformation been disseminated beyond specific interest groups, i.e. picked up and reported on by the mainstream media? (Exposure and Reach)
- Has the incident created fear or intimidation among segments of the population in terms of ability to vote? Does this have a significant impact on the election?
- Has the incident disproportionately affected parties or candidates? To what extent has it interfered in the level electoral playing field?
- Is this a matter for referral to the Commissioner of Canada Elections?
- To what extent is it believed that the interference is related to foreign actors? *✓*
- Is the disinformation around something that would affect the election?
- What is the scale/scope of the incident?
- Are there other remedies to the incident? For example, is this something traditional media is best positioned to weigh in on? To what extent is the incident(s) self-correcting?

v. 2019 05 17 SECRET

### **Pillars of Electoral Democracy (Elections Canada)**

Democracy is much more than holding elections; however, free and fair elections are one of its fundamental conditions. Over time, Canadians have come to trust the outcome of elections as truly reflecting their collective will without political interference. Political parties and candidates in the political arena have also learned that they can have confidence in the fairness of the electoral process. Together, these conditions contribute to a meaningful and peaceful environment for elections, and a lively and long-lasting democracy.

#### **Electoral Integrity**

Electoral integrity is achieved by ensuring that all electoral participants adhere to the rules designed to safeguard voter participation. Elections Canada's electoral integrity program focuses on measuring the quality and soundness of the electoral process to make sure Canadians can trust that an election was fair and that the results accurately reflect the will of Canadians.

#### **Participation, Fairness and Transparency**

Throughout the evolution of the Canadian electoral system, legislators have worked to bring about increased accessibility, fairness and transparency to ensure the prevalence of democratic values. Candidates, nomination contestants (those competing for endorsement as a party's candidate in an electoral district), leadership contestants, political parties, electoral district associations and third parties (persons or groups who are not candidates, registered parties or electoral district associations) are all subject to strict controls. Limits on contributions and expenses exist mainly to ensure transparency and fairness and to reduce the possibility of undue influence. The principle is to maintain a level playing field that attracts more participants, diversifies political discourse and increases overall participation, including attendance at the polls.

#### **Secrecy and Privacy**

Voting in Canada is by secret ballot. The security of the ballot is paramount, and the system makes it impossible to discover for which candidate a specific voter has voted. This is to ensure that no electors are intimidated or bribed into voting in a particular way.