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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

c.c.: Janice Charette

Counter Foreign Interference Approach

(For Information)

SUMMARY

- Work is underway to strengthen our capacity to counter foreign interference threats and address public concerns.
- Departments and agencies are working together to develop a coherent work plan to respond to recent events, strengthen protections against foreign interference, enhance governance and processes, and engage effectively with Canadians.
- While a number of these initiatives are already being implemented,
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BACKGROUND

- The security and intelligence community is taking a number of steps to strengthen our capacity to counter foreign interference threats and address public concerns pertaining to that issue.
- Departments and agencies are working together to develop a coherent work plan with clear deliverables aimed at responding to recent events, strengthening protections against foreign interference, enhancing governance and processes, and effectively engaging with Canadians. Some of these initiatives were outlined in the April 6th, 2023 *Update on Recommendations to Counter Foreign Interference in Canada's Democratic Institutions (30-Day Report)*,
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- Following the 23 May report of the Independent Special Rapporteur (ISR), the Government will have an opportunity to engage Canadians on progress to date and further steps to be made.

Responding to recent events

- ***Affected Members of Parliament and Senators:*** Recent intelligence leaks in the media suggested that some Members of Parliament and Senators have been targeted by foreign

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interference attempts. While media articles do not always accurately portray intelligence agencies' reports and assessment, some politicians have in fact been wittingly or unwittingly involved in foreign interference attempts with various levels of intensity.

- In order to provide further clarity on the status of the foreign interference threats related to current and former Members of Parliament and Senators, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has been reviewing its holdings and has created a list of individuals who have been of interest to foreign interference actors. The list, on which you have been briefed separately, [redacted] divides individuals into [redacted] categories based on [redacted] [redacted] the level of intensity with which they have been targeted by foreign threat actors or their proxies. CSIS has initiated threat reduction measures (TRM) in some cases and is working with Public Safety Canada to develop advice for engagement with individuals for whom TRM are not possible or recommended.
- On May 16, the Minister of Public Safety issued a ministerial direction to CSIS in which the Minister articulated his expectations as to how threats to Parliament and Parliamentarians would be investigated, mitigated and communicated. The text of the Ministerial Direction can be found at **TAB A**.
- The Minister of Public Safety also intends to send a letter to his parliamentary colleagues in which he will discuss foreign interference threats and offer them an unclassified security briefing.
- **Intelligence Leaks:** Investigations into the illegal leaks of classified information continue. The Privy Council Office (PCO) is working with CSIS and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to pursue all appropriate lines of investigation.
- PCO is in the process of scheduling a briefing with your office, and Ministers Joly, Mendicino, Blair and LeBlanc, to provide further information on the intelligence collected on foreign interference attempts in the context of the last two federal elections, including the intelligence that has been, or is suspected to have been, leaked to the media.

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Strengthening protections against foreign interference

- June 19, 2023 by-elections:** s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted] the National Security and Intelligence Advisor (NSIA) has directed the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force to adopt an enhanced operational posture to monitor for and assess foreign interference, to the fullest extent of their mandates, during the upcoming by-elections. SITE will also produce both a classified and an unclassified report following the day of the vote, consisting of its assessment of any attempts at foreign interference identified during the by-elections.
- s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted] s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted]
- Protecting democracy:** As indicated in the *30-Day Report*, PCO Democratic Institutions Secretariat will be working to provide advice to Minister LeBlanc for the fulfilment of the Minister's mandate to "lead an integrated government response to protect Canada's democratic institutions ... against foreign interference and disinformation, working with domestic and international partners." This advice will be developed in consultation with all relevant departments and agencies s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted] s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted]
- Elements of this advice, as specified in the 30-Day Report, will include but may not be limited to an examination of making SITE a permanent entity, with a mandate to conduct regular reporting on foreign interference activities; reviewing the Cabinet Directive on the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol, and ensuring the Panel members responsible for implementing the Protocol are in a permanent state of readiness to assume their Panel-related responsibilities. Recurring Panel meetings will start this spring.

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- As announced on March 6, 2023, PS conducted public consultations on creating a Foreign Influence Transparency Registry, which are nearly complete. PS is assessing the input received during the consultations, s. 39 - Cabinet

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- As highlighted in the 30-day Report, the *CSIS Act* needs modernization to more effectively address foreign interference threats, s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence

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- **Operational Capacity:** Budget 2023 proposed \$48.9 million over three years for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to protect Canadians from harassment and intimidation, increase its investigative capacity, and more proactively engage with communities at risk of being targeted. The RCMP has developed a national plan to engage communities and address foreign actor interference. The initial phase of the plan has commenced, including conducting consultations with Global Affairs Canada, stakeholder groups, other police jurisdictions, and developing reference materials to enable prevention and reporting.

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Enhancing governance and processes

- **Elevating intelligence related to targeted MPs/Senators:** Public Safety portfolio agencies and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) are developing and implementing internal measures to ensure that their respective Ministers are proactively made aware of national security threats related to Parliamentarians and their families, and of any required operational responses conducted under their authorities. As these measures are being implemented and to ensure that you and your staff are also kept abreast of such threats, CSIS and CSE will notify the Privy Council Office (PCO) of any intelligence report pertaining to threats to Parliamentarians and their families, and of any related operational response. PCO will subsequently advise you or your office. A separate note on this topic will be provided to you.

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- ***Coordinating and Disseminating Intelligence:*** The Security and Intelligence community is developing processes and advice to enhance the efficiency and accountability framework related to the dissemination and use of intelligence in support of strategic decision making. Several initiatives are underway to develop options seeking to:

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- *more consistently disseminate and track intelligence reports across government*, including to Ministers and their teams, and to more effectively “flag” particularly relevant intelligence reports to Ministers. These efforts will also seek to enhance the intelligence community’s records keeping processes; and
 - *improve coordination among intelligence agencies and policy and operations centres*, to ensure that intelligence is more consistently accompanied by appropriate advice, and incorporated into policy development.
- ***Review:*** The past months have brought to light concerns regarding the ability, credibility and effectiveness of NSICOP in fulfilling its mandate, including regarding its review of national security activities conducted in response to foreign interference threats. In the coming weeks, PCO will develop advice to help address these concerns and maximize the effectiveness of the Committee.

Communications and Public Engagement

- ***Ongoing Engagement with Canadians:*** Engagement and consultations will be undertaken with representatives from provinces, territories, indigenous groups and other key stakeholders. These efforts will help build resilience and understanding of the threat, help counter disinformation, and gather new ideas and perspectives on the issue. PS is also considering publishing a Counter Foreign Interference Strategy that would provide Canadians with more information on the threats and the Government’s approach to mitigate them.

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- Public Safety is establishing the office of the Foreign Intelligence Coordinator. As you are aware, Budget 2023 announced \$13.5 million over five years, and \$3.1 million ongoing, for that purpose. Once fully staffed, the Office of the Coordinator will bolster communications with Canadians on this issue, offer briefings to provincial/territorial, municipal and Indigenous officials and engage with stakeholders to further assess short- and long-term impacts of foreign interference in Canada.

PCO COMMENT – feasibility and communications

- Some of the initiatives outlined in this note can be implemented quickly. For instance, unclassified briefings to Members of Parliament and Senators could take place before the end of the Parliamentary session. Planning for Threat Reduction Measures and other engagements with current and former Parliamentarians who have been of interest to foreign interference actors is ongoing and may also take place in the next few weeks.
- Similarly, mechanisms to more effectively disseminate, flag and track intelligence to Ministers will be implemented over the next months.

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- The May 23 report from the ISR will provide the Government with an opportunity to engage with Canadians on these issues and a potential way forward. Detailed communications advice is forthcoming.

Jody Thomas

Attachments

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