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Security and Intelligence Threats Task Force and the 19 June 2023 Federal By-Elections

Background:

- On 16 May 2023, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc announced that the Security and Intelligence Threats (SITE) Task Force will provide enhanced monitoring and assessing of foreign interference threats with respect to the by-elections, with votes to be held on 19 June 2023 (see ANNEX A).
- This document outlines how these efforts will be put into practice. It complements the Terms of Reference for SITE and the Terms of Reference for the Deputy Minister Committee on intelligence Response (DMCIR).

Scope:

- As noted in the 16 May 2023 announcement, the focus of SITE's work will be assessing foreign interference threats. However, if SITE member agencies observe other threats to the by-elections (e.g. threats of violence), this will be included in SITE reporting.

Reporting:

- As noted in the 16 May 2023 announcement, SITE assessments will be provided to DMCIR, which will stand ready to brief and advise Ministers with mandates to combat foreign interference and protect Canada's democratic institutions.
- To put this into effect:
 1. SITE will provide written daily situation reports (SITREPS) every business day to DMCIR members.
 - These daily SITREPS will be provided even when there is nothing significant to report, and began on Wednesday, 24 May 2023.
 - SITE will be responsible for tracking and maintaining a record of individuals who received and read the SITREPs each day.
 2. An interdepartmental DG or ADM Committee will meet every Wednesday morning (given that SITE meets on Tuesdays).
 - Representatives will include membership of DG/ADM Election Security Coordination Committees (DG/ADM ESCCs)¹. However, Elections Canada and/or Commissioner of Canada Elections officials may choose, or may be requested, to take leave from the meeting if necessary.

¹ Membership of DG/ADM ESCC includes: Privy Council Office, Elections Canada, Commissioner of Canada Elections, Public Safety Canada, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Global Affairs Canada, Communications Security Establishment, Department of Justice

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- If no significant issues have emerged, the meeting may be held at the DG level.
- If significant issues have emerged, the meeting will be held at the ADM level.
- If an urgent issue arises, and ADM meeting will be called the same day, and members of DMCIR will be notified immediately.
- The Committee will discuss the intelligence, what response measures have already been taken, and what additional response measures are advisable. Each member will provide advice to their respective Deputy Head on what action DMCIR could be considered/proposed to Ministers.

3. DMCIR will be briefed by SITE every Thursday:

- These briefings will be provided even when there is nothing significant to report in a given week.
- Briefings will be provided by the Deputy Head of the agency leading SITE (currently the Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service), or the Head of SITE. Deputy Heads of other SITE agencies may participate in the briefing on occasion if warranted (e.g. if briefing on intelligence collected by their agency).
- If an urgent issue arises, a DMCIR meeting can be called quickly without waiting for the regular weekly meeting.
- The Committee may consult Elections Canada and/or the Office of the Commissioner of Canada Elections as appropriate.

4. Deputy Heads will brief and advise Ministers:

- DMCIR will discuss the intelligence, what response measures have already been taken, and what additional response measures are advisable.
- Ministers with mandates to address foreign interference and protect Canada's democratic institutions will be briefed and advised on any issue that the Minister's Deputy Head deems to be sufficiently significant to warrant a briefing.
- While DMCIR will provide a venue for Deputy Heads to discuss response options, the decision to take a measure to respond to foreign interference will rest with the Deputy Head and/or Minister with the relevant mandate. Nothing in this process in any way alters or expands the mandates of the national security agencies or any other department or agency. In particular, nothing in this document supersedes the RCMP's independence.

Political Parties:

- The Government has directed that lines of communications be opened with designated representatives of political parties to ensure engagement should it become necessary over the course of the by-election period.
 - PCO will act as the Government point of contact.

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- Contact has been made with representatives of each of the political parties with seats in the House of Commons, as well as the People's Party of Canada.
- An initial, unclassified briefing is being scheduled for Monday, 29 May 2023. This briefing will provide a quick overview of the SITE Task Force, the foreign interference threat environment, and how foreign interference may manifest, and will offer advice as to how to report any foreign interference.

Report Following Vote:

- The 16 May 2023 announcement noted that SITE will also produce both a classified and an unclassified report following the day of the vote, consisting of the Task Force's assessment of any attempts at foreign interference identified during the by-elections.
- It further noted that the classified report will be made available to the Prime Minister, relevant ministers, as well as to the Independent Special Rapporteur, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, and identified representatives of the parties with appropriate security clearances.
- The reports should address the full scope of the issues covered by SITE during the by-election. This means that if threats to the by-elections beyond foreign interference (e.g. violence) are included in SITE reporting, they should also be addressed in the SITE final report.
- These reports should be completed, translated, approved and ready to release no later than **90 days** after the by elections are held.

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ANNEX A:

Government of Canada announces measures to protect by-elections from foreign interference

News release

Ottawa, Ontario, May 16, 2023 – The Government of Canada continues to strengthen and protect our democracy from threats posed by foreign interference.

Today, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, announced additional measures to protect the [by-elections](#) with votes to be held on June 19, 2023, from any potential foreign interference.

The [Security and Intelligence Threats \(SITE\) Task Force](#) will provide enhanced monitoring and assessing of foreign interference threats during the by-election period. These assessments will be provided to the Deputy Minister Committee on Intelligence Response, which will stand ready to brief and advise ministers with mandates to combat foreign interference and protect Canada's democratic institutions.

Lines of communications will also be opened with designated representatives of political parties to ensure engagement should it become necessary over the course of the by-election period.

SITE will also produce both a classified and an unclassified report following the day of the vote, consisting of the Task Force's assessment of any attempts at foreign interference identified during the by-elections. The classified report will be made available to the Prime Minister, relevant ministers, as well as to the Independent Special Rapporteur, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, and identified representatives of the parties with appropriate security clearances.

These measures are in line with our commitment to keeping Canadians informed about foreign interference in Canada. Building upon the [Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy](#), the Government of Canada continues to defend Canada's democracy against interference and uphold Canadians' confidence in our institutions.

Quotes

"Since coming into office, our government has put robust measures in place to protect the integrity of our elections and ensure Canadians can continue to have confidence in their institutions. As the threats to our democracy evolve, so does our approach. The measures we are putting in place for the duration of these by-elections build on existing mechanisms, all with the goal of continuously reinforcing our defenses against foreign interference."

– The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities

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Quick facts

- By-elections will be held on June 19, 2023, in the following four electoral districts:
 - Notre-Dame-de-Grâce–Westmount, Quebec
 - Oxford, Ontario
 - Portage–Lisgar, Manitoba
 - Winnipeg South Centre, Manitoba
- The Security and Intelligence Threats (SITE) Task Force was established as part of the government's Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy in 2019. It is composed of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Communications Security Establishment, Global Affairs Canada, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
- On March 6, 2023, the Government of Canada announced a [series of measures](#) to take further action on foreign interference and strengthen Canadians' confidence in our democracy. Other measures included:
 - asking the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) to complete a review of the state of foreign interference in federal electoral processes;
 - asking the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA) to complete a review of how Canada's national security agencies handled the threat of foreign interference during the 43rd and 44th federal general elections;
 - launching public consultations to guide the creation of a Foreign Influence Transparency Registry in Canada to ensure transparency and accountability from people who advocate on behalf of a foreign government and ensure communities who are targeted by attempts at foreign interference are protected;
 - establishing a new National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator in Public Safety Canada to coordinate efforts to combat foreign interference; and
 - investing \$5.5 million to strengthen the capacity of civil society partners to counter disinformation.
- on April 6, 2023, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, and Janice Charette, Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet, delivered a report to the Prime Minister entitled [*Countering an Evolving Threat: Update on Recommendations to Counter Foreign Interference in Canada's Democratic Institutions*](#).