

**Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes
and Democratic Institutions**

**Federal Organizations That Work to Counter Foreign Interference in Federal
Elections and Democratic Institutions**

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1. Executive Summary

Foreign interference (FI) poses a significant threat to Canada's democracy and national security. Foreign states and foreign non-state actors attempt to influence Canada, its decision-making and its people through activities ranging from overt diplomatic or lobbying activity on the one hand to covert and hostile actions on the other. Covert and hostile actions are foreign interference. In many cases, clandestine influence operations are meant to support foreign political agendas or deceptively influence Canada's policies, officials, research institutions or democratic processes.

To achieve their objectives in our democratic processes, foreign actors, including both states and non-state actors, engage in hostile activities such as clandestinely spreading misinformation and disinformation to undermine confidence in some government institutions or electoral processes. Foreign actors also target diaspora communities through monitoring, harassment and intimidation, and information campaigns. Furthermore, foreign actors target elected officials and public servants either directly or through Canadian proxies.

The Canadian government has created structures and processes to detect, deter and counter foreign interference in democratic processes, primarily through the activities of its national security agencies.

This paper is intended to provide a summary background into foreign interference in federal electoral processes and democratic institutions and the involvement of those federal organizations primarily engaged in countering foreign interference activities directed to those ends. It also describes the current review bodies for Canada's national security agencies and the Parliamentary committees that are engaged in reviews of foreign interference in federal electoral processes and democratic institutions.

2. Foreign Interference and Federal Elections Overview

a. Foreign Interference

Foreign interference includes activities undertaken by foreign states, foreign non-state actors or their proxies, that are clandestine, deceptive, or involve a threat to any person to advance their strategic objectives to the detriment of Canada's national interests. Foreign interference has reached levels not seen since the Cold War, and currently poses one of the greatest strategic threats to Canada's national security as it targets the integrity of our political system, democratic institutions, social cohesion, academic freedom, economy, and long-term prosperity.

Countering foreign interference is a priority for western democracies, where the core values of individual freedom of speech and association, respect for diversity and human rights, as well as transparency also present opportunities for foreign actors to undertake malign activities that erode public trust and confidence in democratic institutions and governance, and undermine social cohesion. Foreign interference has long been present in Canada, but its scale, speed, range, and impact have grown in recent years. The geopolitical landscape is increasingly complex, with hostile actors looking to disrupt the international rules-based system that has been in place since the end of the Second World War. The increasing prevalence of social media and other online platforms facilitates the attempts of foreign actors to interfere in Canada, in a variety of ways.

Canada is a country of open political systems, democratic processes, multiculturalism, academic freedoms, and prosperity. While these are reasons why people choose to make Canada their home, these same reasons also make Canada an attractive target for foreign interference.

To achieve their objectives, foreign actors engage in hostile activities such as clandestinely spreading misinformation and disinformation to undermine confidence in fundamental government institutions or electoral processes. They do so by cultivating witting or unwitting individuals to assist them, which enables them to operate with plausible deniability on Canadian soil.

In addition, foreign actors monitor, intimidate and harass diaspora communities in Canada. They also attempt to silence those they view as dissidents and promote narratives favourable to their own cause. In a globalized world where no one is out of reach, foreign states and foreign non-state actors may exploit digital and cyber capabilities to target individuals and institutions in Canada.

Foreign interference directed at Canada's democratic institutions and processes, at all levels of government, can be an effective way for a foreign actor to achieve its immediate, medium-, and long-term strategic objectives. Foreign actors – directly and/or via proxies – may seek to influence electoral nomination processes, shape public discourse or influence policy positions of elected officials using covert tactics. Foreign interference also takes the form of attempts to manipulate social media to amplify societal differences, sow discord, and undermine confidence in fundamental government institutions or electoral processes.

Elected officials, representing all political parties, as well as public officials across all levels of government, can be targeted, sometimes unknowingly, including federal, provincial and municipal officials and representatives of Indigenous governments. Public servants, ministerial and political

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staff, and others with input into, or influence over, the public policy decision-making process can be targeted by foreign states.

The Canadian public and voters can also be targeted by foreign interference. Elections provide valuable opportunities for foreign actors to conduct disinformation and interference campaigns; however, such activities are ongoing and are not only observed in the lead-up to, or during, an election. The targeting and manipulation of diverse Canadian communities are one of the primary means through which foreign actors carry out foreign interference activities and undermine Canada's democracy.

Canada continues to work with international like-minded allies, especially Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States as part of the Five Eyes alliance to address threats to democratic processes and institutions. The Five Eyes recently committed to further collaborate on policy, regulatory, intelligence, operational and enforcement responses, to build our collective resilience against the hostile actions of state actors and protect our open societies from all forms of foreign interference, whether through technology or through attacks against our democratic processes, transnational repression, or misinformation/disinformation.

b. Response to Foreign Interference in Federal Elections

Canada developed a plan to defend Canadian democracy in anticipation of the 2019 federal election. This plan, entitled the Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy ("the Plan") included measures to strengthen our electoral system against cyber and other threats. Elements of the Plan underwent internal and independent assessments, which confirmed the plan's utility and relevance. Key measures were improved and renewed ahead of the 2021 federal election and the plan continues to be reviewed for further improvements to safeguard future federal elections in the face of evolving threats.

The Plan has four pillars:

- Enhancing citizen preparedness
 - o The Critical Election Incident Public Protocol, a mechanism for senior public servants (referred to as the Panel of Five and described in more detail below) to communicate clearly, transparently, and impartially with Canadians during an election in the event of an incident or incidents that threaten Canada's ability to have a free and fair election. First implemented in 2019, the Protocol underwent an independent assessment following the 43rd general election and has been renewed and updated for future elections.
 - o The Digital Citizen Initiative aims to support democracy and social inclusion in Canada by building citizen resilience against online disinformation and building partnerships to support a healthy information ecosystem.
 - o Security agencies (Communications Security Establishment and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service) report publicly on cyber and foreign interference threats to Canada's democratic process.

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- Improving organizational readiness
 - o Enhanced coordination amongst government departments and agencies to identify threats, emerging tactics, and systems vulnerabilities to strengthen security practices and behaviors;
 - o Engagement with political parties to improve their cyber security practices by offering thorough technical advice, including on online security measures and internal security practices;
 - o Sensitize decision-makers to the nature of foreign interference; and
 - o Provide classified threat briefings to political parties.
- Combatting foreign interference
 - o Canada's security agencies worked to prevent covert, clandestine, or criminal activities by foreign actors from interfering in the 2019 and 2021 elections.
 - o Measures include the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force and the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (G7 RRM) (both described below).
- Building a Healthy Information Ecosystem
 - o Disinformation online can create confusion and exploit existing social tensions. The government continues to support social media platforms in their efforts to increase the transparency, authenticity and integrity of their systems to help safeguard our elections. This includes the Canada Declaration on Electoral Integrity Online.

i. Critical Election Incident Public Protocol (CEIPP)

In Canada's form of democratic government, the legitimacy of the Government flows from its ability to command the confidence of the House of Commons. Following the dissolution of Parliament for an election, however, there is no elected chamber to confer confidence on the Government. Given this fact, and that the Government cannot assume that it will command the confidence of the House after the election, it is incumbent upon a government to act with restraint during an election period. This is the "caretaker convention". This convention puts into practice the principle that the government is expected to exercise restraint in its activities and "restrict itself" in matters of policy, spending and appointments during the election period, except where action is "urgent" and "in the national interest". Exercising "restraint" does not mean that government is prohibited from making decisions or announcements, or otherwise taking action, during the caretaker period. To the contrary, the routine operation of government must continue, and necessary business must be transacted. During the caretaker period, deputy ministers have a key role in ensuring the continuance of necessary government business – for example, by ensuring that public services continue to be delivered in timely manner. Ministers continue to be accountable for the actions of their agencies and departments.

A Cabinet Directive, the CEIPP, first established in 2019, sets out the government's expectations with respect to the general directions and the principles to guide the process for informing the public of an incident or series of incidents that threatens Canada's ability to have a free and fair

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federal election during the period that the caretaker convention is in effect. Note that this mandate is broader than just incidents of foreign interference, but would apply to them.

The CEIPP has a time-limited application; it only applies during the caretaker period of a federal election in order to respond to incidents related to the administration of the election, which is the responsibility of Elections Canada, an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament. Incidents that occur outside of the caretaker period will be addressed through regular Government of Canada operations, that is, by the responsible Minister, in coordination with Cabinet if necessary.

The CEIPP establishes a group of five senior civil servants (known as the Panel of Five) who will, working with the national security agencies within the agencies' existing mandates, be responsible for determining whether the threshold for informing Canadians has been met, either through a single incident or an accumulation of separate incidents. The Panel of Five is comprised of: the Clerk of the Privy Council; the National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister; the Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General; the Deputy Minister of Public Safety; and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Canada's national security agencies provide regular briefings to the Panel on emerging national security developments and potential threats to the integrity of the federal election. The Panel may also receive information and advice from sources other than the security and intelligence agencies.

If the head of a national security agency becomes aware of interference in a general election, they will, in consultation with each other, consider all options to effectively address the interference. As part of this process, they will inform the Panel. Barring any overriding legal, national security/public security reasons, the agencies will inform the affected party (e.g., a candidate; a political party; Elections Canada) of the incident directly.

If advised of an incident, the Panel will determine whether the threshold to inform the public has been met, on a consensus basis and with consultation as required. The threshold for informing the public is set out in the Cabinet Directive but is generally described as the occurrence of an incident or an accumulation of incidents that threatens Canada's ability to have a free and fair election.

If the Panel determines that the threshold is met, the public is to be informed, following the procedure set out in the CEIPP. During the 2019 and 2021 federal elections (43rd and 44th federal general elections), the Government of Canada did not detect foreign interference that threatened Canada's ability to have a free and fair election, and that warranted public communication, as determined by the Panel under the CEIPP.

The CEIPP also requires an independent report after each federal election period, to assess the implementation of the CEIPP and its effectiveness in addressing threats to the election. Following the 2019 election, Jim Judd reviewed the CEIPP and noted that while the Protocol was a success, there were still opportunities for improvement. After the 2021 election, Morris Rosenberg similarly determined that the CEIPP was effective and ought to remain in place.

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ii. *Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force*

In order to ensure the regular briefings of the Panel of Five required by the CEIPP, the government established the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force. SITE is made up of representatives from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) (more on each of these organizations below). Each member organization contributes intelligence and other information that falls within its particular mandate in the Security and Intelligence (S&I) community.

The SITE Task Force was established to enable coordinated information sharing, alignment and awareness on matters related to threats to the security of Canada and its federal elections. It began operations more than a year before the 2019 election, producing amalgamated reports that incorporated both classified and unclassified inputs from the four member organizations of the Task Force.

Unlike the Panel of Five, the SITE Task Force is not restricted to the caretaker period. It continues to meet regularly to coordinate and share information on threats to elections arising from domestic and foreign actors. For example, the SITE Task Force assumed an enhanced operational posture to monitor for any foreign interference directed at four by-elections in June 2023 and one by-election in July 2024. The SITE Task Force produced a report consisting of its assessment of any attempts at foreign interference identified during the June 2023 by-elections, and a report on the July by-election is forthcoming. During non-election periods, it reports information through regular Government of Canada operations, that is, to the responsible departments/agencies/Ministers, who can coordinate with Cabinet, if necessary.

iii. *G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (G7 RRM)*

GAC also engages in bilateral and multilateral forums to share information and best practices with respect to countering foreign interference. This includes the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (G7 RRM), which was established by Leaders at the 2018 G7 Summit in Charlevoix. The G7 RRM strengthens coordination between G7 countries to identify and respond to diverse and evolving foreign threats to democracy such as foreign state activity targeting democratic institutions and processes, and the information environment.

The G7 RRM comprises Focal Points from the G7 community. It counts Australia, New Zealand, the NATO Secretariat, the Netherlands, and Sweden as observers. Each member country representative shares analysis and reports on threat patterns and trends that it is seeing, based solely on open source (i.e. publicly available) information.

Canada leads the G7 RRM on an on-going basis, through a dedicated unit in Global Affairs Canada, known as RRM Canada. During the general elections, RRM Canada leverages relevant information from international partners and monitors the Canadian information environment using Open Source Intelligence techniques to provide updates to the SITE Task Force (described previously) to assist in the briefings to the Panel of Five during the caretaker period (also described previously).

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3. National Security and Intelligence Community Overview

Canada's National Security and Intelligence (S&I) community is made up of multiple departments and agencies, reporting to Ministers and subject to review by several bodies and Parliamentary committees. Each of the departments and agencies has a specific mandate and is governed by its own authorities, policies and procedures.

The key departments and agencies from the S&I community involved in the detection, deterrence and countering of foreign interference directly or indirectly targeting Canada's democratic processes are:

- Privy Council Office (PCO)
- Public Safety Canada (PS)
- Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS)
- Communications Security Establishment (CSE)
- Global Affairs Canada (GAC)
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

Parliament has established a robust network of review of the S&I community, through a dedicated review agency, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA), the Intelligence Commissioner and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP), all described below.

a. Privy Council Office (PCO)

i. PCO's responsibilities

PCO reports directly to the Prime Minister. PCO:

- Supports the development and implementation of the Government of Canada's policy and legislative agendas;
- Supports the Minister of Democratic Institutions;
- Coordinates responses to issues facing the Government and the country; and
- Supports the effective operation of Cabinet.

PCO is headed by the Clerk of the Privy Council, who also serves as Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Public Service. As a central agency, PCO primarily co-ordinates the work of government departments and agencies, monitoring and developing up-to-date situational awareness on matters related to potential instances of foreign interference.

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ii. *PCO involvement in the S&I community*

a) *National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister*

The National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister (NSIA) provides policy and operational advice, as well as intelligence, to the Prime Minister and Cabinet on issues related to national security, including foreign interference. The NSIA, Deputy NSIA and supporting secretariats convene the security and intelligence community to ensure the coordination of government responses to all types of foreign interference threats.

With respect to foreign interference, the NSIA is primarily supported by two secretariats: the Security and Intelligence Secretariat (S&I Secretariat) and the Intelligence Assessment Secretariat (IA Secretariat). In addition to information from supporting secretariats, the NSIA relies on information provided by the S&I community, including status updates regarding ongoing security incidents and intelligence on threats to national security.

The S&I Secretariat provides policy advice and support to the NSIA on national security and intelligence matters, including coordinating operational and policy development initiatives for senior-level interdepartmental committees. The S&I Secretariat supports the NSIA in briefing the Prime Minister and Cabinet on key national security issues and has a coordination role whenever national security or intelligence issues are before Cabinet. The S&I Secretariat works closely with Public Safety Canada and other government departments to convene and support regular senior governance meetings on foreign interference threats and responses.

The IA Secretariat is a strategic foreign intelligence analysis and assessment unit. It provides intelligence analysis and assessments to the Prime Minister, Cabinet, Clerk of the Privy Council, and senior Government of Canada officials and plays a key interdepartmental leadership and coordination role for Canadian Intelligence Community assessments. The IA Secretariat also fosters relationships with allied intelligence assessment organizations and builds a stronger allied Intelligence Community through horizontal, community-wide initiatives, enterprise solutions and collaborative, cost-effective intelligence analysis training. The IA Secretariat monitors and assesses foreign interference, examining trends, threats, and emerging issues related to foreign interference as they pertain to the geostrategic environment it covers. The IA Secretariat reports on these issues through its range of intelligence products to its core clients, as well as the broader Canadian S&I community.

b) *Democratic Institutions Secretariat*

The Democratic Institutions (DI) Secretariat supports policy initiatives related to strengthening and protecting Canada's democratic institutions, such as leading the whole of government effort as part of the Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy, described above.

c) *PCO's coordination role*

PCO plays a lead role in coordinating senior public servants, including Deputy Ministers, Assistant Deputy Ministers and Directors General, from various departments and agencies across the S&I community on topic-specific committees.

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iii. Review and Accountability Mechanisms

PCO's role in the S&I community in respect to foreign interference is currently being considered by the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA), the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) and Parliamentary committees as they conduct their reviews into foreign interference in Canada's democratic processes.

iv. PCO and foreign interference into federal elections

To address potential threats of foreign interference during elections, an Elections Security Architecture is established during election periods. This brings together multiple departments and agencies to ensure that intelligence and information indicating possible foreign interference are gathered, assessed and shared as rapidly as possible.

A primary component of this architecture is the Election Security Coordinating Committee (ESCC), which can meet at the Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Minister, or Director General-levels. The ESCC is co-chaired by PCO and by Elections Canada and ensures a coordinated approach and common understanding among the S&I community, Elections Canada and the Commissioner of Canada Elections. Operational coordination between ESCC and the SITE Task Force (discussed above) allows key players to quickly coordinate, assess and verify threat-related information regarding potential foreign-interference activities. Other national security governance committees may also be leveraged as appropriate to share information and coordinate decision-making during elections. The ESCC can also meet outside of election periods to maintain connections and momentum and to review preparedness for emerging threats.

v. PCO role during the 43rd and 44th general elections

PCO played a coordinating role between the agencies of the S&I community and provided briefings to senior government officials, including the Prime Minister, security cleared representatives from political parties represented in the House of Commons, and the members of the Panel of Five.

In the lead up to both general elections, and throughout the election periods, PCO supported meetings of the Panel of Five, co-chaired the ESCC (with Elections Canada), and engaged with political parties on election security matters. During and after the elections, PCO conveyed information from political party representatives to appropriate security agencies concerning possible security threats.

Following both elections, PCO arranged the independent assessments of the CEIPP (by Jim Judd in 2019 and Morris Rosenberg in 2021) and coordinated the review and response to the recommendations of both reports.

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b. Public Safety (PS)*i. PS's responsibilities*

The Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness (PS) is responsible for matters of public safety, national security, and emergency management.

The Department develops and provides advice to the Minister of Public Safety on national security matters in support of the many operational activities undertaken by the Canadian security and intelligence community. This includes functioning as a centralized hub for coordinating work on a number of national security issues, including countering foreign interference.

PS functions as a centralized hub for work in counter-terrorism, critical infrastructure, cyber security and transportation security. PS coordinates and provides support with respect to detection, denial, prevention, response, and recovery on matters relevant to national and cyber security. This includes working with operational and policy partners to provide strategic advice to the Government on evolving and sensitive security issues. PS identifies and works to close gaps in Canada's ability to address and withstand national and cyber-security threats. These threats include, but are not limited to, ransomware, foreign influence, money laundering, terrorist financing, threats to critical infrastructure, weapons of mass destruction, hostile state activity, and terrorism.

ii. PS's role in the S&I community

PS oversees five agencies: the RCMP, CSIS, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and the Parole Board of Canada. Of these, the RCMP and CSIS are engaged in efforts to combat foreign interference.

The Minister of Public Safety has the authority to provide direction to the Heads of Agencies, who are responsible for the control and management of their respective agency. Direction is sometimes provided through formal instruments known as Ministerial Directives. Most directions provide high-level direction and require the Deputy Minister or Agency Head to determine the ways and means of accomplishing objectives. In some cases, this is required by law; in other cases, it may still be advisable as an exercise of good governance.

iii. Review and accountability mechanisms

PS is engaged in the reviews into foreign interference by NSIRA, NSICOP and certain Parliamentary committees.

iv. PS and foreign interference into federal elections

PS develops and provides advice to the PS Minister on national security matters, in support of the many operational activities undertaken by the Canadian S&I community. This includes functioning as a centralized hub for coordinating work on a number of national security issues, including detecting, deterring and countering foreign interference.

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PS does not investigate or produce intelligence related to FI, but rather convenes and coordinates partners and portfolio agencies to ensure common situational awareness and an informed response across the Government of Canada and Cabinet. PS also plays a leadership role in analyzing and synthesizing a whole-of-government perspective on FI-related issues, and leads the policy development response to the issue. PS also takes a leadership role in communicating and engaging with Canadians to inform policy and educates the public on national security threats and the government's actions to protect against foreign interference. PS works with other departments and agencies to develop policy advice on FI issues, such as: transnational repression; attempting to interfere in Canada's democratic institutions and processes; cyber threats; and, targeting officials at all levels of government to influence public policy and decision-making in a way that is clandestine, deceptive or threatening, and to the detriment of Canadian interests.

A National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator has been announced by the Prime Minister and established within PS to lead the whole-of-government response and coordinate efforts to combat foreign interference. Public and stakeholder outreach will be a primary function of this role.

The GoC also completed public and stakeholder consultations to guide the creation of a Foreign Influence Transparency Registry (FITR), consisting of both online submissions from the general public (approximately 1,000) and in-person roundtable discussions with targeted stakeholders (80 individuals representing 40+ organizations). These additional consultations are necessary based on analysis of the feedback received from the initial consultations where many stakeholders emphasized that the Registry is only one tool out of many that should be added to Canada's toolkit to counter foreign interference.

Most recently, on November 10, 2023, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice signaled the intent to introduce legislation in the coming weeks for the creation of a FITR and announced the launch of additional public consultations on foreign interference, specifically on the *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act*, the *Criminal Code*, the *Security of Information Act* and the *Canada Evidence Act*.

v. *PS role during the 43rd and 44th general elections*

The Deputy Minister of Public Safety was a member of the Panel of Five.

c. Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS)

i. *CSIS responsibilities*

Established in 1984, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS or the Service) is a civilian security intelligence service. CSIS' core mandate is to investigate threats to the security of Canada and advise the Government of Canada on such threats. The *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act (CSIS Act)* identifies the specific activities that the Service may investigate as well as the threshold that must be met for CSIS to engage in investigative activities. Among others, s. 2 of the *CSIS Act* defines as a threat to the security of Canada "espionage or sabotage that is against Canada or is detrimental to the interests of Canada or activities directed toward or in support of such espionage or sabotage," and "foreign influenced activities within or relating to Canada that are detrimental to the interests of Canada and are clandestine or deceptive or involve a threat to any

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person”. CSIS’ authority to collect information and intelligence on threats to the security of Canada rests primarily in s. 12 of the *CSIS Act*.

Subsection 12(2) clarifies that CSIS may investigate either inside or outside of Canada. Further to its mandate to investigate threats to the security of Canada, CSIS also has the authority under s. 12.1 of the *CSIS Act* to take measures to reduce these threats in certain circumstances.

In addition to investigating threats to the security of Canada, CSIS also conducts foreign intelligence collection within Canada pursuant to s.16 of the *CSIS Act*; that is, intelligence relating to the intentions, capabilities and activities of a foreign state, a group of foreign states or any foreign person. CSIS may only collect such intelligence at the personal request of the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister of National Defence and with the personal consent of the Minister of Public Safety.

The head of CSIS is the Director, who serves as Deputy Minister for the organization and reports to the Minister of Public Safety. The Director is supported by several Deputy Directors. The Deputy Director Operations (DDO) is most directly involved in investigating the threat posed to Canada by foreign interference, including in federal elections and democratic processes. The DDO heads the directorate that is responsible for the operational activities of the Service, including intelligence collection, assessments and threat reduction measures. The Deputy Director, Policy and Strategic Partnerships (DDP) is responsible for the overall strategic policy framework of the Service including proposing legislative amendments to the *CSIS Act* so that CSIS can better address foreign interference threats.

ii. CSIS involvement in the S&I community

As Canada’s civilian security intelligence service, CSIS collects and assesses intelligence and then provides advice to the Government of Canada, including in the form of intelligence assessments and reports which are shared with other relevant Government of Canada departments for information purposes and for use in their own threat analyses. In 2022, CSIS produced over 2,500 assessments and reports on all threats it was investigating, including foreign interference.

CSIS’ intelligence collection activities may serve to advance investigations, assist the Minister of National Defence or the Minister of Foreign Affairs, provide security assessments to departments of the Government of Canada, as well as advice on the admissibility of people to Canada, or to disseminate intelligence, assessments and advice to the government. In carrying out investigations, CSIS may deploy a wide array of operational techniques with varying levels of intrusiveness (e.g., interviews with targets, physical surveillance, and warranted powers to intercept communications or enter premises). When investigations involve Canadian fundamental institutions, CSIS policies and procedures provide additional specific direction, including Ministerial Direction, along with special considerations and enhanced approvals.

In response to the heightened level of public awareness on the foreign interference issue, CSIS created a unified team (CSIS Foreign Interference Tiger Team or C-FITT) as a Centre of Excellence dedicated and focused on responding to the demands related to foreign interference in a coordinated way. Reporting to the DDP (mentioned above), this team has taken the responsibility within CSIS for government wide engagement on issues ranging from policy, issues management

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and external review, as well as shaping and deepening the understanding and the government response to foreign interference.

iii. Review and accountability mechanisms

Parliament has established robust review mechanisms for the S&I community. All CSIS activities are reviewed by NSIRA and NSICOP, described below. Both NSIRA and NSICOP are currently engaged in reviews regarding foreign interference in federal elections and democratic processes. The Intelligence Commissioner, also described below, conducts quasi-judicial reviews into certain ministerial authorizations and determinations concerning intelligence activities. Certain other Parliamentary committees also routinely study policies and programs of national security agencies, including CSIS.

The Federal Court authorizes warrants for CSIS' intelligence collection activities requiring intrusive investigation techniques. CSIS has a duty of candour to the Federal Court and must proactively advise the Court on issues of non-compliance pertaining to Canadian law, Ministerial Direction and potentially unlawful activity. The Minister of Public Safety and NSIRA must be advised on such issues as well.

iv. CSIS and foreign interference into federal elections

CSIS contributes to a whole-of-government approach to protect Canadians from threats to the security of Canada, including those related to foreign interference.

CSIS has longstanding investigations into specific threat actors who are suspected to be targeting Canada and Canadians through clandestine, deceptive or threatening means. Foreign states, such as the People's Republic of China, Russia and India, have had a long-standing interest in targeting Canada and direct foreign interference activities toward Canada's democratic institutions and processes, in efforts to achieve their immediate, medium-, and long-term strategic objectives. CSIS advises the Government of Canada of these on-going threats and can take lawful measures under its threat reduction mandate to mitigate them.

During general elections, CSIS continues to investigate threats to the security of Canada and to advise the Government of Canada. CSIS provides advice to the Panel of Five as a member of the SITE Task Force in addition to its regular reporting structures. Advice can be provided as verbal briefings or through the production of intelligence assessments and reports. Intelligence assessments are intended to sensitize partners and contextualize the threat.

CSIS seeks out opportunities to engage directly with Canadians on issues of national security, such as foreign interference, to build awareness, trust and resilience among the Canadian population. CSIS publications on foreign interference, research security and other topics are translated into multiple languages in order to reach as many Canadians as possible. To raise awareness and build resilience, CSIS has a robust strategic engagements program that engages communities, groups and associations, the private sectors and other levels of governments. For example, CSIS briefed elected officials in 2022 at all levels of government including 49 federal, 26 provincial and 17 municipal elected officials to raise awareness of foreign interference threats.

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As national security extends beyond the remit of the federal government, such engagement is very important to CSIS. Outside of the federal government, however, except for some limited operational contexts, CSIS is limited to sharing information on foreign interference due to statutory restrictions, the sensitivity of the issue and the security classification of material.

v. *CSIS role during the 43rd and 44th general elections*

CSIS provides briefings on the threat of foreign interference across the Government of Canada. During the 43rd and 44th general elections, CSIS was a member of the SITE Task Force (described earlier) and, as a result, its briefings and intelligence reporting were provided to the Panel of Five. CSIS also briefed candidates and political parties in advance of the election period in order to raise awareness of the foreign interference threat. Finally, CSIS also provided threat briefings and intelligence reporting on foreign interference to senior government officials, Elections Canada and the Commissioner of Canada Elections.

CSIS also maintained close links with its Five Eyes partners (United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand) throughout the pre-election and election periods to benefit from their intelligence gathering that might relate to threats to Canadian elections.

d. Communications Security Establishment (CSE)

i. *CSE responsibilities*

The Communications Security Establishment (CSE) is Canada's national cryptologic agency providing the Government of Canada with foreign signals intelligence (SIGINT), cyber security and information assurance. CSE intercepts and analyzes foreign electronic communications to provide the Government of Canada with unique information about foreign threats to Canadian security and prosperity and important insights to support foreign policy and decision-making. CSE also delivers active and defensive cyber operations for Canada as it relates to international affairs, defence and security, including cybersecurity. CSE's Canadian Centre for Cyber Security helps defend Canadian Federal infrastructure and infrastructure deemed of importance to the Government from malicious cyber activity. CSE provides assistance to federal law enforcement and security agencies, such as CSIS and the RCMP, as well as the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and the Department of National Defence (DND) in the performance of lawful duties.

The head of the organization is the Chief, CSE. Chief, CSE serves as Deputy Minister for the organization and reports to the Minister of National Defence (MND). The Chief, under the direction of the MND, has the management and control of CSE and all matters relating to it.

Section 15 of the *Communications Security Establishment Act* sets out CSE's mandate as the national signals intelligence agency for foreign intelligence and the technical authority for cybersecurity and information assurance. This mandate has five aspects set out in sections 16 to 20: foreign intelligence (s.16); cybersecurity and information assurance (s.17); defensive cyber operations (s.18); active cyber operations (s.19); and technical and operational assistance (s.20).

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ii. CSE's involvement in the S&I community

CSE produces over 3,200 signals intelligence reports per year to help support government decision-making in the fields of international affairs, defence and security, including foreign interference, and provides a better understanding of global events and crises and helping to further Canada's interest and security in the world. CSE reports are shared with other relevant Government of Canada organizations (the DND/CAF, CSIS, the RCMP, GAC and PCO, amongst others) for information purposes and for use pursuant to their own mandates. These reports are shared with officials who hold the appropriate clearance and have a need to know.

CSE works with its cryptological partners in the Five Eyes (United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand). This partnership has endured for over 77 years. Through these and other partnerships, CSE delivers relevant and timely intelligence to satisfy Canada's foreign intelligence requirements.

In addition to also providing cyber security and information assurance services to protect federal infrastructure including blocking close to six billion malicious activities on the Government's network per day, and securing Canada's most valued secrets, CSE provides technical and operational assistance to agencies such as CSIS, the RCMP and CAF. In the course of providing the assistance, CSE has the same authority to carry out any activity as would have CSIS, the RCMP or CAF, as the case may be, if it were carrying out the activity, including requirements with respect to any applicable warrant.

iii. Review and accountability mechanisms

All of CSE's activities are subject to review by external review bodies including NSICOP and NSIRA (discussed below). The Intelligence Commissioner of Canada also performs quasi-judicial reviews of the authorizations for CSE's foreign intelligence and cybersecurity acquisition activities. Certain Parliamentary committees are also engaged in unclassified reviews of aspects of CSE's activities.

iv. CSE and foreign interference into federal elections

CSE actively supports the whole of government approach to detect, deter and counter foreign interference in federal elections and democratic processes by:

- providing SIGINT to Government of Canada decision-makers about the intentions, capabilities and activities of foreign-based threat actors
- defending Canada's federal elections infrastructure from malicious cyber activity
- proactively helping democratic institutions improve their cyber security
- sharing unclassified threat assessments with the public
- sharing information to help Canadians:
 - identify disinformation
 - protect their privacy and security online.

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Since the 2015 federal general election, CSE has been ensuring that strong and effective cyber defence measures are in place to protect Elections Canada's systems, network and our various democratic processes. CSE has produced multiple public reports about the risks that foreign interference poses to various parts of Canada's democratic process and the safeguards created against them. In these reports, CSE reviewed and published global trends in cyber threat activity against democratic processes (which it defines as including voters, political parties, and elections) and evaluated the corresponding threat to Canada in 2017, 2019 and 2021.

CSE leverages all aspects of its mandate (foreign intelligence, cybersecurity, foreign cyber operations and technical and operational assistance) to counter hostile state activities, including foreign interference. CSE also works with global and federal partners to mitigate the risks posed by transnational repression activities by gathering SIGINT and by supporting Canada's security and intelligence community. CSE is also an important player when it comes to countering disinformation. Foreign states use disinformation to destabilize Canada's democracy. CSE contributes to government-wide disinformation awareness campaigns, to counter the efforts of foreign interference through online disinformation.

In advance of the 2019 and 2021 federal general elections, the Cyber Centre worked with federal political parties to brief them on cyber threats and advise them on cyber security best practices. In both cases, the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security set up a 24/7 hotline that candidates could call if they had any cyber security concerns. Outside election periods, the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security has a dedicated point of contact political parties can reach out to on cyber security matters.

In September 2023, the Chief, CSE issued a directive to the Deputy Chief of Signals Intelligence and the Head, Canadian Centre for Cyber Security outlining expectations on how CSE will contribute to broader Government of Canada efforts to protect Canada's democracy. Specifically, it directs CSE to continue operations to ensure foreign intelligence on threats to Parliament, Parliamentarians, their families and staff gets into the right hands at the right time to inform decision-making.

v. CSE role during the 43rd and 44th general elections

CSE served as a member of the SITE Task Force and contributed to briefings to the Panel of Five. Also, as noted above, CSE briefed political parties on cyber threats and cyber security and established a hotline for candidates to call with cyber security concerns.

CSE also had defensive cyber operations authorities in place to protect the electronic information infrastructure of Elections Canada, in the event of malicious cyber activity directed at Elections Canada.

e. Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

i. GAC's responsibilities

Global Affairs Canada, under the leadership of the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development; and the Minister of International Development, is responsible for advancing Canada's international relations, including:

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- Developing and implementing foreign policy;
- Fostering the development of international law, international trade and commerce;
- Providing international assistance (encompassing humanitarian, development, and peace and security);
- Providing consular services for Canadians; and,
- Overseeing the Government of Canada's global network of missions abroad.

The mandate of the Minister of Foreign Affairs is outlined at section 10 of the *Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act*.¹

ii. GAC's involvement in the S&I community

Many of Canada's most significant national security threats, including foreign interference, involve a foreign policy nexus. In its work advancing global and regional security interests and managing bilateral and multilateral relationships, GAC, therefore, contributes to preventing and responding to threats to Canadians and Canadian international interests.

Intelligence on the capabilities, intentions and activities of foreign states collected by domestic and allied intelligence partners informs a wide range of GAC's activities, from policy development to the security of Canada's missions abroad. For example, pursuant to s. 16 of the *CSIS Act*, CSIS may assist the Minister of Foreign Affairs, within Canada, in the collection of foreign intelligence. GAC also produces specialized diplomatic and open-source reporting on foreign interference related issues, as well as strategic intelligence assessments. The *CSE Act* also foresees that the Minister of National Defence may issue an Active Cyber Operations Authorization only if the Minister of Foreign Affairs has requested the Authorization's issue or has consented to its issue.

iii. Review and accountability mechanisms

GAC's national security and intelligence activities are subject to review by NSICOP and NSIRA, as well as unclassified studies by certain parliamentary committees. Within the Five Eyes, Canada is the only country with a Foreign Affairs department whose activities are subject to external national security and intelligence review in a manner usually reserved for operational security agencies.

iv. GAC and foreign interference into democratic processes

GAC addresses foreign interference using a wide range of diplomatic tools, including direct bilateral diplomacy, formal diplomatic responses, engagement with allies and like-minded partners, outreach to domestic stakeholders, and collaboration with the S&I community. When considering these tools, GAC leverages all of the available information (intelligence, geographic

¹ GAC supports three Ministers: the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development; and, the Minister of International Development. Of these, only the Minister of Foreign Affairs is directly implicated in foreign interference in federal elections and democratic institutions.

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and/or thematic expertise, bilateral relations, likeminded considerations, etc.) to outline and consider various capacities and authorities that could be engaged to formulate a diplomatic response to instances of foreign interference. GAC activities are complementary to activities carried out by other members of Canada's S&I community, and are carried out in close consultation with them, as appropriate. Of note, GAC's diplomatic response to foreign interference tends to have more impact when done in coordination with domestic actions and measures.

As discussed above, GAC coordinates the G7 RRM through the RRM Canada secretariat. The RRM Canada secretariat also monitors the digital information environment using Open Source Intelligence data analytics. For indicators of foreign state-sponsored or state-affiliated information manipulation, such as disinformation. RRM Canada also represents GAC on the SITE Task Force, where it acts as an early warning system for indicators of information manipulation and other threats to democracy.

The RRM Canada team leverages the leadership of the G7 RRM to bring the experiences countering electoral interference from other countries to Canada. Additionally, the RRM Canada team engages leading national and international civil society organizations to support monitoring and reporting activities.

v. *GAC role during the 43rd and 44th general elections*

As part of regular practice, during the 43rd and 44th federal general elections, GAC circulated a Notice to all foreign missions in Canada cautioning them to respect the election period, withhold views that could affect bilateral relations, and refrain from conducting activities that could be perceived as inducing voters to vote for or against any particular candidate, or make financial contributions to candidates, political parties or events.

RRM Canada also monitored the digital information ecosystem for signs of foreign-sponsored disinformation and other forms of information manipulation and produced daily updates for the SITE Task Force. These updates supported SITE's efforts to brief the Panel of Five. RRM additionally produced ad hoc reports covering specific or emerging situations during campaigns, which were shared with the SITE Task Force. During the 43rd general election, RRM Canada also contracted a leading civil society organization in the field of detecting information manipulation, the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, to provide independent updates on their observations of the digital information ecosystem, and a final retrospective report.

The Deputy Minister of GAC also participated in the Panel of Five.

f. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

i. *RCMP responsibilities*

The RCMP is Canada's national police force, with a mandate to prevent crime, maintain peace, enforce laws, contribute to national security, ensure state officials' safety, and provide operational support to law enforcement agencies. The RCMP obtains its authority from several statutes, including the *RCMP Act*, the *Security Offences Act (SOA)* and the *Criminal Code*. Administrative and Operational Manuals, which act as the national manuals for police officers, are among the service manuals that contain the policies, procedures, and protocols that govern the RCMP.

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Decision-making and authority falls with the RCMP Commissioner, who is supported by the Senior Executive Committee (SEC), inclusive of the Commissioner, Chief Administrative Officer, Deputy Commissioners, Commanding Officers for British Columbia and Alberta, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Strategic Policy Officer and the Chief of Reform, Accountability and Culture.

ii. RCMP involvement in the S&I community

The RCMP is the law enforcement agency within the Canadian S&I community and works closely with other government agencies and departments to coordinate efforts and address complex issues that require a multi-agency response.

The RCMP is also engaged with key national and international stakeholders seeking to raise awareness of federal priority enforcement areas, including foreign interference, through crime prevention and reporting initiatives. The goal of these efforts is to reduce victimization and increase reporting to police and partners of illicit activities, including foreign interference, that might otherwise go uninvestigated. Those targeted by foreign actor interference may be unaware that they can report these activities to Canadian authorities. The RCMP works with Canadian communities, local police of jurisdiction, in addition to public and private sector entities on these issues.

iii. Review and accountability mechanisms

The RCMP is subject to the review by NSIRA and NSICOP (both described in detail below) and certain Parliamentary committees.

iv. RCMP and foreign interference into federal elections

There are several program areas within the RCMP's federal policing mandate that contribute to countering foreign interference. Those most concerned with foreign interference into federal elections are:

- ***Federal Policing National Security*** program has a multidisciplinary team dedicated to countering foreign interference and identifying related criminality:
 - The ***Foreign Actor Interference Team (FAIT)*** is responsible for providing governance and oversight over all FAI investigations undertaken by RCMP investigative teams. It prioritizes, plans and coordinates efforts and initiatives to improve the operational response to FAI. It advises on matters of national security related to illegal activities conducted at the direction or for the benefit of a foreign state, entity, and/or power.
 - The ***National Security Operational Analysis (NSOA)*** is an all-source operational intelligence analysis section. NSOA combines intelligence to investigative holdings to provide a more comprehensive picture of national security threats, including FAI.
- ***Federal Policing Strategic Intelligence (FPSI)*** produces strategic intelligence products that inform senior management and Government of Canada partners of FAI-related threat activity. FPSI is also the RCMP's lead on the SITE Task Force.

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- *National Critical Infrastructure Team (NCIT)* captures intelligence and assesses physical and cybercriminal threats to critical infrastructure (CI) in support of the RCMP's and the Government of Canada's CI protection mandates, including foreign actor interference threats.

The RCMP supports investigations of potential violations under the *Canada Elections Act*, which are conducted by the Commissioner of Canada Elections (CCE) and their office, on an *ad hoc* basis, when requested. The RCMP conducts joint investigations of suspected offences, when requested, with the office of the CCE, and may also provide assistance in relation to crime prevention measures, technical investigations services, and providing other advice or recommendations.

- The RCMP participates in the SITE Task Force, providing criminal intelligence collection, analysis, and assessments to support reporting on covert activities. The RCMP also participates in SITE-related briefings for senior government management, the Panel of Five, and political party campaign leaders.
- The RCMP contributes to information and intelligence to the CEIPP.
- The RCMP participates in the G7 RRM.

v. *RCMP role during the 43rd and 44th general elections*

For the 43rd and 44th federal general elections, the RCMP provided law enforcement expertise, criminal intelligence reports and assessments to the government on foreign interference, including threats to federal elections. It did not conduct any criminal investigations related to foreign interference in either election, and it did not have any direct engagement with political parties or candidates.

g. Accountability and Review Bodies

In 2017, the Government committed to increasing the public's confidence, democratic accountability and transparency of the activities of departments and agencies that are members of Canada's S&I community. Parliament created two external review bodies: NSICOP in 2017, and NSIRA in 2019.

i. *National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA)*

Created in 2019, NSIRA is an independent and external review body, made up of Governor in Council appointees, that reports to Parliament. NSIRA reviews Government of Canada national security and intelligence activities to ensure that they are lawful, reasonable and necessary. NSIRA also investigates complaints from the public regarding key national security agencies and activities. NSIRA replaced the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC), which reviewed only CSIS and the Office of the CSE Commissioner, which reviewed only CSE.

On 9 March 2023, NSIRA announced that it would initiate a review of the production and dissemination of intelligence on foreign interference with respect to the 43rd and 44th federal elections. That review engages CSIS, CSE, RCMP, GAC, PS and PCO, and is ongoing.

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ii. National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP)

The NSICOP is a committee of parliamentarians mandated to review any national security or intelligence matter including ongoing operations and activities. Committee members are drawn from the House of Commons and the Senate of Canada. All members hold Top Secret security clearances, allowing the S&I community to provide briefings in a classified setting on a variety of topics, including foreign interference.

On March 8, 2023, NSICOP launched a review of foreign interference in Canada's federal democratic processes. All of the agencies described in this document are subject to that review. This review is ongoing.

iii. Parliamentary Committees

Parliamentary committees have been engaged in studies of foreign interference in federal electoral processes and democratic institutions. On October 24, 2023, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics published its report entitled "Foreign Interference and the Threats to the Integrity of Democratic Institutions, Intellectual Property and the Canadian State". The studies by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics are on-going.

iv. The Intelligence Commissioner

The Office of the Intelligence Commissioner is an independent oversight body. The Intelligence Commissioner conducts independent quasi-judicial reviews of the conclusions reached by ministers in issuing certain ministerial authorizations and determinations concerning intelligence activities of CSIS and CSE.