

Protected B//Confidence of the King's Privy Council

Weekly Deputy Minister Meeting on Foreign Interference**June 27, 2023: 16:00 to 17:00****Meeting Location: TBC****Key Messages**

- The RCMP supports the plan to consult on the *Foreign Influence Transparency and Accountability Act* along with amendments to the *Criminal Code*, *Security of Information Act*, *Canada Evidence Act*, and *CSIS Act* over Summer 2023.
- It is important to build in time to review consultation feedback; publish an unclassified Counter-Foreign Interference Strategy; and engage both Members of Parliament and the general public on foreign interference. Adopting a more strategic approach to communications will help bolster trust and understanding, which will help to advance the proposed legislation.
- The RCMP would be interested in hearing proposed next steps relating to the Independent Special Rapporteur, including projects that the interim team may undertake and anticipated timelines for the previously announced

OUTLINE/OVERVIEW

The Weekly Deputy Minister Meeting on Foreign Interference (FI) discusses initiatives underway to strengthen the Government of Canada's (GoC's) counter-FI response. This includes legislation and policy; external review and parliamentary committee hearings; and supporting the Independent Special Rapporteur's (ISR's) study of alleged FI targeting Canada's federal elections, including their plan to hold public hearings. A meeting agenda is included in **TAB A**. This meeting provides you with the opportunity to guide and inform the sequencing and prioritization of initiatives. Speaking points are included at **TAB B**, for your reference.

BACKGROUND

Several counter-FI policy and legislative initiatives are upcoming, including:

- Consulting on the *Foreign Influence Transparency and Accountability Act (FITAA)* over Summer 2023 with additional stakeholders, including Indigenous and subnational governments, academics, and legal specialists;
- Conducting public engagement and consultations on proposed legislative amendments to the *Criminal Code (CC)*, *Security of Information Act (SOIA)*, *Canada Evidence Act (CEA)*, and *CSIS Act* over Summer 2023; and,
- Drafting legislative amendments to the *Canada Elections Act*.

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Discussions continue on how to enhance the public's awareness of and resilience against FI threats by providing unclassified threat briefings to Members of Parliament (MPs) and publishing an unclassified and public-facing Counter-FI Strategy. There remains concern at senior levels that the narrative about FI threats, and related GoC response, is clearly communicated; as well, concerns have been raised about potential risks relating to providing unclassified FI briefings to MPs. Options including conducting focus groups to test these briefings are being explored.

As well, review efforts are ongoing. The National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA) and National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) continue to conduct reviews of alleged FI targeting Canada's 2019 and 2021 federal elections. A/Assistant Commissioner Brigitte Gauvin is discussing intelligence to evidence with NSICOP this week. While the Hon. David Johnston has resigned as ISR, discussions are ongoing about next steps, including the possibility of a public inquiry into the GoC's response to FI. The current plan is to form an interim team until a new ISR is announced.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

- The RCMP supports the plan to consult on *FITAA* as well as other legislative amendments over Summer 2023. Because *FITAA* is a new and high-profile piece of legislation, it will be essential to ensure that the legislation is carefully drafted, reflects the concerns of stakeholders, and strategically communicated to the public.
- The RCMP supports developing a counter-FI narrative for legislative amendments and putting forward a comprehensive FI-Bill. This will not only streamline efforts, but also help to ensure that a single narrative is articulated that communicates both the need for these amendments, as well as their value-add to public safety for members of the public.
- We should ensure that we build in time to review consultation feedback, and are prepared to address feedback that is critical of, or outright challenges, the new legislative proposals. Addressing criticisms will not only strengthen the legislation, but could also help in gaining the public's buy-in for the legislative proposals.
- It is important to bolster understanding of FI threats and the GoC response to these threats among members of the public and MPs. The GoC's response to FI has been heavily scrutinized. Publishing an unclassified counter-FI Strategy and providing briefings to MPs should continue to be prioritized to address this evident trust deficit.
- Until a new ISR is appointed, it is likely that an interim team will continue the ISR's work. It will be important for that team to communicate to the DM community both the projects they plan to undertake, as well as anticipated timelines for the previously announced public hearings.

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