



Countering an Evolving Threat:

**Update on Recommendations to Counter Foreign
Interference in Canada's Democratic Institutions**

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Recommendations from the Four Reports Reviewed – Implementation Status, Potential Gaps and Next Steps	3
Annex A – Table of Recommendations and Associated Actions	15



Introduction

On March 6, 2023, the Government of Canada announced several measures to combat foreign interference in Canadian democratic processes. Included in these measures was a request to develop a plan to address outstanding recommendations from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) in 2018 and 2019¹, the Judd Report², and the Rosenberg Report³. The plan, set out below, outlines these recommendations, summarizes the actions that have been taken so far to address them, and proposes further action.

Between the years 2018 to 2023, 26 recommendations were made with 16 of those received in early 2023, as part of the Rosenberg Report. Since the recommendations from each of the reports touch on similar issues, they have been grouped under the following themes:

- Communicating with Canadians about Foreign Interference and Protecting Canada's Democracy
- Effective Governance and Strong Legal Frameworks
- Risks, Vulnerabilities, and Security Measures
- Engagement with Partners to Enhance Awareness and Improve Resilience to Foreign Interference

A table with the status of each recommendation can be found at **Annex A**.

This plan outlines the recommendations made in the reports to protect Canadian democratic institutions and processes; summarizes the actions that have been taken or are in progress to address the recommendations; and proposes further steps for consideration to bolster Canada's response to foreign interference threats. In order to implement these further steps, additional work will be required, including, the policy approach, undertaking consultations, possible legislation for Parliamentary review, and implementation.

Recommendations from the Four Reports Reviewed – Implementation Status, Potential Gaps and Next Steps

There has been significant work done to implement many of the recommendations from the reports, and the Government is continuing to work toward implementing others.

¹ [The 2019 NSICOP Annual Report](#) (NSICOP 2019), and the [2018 NSICOP Special report into the allegations associated with Prime Minister Trudeau's official visit to India in February 2018](#) (NSICOP 2018). Other published reports from NSICOP and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency were not examined as they did not contain recommendations relating to foreign interference.

² [The Report on the assessment of the 2019 Critical Election Incident Public Protocol](#) (Judd Report)

³ [The Report on the assessment of the 2021 Critical Election Incident Public Protocol](#) (Rosenberg Report)

4 Countering an Evolving Threat

The five recommendations from the two NSICOP reports (2018 and 2019) have been partially addressed. Some action has been taken with respect to every recommendation, and additional options for consideration have been identified.

Four of five recommendations of the Judd Report have been implemented in whole or in part. One of the recommendations (#2) proposes that the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol be expanded to apply even when there is no election being held. This had not been implemented because Ministers already have the responsibility and the necessary powers to address any concerns about foreign interference that could arise between elections. Ministerial responsibility is a fundamental tenet of Canada's parliamentary democracy.

The Rosenberg Report, received in February 2023, outlined 16 recommendations which are in the process of being considered for early implementation.

Communicating with Canadians about
Foreign Interference and Protecting
Canada's Democracy

NSICOP 2019 (#1)
Judd (#1, 5)
Rosenberg (#1, 4-5, 10-11, 15, 16)

The four reports point out that equipping citizens with knowledge is the best defence against those who try to meddle in Canada's democratic processes. In its 2019 report, NSICOP outlined that, with regards to foreign interference, it is critical to "strengthen public awareness of threats to Canada." Mr. Rosenberg, in his recent report, emphasized the importance of establishing "a clear articulation of the problem and the approach to addressing it."

Current Status

The Government of Canada has taken steps to increase public awareness around foreign interference and to encourage a whole-of-society approach to addressing this threat. Since 2018, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has highlighted the threat of foreign interference in every Annual Report. Before the 2021 federal election, CSIS released a public report focusing on foreign interference and [threats to Canada's democratic process](#). The Communications Security Establishment (CSE) also began publishing reports on [foreign cyber interference in the context of elections](#) in 2017. The Government of Canada has also undertaken specific outreach activities to engage Canadians and communities, including CSIS stakeholder engagement (industry, universities, Canadian communities, civil society), CSE and Cyber Centre outreach (industry, small business, privately-owned critical infrastructure), and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) community outreach efforts.

In advance of the 2019 election, Canada put in place the [Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy](#). The Plan was the first of its kind internationally and recognized the importance of an informed citizenry in defending against foreign interference through the establishment of the [Digital Citizen Initiative](#). This initiative supports democracy and social inclusion in Canada by building

5 Countering an Evolving Threat

citizen resilience against online disinformation and building partnerships to support a healthy information ecosystem. The Plan also recognized the importance of collaboration with allies and like-minded partners by expanding Canada's leadership role in the [G7 Rapid Response Mechanism](#), which was launched at the G7 meeting hosted by Canada in 2018. This mechanism helps G7 and other allied countries to cooperate by sharing information about foreign interference on social media. Since 2018, the Government of Canada has invested close to \$20 million in the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, including \$13.4 million over five years in May 2022, to deepen the coordination between countries in identifying, and responding to, foreign threats to democracy, including state-sponsored disinformation.

The Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy also signalled that government institutions need to continue to work together to prepare and respond to threats of foreign interference. The [Cabinet Directive on the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol](#) (the Protocol) is part of this effort. The Protocol establishes a non-partisan panel of deputy ministers (the Panel) tasked with communicating to Canadians about incidents during the writ period that threatened the integrity of a federal election.

The Panel's deliberations are informed by another innovation, the [Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections \(SITE\) Task Force](#), which is made up of officials from the RCMP, CSE, CSIS and Global Affairs Canada, to report on covert, clandestine, or criminal activities by foreign actors.

The Plan recognized that foreign state interference and disinformation challenges are complex and inter-related – the latter being a tactic of the former. As such, the Plan outlined a whole-of-society approach to tackling them. The Government of Canada is working to further equip academia, civil society, and provinces and territories with the resources needed to increase awareness of these threats. Working with these partners is essential to ensuring Canada continues to adapt to ever-changing challenges.

The Government's approach continues to evolve. The Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy has been revised and improved since the 2019 federal election by bringing to bear four strategic areas of improvement:

- Strengthening a "full election cycle" view of threats;
- Broadening the Government's view on threat awareness;
- Developing central leadership on disinformation; and
- Continuously reinforcing the resilience of institutions and citizens.

The Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy has also been improved by addressing Mr. Judd's recommendations for the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol. These changes included:

- Alignment of the Protocol's application period with that of the Caretaker Convention;
 - An explicit provision for the Panel to consult with the Chief Electoral Officer, as appropriate;
-

6 Countering an Evolving Threat

- A provision for the ability of political parties to alert security agencies of incidents that could threaten a free and fair election; and
- A recognition of the Panel's ability to examine domestically-driven interference, as well as to receive information from sources other than security agencies.

The Canada Declaration on Election Integrity Online was strengthened by expanding signatories beyond the original four – Facebook, Google, Microsoft and Twitter. In 2021, TikTok, LinkedIn and YouTube joined the Declaration. First established in 2019, the Declaration is a voluntary agreement with social media platforms to increase the transparency, authenticity and integrity of their systems to help safeguard Canada's federal elections. The Declaration recognizes that social media and other online platforms, as well as the Government of Canada, have respective responsibilities to help safeguard Canada's electoral processes. This directly responded to Mr. Judd's recommendation #5 and helped to reduce disinformation.

The renewed Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy also recognized the importance of departments and agencies working together to address quickly emerging challenges. It additionally strengthened interdepartmental cooperation in countering disinformation. Drawing upon insights developed by the United Kingdom's [RESIST model](#), this work is founded on the need to recognize disinformation and to understand how it works. While still in its early stages, these efforts also seek to enhance the availability of reliable information on government programs and services, implement a counter disinformation toolkit, and offer training for Parliamentarians and public servants on foreign interference and disinformation.

Most recently, the Government of Canada established the Protecting Democracy Unit within the Privy Council Office and tasked it with coordinating, developing, and implementing government-wide measures designed to combat disinformation and to protect Canada's democratic institutions. Together, these efforts contribute to the overarching objective of one of NSICOP's 2019 recommendations to "build institutional and public resiliency" through "sustained central leadership and coordination."

Potential Gaps and Next Steps

Informed by earlier reviews and by evidence from the 2019 and 2021 federal elections in which the above measures were in place, Mr. Rosenberg finds that "the government's plan and public communications should acknowledge that the problem of interference occurs both before the election is called and during the caretaker period" – it is not just during the election period, but all the time.

Mr. Rosenberg also finds that the Government should be clear that "the Protocol is only one element in a much larger set of measures aimed at addressing election interference". Mr. Rosenberg recommends "an early, fulsome communications approach" that explains the "full range of activities that occur during the caretaker period." These findings align closely with earlier findings from NSICOP that recommend that the Government "engage Canadian institutions more thoroughly on the significant threats they face" with regards to foreign

interference. It can, however, be challenging to speak openly about foreign interference, given the risk of revealing intelligence, the need to protect sources, and to ensure critical relationships are maintained with Canada's intelligence partners. NSICOP acknowledged this reality in its 2019 report when it emphasized the "challenges in communicating information" related to foreign interference "due to the sensitive nature of the information."

Nevertheless, it is clear that a central finding in the four reports studied relates to a requirement for increased transparency with Canadians about the extent and nature of foreign interference in democratic processes. There is more work to be done to ensure broader awareness of both the threats facing Canada and the measures put in place to address them. As per Mr. Rosenberg's recommendations to undertake more robust and frequent communications with Canadians on foreign interference and Canada's efforts to protect Canadian democracy, the Government, including responsible ministers as well as national security and intelligence officials, will find further opportunities to keep Canadians informed of the extent of foreign interference affecting all aspects of society, including in their democracy. An engaged, informed, and resilient citizenry is one of our best defenses against attempts to undermine our democracy and its institutions. Keeping Canadians informed of the activities being undertaken on their behalf, and adopting emerging communications best practices that draw from Canada and NATO's recent efforts to identify and counter Russian state sponsored disinformation in the invasion of Ukraine, will help ensure Canadians' democracy remains strong and secure.

Specifically, the Government will use the new National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator and CSIS's upcoming Annual Report to bolster communications with Canadians.

Additionally, new briefings to be offered to Members of Parliament and Senators will increase awareness of the threat foreign interference poses. The new National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator will work on expanding briefing mechanisms with provincial/territorial, municipal, and Indigenous officials.

Recently announced funding to strengthen the capacity of civil society partners to counter disinformation, including from foreign sources, will also help to increase resilience. The Government is also accelerating efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Government of Canada, and partners, to combat disinformation, including state-sponsored disinformation, through strategic communications, based on the RESIST model.

These measures are consistent with the commitments outlined in Minister LeBlanc's [mandate letter](#) – in which he is charged to "lead an integrated government response to protect Canada's democratic institutions, including the federal electoral process, against foreign interference and disinformation". This work will need to be done in close collaboration with others, including the Minister of Public Safety, who has the overall responsibility to lead the government-wide efforts to counter foreign interference. Efforts will also be informed by key partners such as the Chief Electoral Officer, whose post-election recommendations reports provide important insights on developments affecting Canada's electoral system.

Using the findings and recommendations from the Independent Special Rapporteur's review on foreign interference, as well as the ongoing reviews from NSICOP and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA), the Government will take additional action.

Effective Governance and Strong Legal Frameworks

NSICOP 2019 (#1c-d)
NSICOP 2018 (#2)
Rosenberg (#8)

The reports studied highlighted the importance of having a modern and robust legal and governance framework to counter foreign interference, which balances national security considerations with privacy and other Charter protections.

Current Status

In 2017, Parliament created NSICOP, which provides a forum for Members of Parliament of all recognized political parties and Senators with top-secret clearance to review classified information. In line with the NSICOP 2019 recommendation #1d, which calls for a whole-of-government mechanism to identify and respond to foreign interference, the Government has recently taken several steps to respond to foreign interference through operational and policy mechanisms. Firstly, the Prime Minister announced the creation of the National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator within Public Safety Canada, a new role with the express purpose of coordinating efforts to combat foreign interference. Budget 2023 announced an investment of \$13.5 million over five years and \$3.1 million ongoing to fund the Coordinator's office and its activities. Secondly, the Government launched public consultations regarding the implementation of a [Foreign Influence Transparency Registry](#) to expand Canada's toolkit to confront this evolving threat. These consultations are due to conclude in spring 2023.

In addition, the 2018 NSICOP special report highlighted the key role played by the National Security and Intelligence Advisor (NSIA) to the Prime Minister in providing advice as coordinator of the security and intelligence community and as advisor to the Prime Minister. Since then, steps were taken to further strengthen the national security governance framework to ensure that the NSIA maintains active awareness of ongoing threats and mitigation measures, including those related to foreign interference.

The NSICOP report from 2019 recommended (#1c) that the Government assess existing legislation that pertains to foreign interference, specifically the *Security of Information Act* and the *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act* (CSIS Act), and make legislative changes as required. Departments and agencies have conducted extensive policy and legal analysis with respect to these laws, have identified gaps, and continue to develop options to address them with a view to strengthening Canada's legal framework.

The *Elections Modernization Act*, which Parliament passed in 2018, prohibits the use of funds from foreign entities and includes heightened transparency measures. The Government has also introduced other pieces of legislation, including Bill C-26, *An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts*, to bolster cyber security.

In 2019, the Government created NSIRA, which conducts independent expert review of national security and intelligence activities across all federal departments and agencies and informs Parliament and Canadians as to their lawfulness.

Additionally, Budget 2023 provides \$53 million over two years to support departments and national security and intelligence agencies to support them in fulfilling their obligations to comply with legislated review requirements in a timely and efficient manner as well as implement recommendations.

Potential Gaps and Next Steps

In order to modernize Canada's legal toolkit to address foreign interference threats and fully implement the NSICOP recommendation on strengthening the legal framework, the Minister of Public Safety, informed by the ongoing work of the Independent Special Rapporteur and the reviews of NSICOP and NSIRA, will:

- Work on changes to modernize the *CSIS Act* which was written before the internet was widely available. Changes could be advanced to allow CSIS to better operate in a digital world by effectively collecting and using digital data; enable CSIS to share intelligence with non-government partners to help them counter threats; and collect intelligence and conduct activities to counter foreign threats that were not envisioned when the *CSIS Act* received Royal Assent in 1984. This work should also be informed by the recommendations in the Public Order Emergency Commission's final report that pertain to the *CSIS Act*. Given the need for Canadians, particularly members of diaspora communities, to have confidence that their national security agencies are working to protect their interests and respect their Charter rights, robust dialogue and consultation on any proposals will be required ; and
- Working with enforcement partners and national security agencies, explore if further amendments to existing provisions are needed and whether to create new offences under the *Security of Information Act* and the *Criminal Code* to facilitate prosecution of foreign interference activities.

In referring to the 2018 *Election Modernization Act*, Mr. Rosenberg notes that "Canada's election laws have been modified to more effectively counter foreign interference ." The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities is currently working on amendments to the *Canada Elections Act*. As part of this process, the Minister is examining potential amendments to also counter foreign interference.

Risks, Vulnerabilities, and Security Measures

NSICOP 2019 (#1a-b)
Rosenberg (#2-3)

The reports reviewed provided several recommendations related to the requirement for the Government to have the ability to evaluate risks and vulnerabilities resulting from the growing threat posed by foreign interference in order to be able to adapt the Government's toolkit to the evolving threat.

Current Status

The NSICOP 2019 report highlighted the need to identify risks and harms to institutions posed by the foreign interference threats (#1a), as well as requirements to undertake a full examination of resulting vulnerabilities (#1b). In response, departments and agencies have developed assessments of threats and risks posed by foreign interference, and measures to counter these threats. Departmental Chief Security Officers (CSO) and Chief Information Officers (CIO) have, under the leadership of the Privy Council Office, undertaken training to better inform the CSO and CIO community of threats and possible mitigation strategies (e.g., technical safeguards and cyber hygiene tips). In addition, as part of the assessments of threats and risks, departments and agencies have been engaging with stakeholders from sectors of strategic interest – such as critical infrastructure operators – to help identify risks and address vulnerabilities relevant to their specific areas of operation.

In order to address foreign state efforts to interfere in Canada's democracy by intimidating diaspora communities in Canada, Budget 2023 provides \$48.9 million over three years to the RCMP to protect Canadians from harassment and intimidation, increase its investigative capacity, and more proactively engage with communities at greater risk of being targeted.

Potential Gaps and Next Steps

Foreign interference can be subtle and the potential effects difficult to identify, quantify and articulate. As such, departments and agencies continue to engage with stakeholders in academia and through other outreach programs to assess short- and long-term impacts of foreign interference in Canada, while continuing to make updates to assessments as the threat evolves. Mr. Rosenberg made the recommendation (#2) that "preparations for the next election should include an assessment of whether ministerial security, [RCMP] protective policing, and local policing capabilities are adequate for the level and persistence of threats and whether there is effective coordination among these bodies. There should also be a review of the coordination between political parties and the government with respect to campaign and security operations." The Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities have undertaken a comprehensive analysis of security threats and protective

measures available to Ministers, other Parliamentarians and senior officials, including foreign interference threats. The Ministers are evaluating tools to align with the threat environment and alleviate risks and vulnerabilities.

Mr. Rosenberg also recommended (#3) that “[t]here should be an assessment as to whether any adjustments should be made to the role of the SITE membership in light of the growing problem of domestic interference”. This will be considered through further enhancements to the Plan to Protect Canada’s Democracy, building on the guidance laid out in Minister LeBlanc’s mandate letter, and will include an examination of making SITE a permanent entity, with a mandate to conduct regular reporting on foreign interference activities.

Engagement to Raise Awareness and
Improve Resilience to Foreign
Interference

NSICOP 2019 (# 1e, 1f, 1g, 2)
NSICOP 2018 (#1 (A and B))
Judd (#3-4)
Rosenberg (#6-7, 12-14)

Foreign interference is both a local and a global threat. It affects individuals, organizations, companies, as well as democratic processes at every level. It cannot be effectively addressed by any entity or order of government acting in isolation. It evolves quickly, making the sharing of information one of the most effective tools to stay abreast of the risks. The Government of Canada must work with partners both domestically and internationally to ensure the strongest defences possible are in place. Each of the four reports provided recommendations that point to the need for a whole-of-society approach in countering foreign interference. These include recommendations to enhance engagement domestically and internationally, as well as to ensure partners and stakeholders are informed and able to contribute to collective efforts.

Current Status

In response to recommendations made by NSICOP in 2018 and 2019, the Government has advanced several efforts. The Prime Minister announced the creation of the National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator within Public Safety Canada, which directly responds to the NSICOP 2019 recommendation #2. The Government has also made progress in response to two other NSICOP 2019 recommendations. For example, security and intelligence agencies, including the RCMP, CSIS, Public Safety Canada, and the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, have expanded engagement with provincial, territorial and municipal representatives, as well as with Indigenous leaders and communities, and critical infrastructure owners and operators to increase awareness of threats and build resilience (#1e). The RCMP also works with police of jurisdiction (POJ) to counter foreign interference, including for the countering of state backed harassment and intimidation, as POJs are often the first to be made aware of foreign interference-related activities. Further, the security and intelligence agencies and others continue to engage regularly with international partners on collaborative efforts to address foreign interference, including through

intelligence sharing. Cooperation with Canada's allies is also undertaken by the Minister of Public Safety as Canada's representative at the annual [Five Country Ministerial](#), where Five Eyes security ministers meet to collaborate on various national security issues, including foreign interference; discuss respective approaches to shared issues; and coordinate a cohesive Five Eyes response (#1g).

In its 2018 special report, the NSICOP recommended (#1) that, "in the interest of national security, members of the House of Commons and the Senate should be briefed upon being sworn in and regularly thereafter on the risks of foreign interference and extremism in Canada." It further recommended that Ministers "should be reminded of the expectations described in the Government's *Open and Accountable Government*... [and that] ... consistent with the *Conflict of Interest Act*, public office holders must always place the public interest before private interests." Measures exist that address this recommendation. First, expectations and obligations for Ministers and their actions have been made public as part of their individual mandate letters. Second, the Parliamentary Protective Service provides security briefings to incoming Parliamentarians which address various threats, including foreign interference. SITE has also offered briefings to political party representatives during the writ period, while the Privy Council Office briefs all incoming Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries upon appointment on the range of security threats, including foreign interference.

Mr. Judd recommended that Canada "should monitor any international developments, with particular attention paid to any evolution in tactics by malign actors and any developments in defensive counter-measures taken by target countries (legal, regulatory and operational)." The Government has pursued international collaboration in many fora, including through the Rapid Response Mechanism, bringing together G7 countries to identify and respond to foreign threats. The Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace (Paris Call) was launched in November 2018 and calls on states, the private sector, and civil society organizations to work together to enhance security in cyberspace, fight disinformation and address new threats that emerge. Through the Paris Call, Canada and other groups exchange information and good practices on several aspects related to foreign electoral interference. Workshops were organized resulting in the publication of [Multi-Stakeholder insights: A compendium on countering election interference](#) in 2021.

In response to Mr. Judd's recommendation #4, the Government offered briefings for political parties in the lead up to the 2021 federal election, including providing information about issues the parties may face during the campaign.

Mr. Rosenberg highlighted "the need to work with external partners in Canada and globally, from academia, industry, and civil society, to support information integrity during elections. These external partners play several important roles. They have perspectives on the evolving threat environment that may differ from those of the national security agencies. They have a public education role. They can also alert the public to attempts at interference both before and during the campaign." To this end, the Government of Canada has worked to empower Canadians,

particularly youth, with the right skills to navigate online information. Since January 2020, the Digital Citizen Initiative has invested over \$15 million in 96 projects by civil society and academic organizations to build citizen resilience against disinformation. The Government's commitment to the Digital Citizen Initiative was further expanded in the 2022 Fall Economic Statement with an investment of \$31 million over four years, more than doubling the program's yearly funding. On March 6, 2023, the Government of Canada announced an investment of \$5.5 million to strengthen the capacity of civil society partners to provide important insight into the dynamics of Canada's information ecosystem, strengthening the resilience and digital literacy of government, industry, civil society and citizens.

Potential Gaps and Next Steps

NSICOP's 2019 report recommended (#1f) that Canada's strategy to counter foreign interference and build institutional and public resilience should "include an approach for ministers and senior officials to engage with fundamental institutions and the public." As the Government reviews the Protocol following the release of Mr. Rosenberg's report, the Government will look at establishing a process by which Ministers and senior officials, including members of the Panel as part of the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol, engage with stakeholders and communities. This engagement would seek views on best practices to mitigate the impact of foreign interference and disinformation on Canada's institutions.

The Government will also continue working with Canadian partners to further the work accomplished through the Paris Call to ensure that everyone has access to the most current expertise to protect Canada's electoral processes.

The report by Mr. Rosenberg also included recommendations to brief political party representatives in a secure location in Ottawa (#12) and to fix briefing schedules during the election period in advance while being flexible to urgent situations (#13). These recommendations will be implemented. The report further suggested providing a program for unclassified briefings for Parliamentarians and their staff on foreign interference and ways they can protect themselves (#14). Briefings will be offered to Parliamentarians and their staff following their swearing-in and on a regular basis in the future.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Government of Canada has implemented a number of measures in recent years to counter foreign interference in all aspects of society, including those related to democratic processes. These measures respond to several recommendations made by NSICOP, Mr. Judd and Mr. Rosenberg, either in whole or in part. This plan outlines further actions to respond to the outstanding recommendations and close any remaining gaps.

This work includes further increasing transparency and communications with Canadians about the threat of foreign interference and the specific Government actions being undertaken to mitigate it. This includes reviewing existing legislation, such as the *CSIS Act*, the *Criminal Code*, the *Security of Information Act*, and the *Canada Elections Act*. It also includes enhancing the security of senior public officials and exploring possible improvements to SITE and the Cabinet Directive.

Any steps taken will be undertaken with close consideration for ongoing work done by NSICOP, the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, and the Independent Special Rapporteur, the Right Honourable David Johnston, to ensure Canadians continue to have confidence in their democratic institutions and electoral processes.

Annex A – Table of Recommendations and Associated Actions

Recommendation		Key Actions and Next Steps
National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) Annual Report 2019		
1	The Government of Canada develop a comprehensive strategy to counter foreign interference and build institutional and public resiliency. Such a strategy should:	Departments and agencies work together as part of an effective governance framework to identify and respond to foreign interference activities. The new National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator will play a leading role to ensure Government-wide efforts to combat foreign interference are working effectively and towards the same goal. Using the findings and recommendations from the Independent Special Rapporteur’s review on foreign interference, as well as the ongoing reviews from NSICOP and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, the Government will take additional action.
	a) Identify the short- and long-term risks and harms to Canadian institutions and rights and freedoms posed by the threat of foreign interference.	<p>Departments and agencies have developed comprehensive assessments of foreign interference threats and risks. This analysis is ongoing, and takes into account how the threat—and the measures to counter it—evolve. Departments and agencies have been engaging with stakeholders in various sectors to share information on threats and help identify risks.</p> <p>Challenges remain in concretely measuring and articulating foreign interference harms in certain sectors of strategic interest. The Government will leverage the new National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator, academic and other outreach programs to engage stakeholders to further assess the short- and long-term impacts of foreign interference in Canada.</p>
	b) Examine and address the full range of institutional vulnerabilities targeted by hostile foreign states, including areas expressly omitted in the NSICOP’s review.	<p>Departments and agencies have developed comprehensive assessments of foreign interference threats and risks.</p> <p>The tools used by foreign state actors to conduct interference activities continue to evolve, require ongoing assessments of risks. Departments and agencies will continue to</p>

	Recommendation	Key Actions and Next Steps
		<p>collaborate with stakeholders to assess vulnerabilities in strategic sectors.</p> <p>Budget 2023 provides \$48.9 million over three years to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to protect Canadians from harassment and intimidation, increase its investigative capacity, and more proactively engage with communities at greater risk of being targeted.</p>
	<p>c) Assess the adequacy of existing legislation that deals with foreign interference, such as <i>Security of Information Act</i> or the <i>Canada Security Intelligence Service Act</i> (CSIS Act), and make proposals for changes if required</p>	<p>Over the past few years, departments and agencies have conducted policy and legal analysis to identify gaps and develop options to address them.</p> <p>The Minister of Public Safety, informed by the ongoing work of the Independent Special Rapporteur and the reviews of NSICOP and NSIRA, will work and consult on changes to the <i>CSIS Act</i>, the <i>Security of Information Act</i>, and the <i>Criminal Code</i>.</p>
	<p>d) Develop practical, whole-of-government operational and policy mechanisms to identify and respond to the activities of hostile states.</p>	<p>The establishment of the Counter-Foreign Interference Coordinator enhances the existing national security governance and the government's capacity to effectively address foreign interference activities. Budget 2023 provides \$13.5 million over five years, and \$3.1 million ongoing to Public Safety Canada to establish a National Counter-Foreign Interference Office. The 2023 Budget further proposes \$48.9 million over three years to the RCMP to protect Canadians from harassment and intimidation, increase its investigative capacity, and more proactively engage with communities at greater risk of being targeted.</p> <p>Departments and agencies work together as part of an effective governance framework to identify and respond to foreign interference activities. Over the past years, steps were taken to strengthen the national security governance framework to ensure that the NSIA maintains active awareness of ongoing threats and mitigation measures, including those related to foreign interference.</p> <p>Budget 2022 provided \$2 million annually for the Protecting Democracy Unit at the Privy</p>

	Recommendation	Key Actions and Next Steps
		<p>Council Office to coordinate, develop, and implement government-wide measures designed to combat disinformation and protect Canada's democratic institutions and processes. This includes developing a whole-of-society approach to protecting Canada's democracy, the implementation of a counter disinformation toolkit, and training for Parliamentarians and public servants on misinformation and disinformation, building upon the United Kingdom's RESIST model. It also includes further developing options to strengthen interdepartmental governance, in consideration of existing committees.</p> <p>The Government of Canada announced a \$5.5 million investment to strengthen the capacity of civil society and research partners to provide important insights into the dynamics of Canada's information ecosystem, including with respect to disinformation and activities of state actors.</p>
	<p>e) Establish regular mechanisms to work with sub-national levels of government and law enforcement organizations, including to provide necessary security clearances.</p>	<p>Over the past few years, the RCMP, CSIS, the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, and Public Safety Canada have engaged with provincial, territorial and municipal colleagues, as well as with critical infrastructure owners and operators to increase awareness of foreign interference threats and build resilience.</p> <p>Sustained, regular, and coordinated engagement with partners is essential to detect threats, build resilience and effectively counter foreign interference activities. The new National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator will work on expanding briefing mechanisms with provincial/territorial, municipal, and Indigenous officials. The Protecting Democracy Unit within the Privy Council Office will expand its work with provinces and territories.</p>
	<p>f) Include an approach for ministers and senior officials to engage with fundamental institutions and the public</p>	<p>Departments and agencies have been developing their capabilities to conduct outreach activities, including CSIS stakeholder engagement (industry, universities, research and development, Canadian communities, civil</p>

	Recommendation	Key Actions and Next Steps
		<p>society), Communications Security Establishment and Cyber Centre outreach (industry, small business, privately-owned critical infrastructure), and RCMP community outreach efforts.</p> <p>Communications and outreach are key elements of the government strategy to counter foreign interference. Efforts will continue to engage with partners effectively and cohesively across all jurisdictions.</p> <p>The Government will use the new National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator and CSIS's upcoming Annual Report to bolster communications with Canadians. Recently announced funding to strengthen the capacity of civil society partners to counter disinformation, including from foreign sources, will also help to increase resilience. New briefings will be offered to Members of Parliament and Senators and the Coordinator will work on expanding briefings to partners outside the Federal Government.</p> <p>The Government will look at establishing a process by which members of the Panel as part of the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol, engage with stakeholders and communities. This engagement would seek views on best practices to mitigate the impact of foreign interference and disinformation on Canada's institutions.</p>
	g) Guide cooperation with allies on foreign interference.	<p>Departments and agencies each engage with their international counterparts in collaborative efforts and partnerships to address foreign interference.</p> <p>The Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator will increase the coherence of these interdepartmental efforts, and will ensure alignment with Canada's foreign policy objectives.</p> <p>Cooperation with Canada's allies is also undertaken by the Minister of Public Safety as Canada's representative at the annual Five</p>

Recommendation		Key Actions and Next Steps
		Country Ministerial , where Five Eyes security ministers meet to collaborate on various national security issues, including foreign interference; to discuss respective approaches to shared issues; and to coordinate a cohesive Five Eyes response.
2	The Government of Canada support this comprehensive strategy through sustained central leadership and coordination. As an example of a central coordinating entity to address foreign interference, the Committee refers to the appointment and mandate of the Australian National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator.	<p>The Prime Minister announced the establishment of the Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator. Budget 2023 proposes to provide \$13.5 million over five years, and \$3.1 million ongoing to Public Safety Canada to establish a National Counter-Foreign Interference Office.</p> <p>Budget 2022 provided \$2 million annually to the Privy Council Office to coordinate, develop, and implement government-wide measures designed to combat disinformation and protect Canada's democracy.</p>
National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) Special Report into the allegations associated with Prime Minister Trudeau's official visit to India in February 2018		
1	1.A. Members of the House of Commons and Senate should be briefed upon being sworn-in and regularly thereafter on the risks of foreign interference and extremism in Canada.	<p>The Parliamentary Protective Service provides security briefings to incoming Members of Parliament. The Security and Intelligence Threats to Election Task Force (SITE) offers briefings to political party representatives during writ period. The Privy Council Office Security Operations Division briefs all incoming Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries on the spectrum of threats, including foreign interference. CSIS also provides briefings to Parliamentarians upon request.</p> <p>Briefings for Members of Parliament and the Senate will be provided upon their swearing-in and on a regular basis.</p>
	1.B. Cabinet Ministers should be reminded of the expectations described in the directive on <i>Open and Accountable Government</i> , including that Ministers exercise discretion with whom they meet or associate, and clearly distinguish between official and private media messaging,	Expectations and obligations for Ministers and their actions have been made public as part of <i>Open and Accountable Government</i> .

Recommendation		Key Actions and Next Steps
	and be reminded that, consistent with the <i>Conflict of Interest Act</i> , public office holders must always place the public interest above private interests.	
2	The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness should consider revising the *** to include a formal role for the NSIA. The Committee believes that the NSIA has a legitimate role to provide advice as coordinator of the security and intelligence community and advisor to the Prime Minister.	Steps were taken to further strengthen the national security governance framework to ensure that the National and Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister (NSIA) maintains awareness of ongoing threats and mitigation measures, including those related to foreign interference.
Report on the assessment of the 2019 Critical Election Incident Public Protocol (Judd Report)		
1	Implement the Protocol for the next election using the same model and Panel membership. Prepare Panel members early, starting with new members. The high threshold and decision by consensus should be maintained, as well as the support and participation from the same departments and agencies. The rationale is that this model has already been accepted by political parties and there is the ability to maintain some consistency in membership. An accompanying media strategy should also be developed.	The Cabinet Directive on the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol was updated ahead of the 2021 federal election. It maintained the same general framework and included some changes informed by Mr. Judd's evaluation. While the Government's media strategy was not as comprehensive for the 2021 election compared to 2019 in a minority Parliament context, a more proactive communications strategy will be developed by the Privy Council Office for future elections and would build on the recommendations made by Mr. Rosenberg.
2	The Protocol should also cover the pre-writ period, recognizing this may not be possible in the event of an election triggered by a non-confidence vote.	This recommendation was not implemented since ministers already have the responsibility and the necessary powers to address any concerns about foreign interference that could arise between elections. Ministerial responsibility is a fundamental tenet of Canada's parliamentary democracy. Building on Mr. Rosenberg's recommendations, the Government will find further opportunities to communicate with Canadians about threats to democratic institutions and electoral processes at all times, irrespective of the electoral calendar.
3	Privy Council Office support teams (Democratic Institutions and Security and Intelligence) should monitor any international developments, with particular attention paid to	The Government will continue to build on existing work from allies and learn from best practices. For instance, the Government could re-engage with Canadian partners to further

Recommendation		Key Actions and Next Steps
	any evolution in tactics by malign actors and any developments in defensive counter-measures taken by target countries (legal, regulatory and operational). This can also include academic and think-tank research.	<p>the work accomplished through the Paris Call to ensure that Canada's allies have access to the most current expertise to protect electoral processes.</p> <p>In addition, Budget 2022 provided funding to coordinate, develop, and implement government-wide measures designed to combat disinformation and protect Canada's democracy. The Protecting Democracy Unit is undertaking research on threats to democracy.</p> <p>The Government also provided \$13.4 million over five years in May 2022 to deepen the coordination between countries in identifying, and responding to, foreign threats to democracy, including state-sponsored disinformation.</p>
4	Immediately establish the same relationships with the political parties, particularly with respect to guidance and support around cyber issues as the parties are likely targets beyond simply the election period.	Briefings were offered in the lead up to the 2021 elections. SITE plans to hold similar briefings in future elections, building on recommendations by Mr. Rosenberg.
5	Conduct an evaluation on the extent to which the social media platforms lived up to the Canada Declaration on Electoral Integrity Online. Once complete, hold discussions with the platforms on the Government's expectations for the next election. Participation in the Paris Call could possibly inform any new agreements.	A lessons learned exercise in relation to the Declaration was conducted following the 2019 election. Discussions with the platforms were held in the lead up to the 2021 election resulting in a revised Declaration and three additional signatories (TikTok, LinkedIn and YouTube).
Report on the assessment of the 2021 Critical Election Incident Public Protocol (Rosenberg Report)		
1	Public communication about the Protocol should provide a clear explanation for the inclusion of domestic actors and of the types of activities that are of concern.	The Privy Council Office will develop a strategy to better communicate with Canadians about the Protocol and how it fits within the suite of measures to counter foreign interference and protect democratic institutions.
2	Preparations for the next election should include an assessment of whether ministerial security, Royal Canadian Mounted Police protective policing, and local policing capabilities are adequate for the level and persistence of threats and whether there is effective coordination among these bodies.	The Government will evaluate tools to enhance the security and information for Parliamentarians in order to address the changing threat environment, security gaps and concerns for safety. This is in keeping with the mandate letter commitment for the Minister of Public Safety to work with the

Recommendation		Key Actions and Next Steps
	There should also be a review of the coordination between political parties and the government with respect to campaign and security operations.	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities to bolster the security of Ministers and Parliamentarians.
3	There should be an assessment as to whether any adjustments should be made to the role of the SITE membership in light of the growing problem of domestic interference.	With a view to continuously improved measures under the Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy, the Government will review the mandate and membership of SITE.
4	There should be an announcement, within a year of the previous election, about the government's plan to safeguard the integrity of Canada's elections, including an explanation of the reason for the Protocol.	The Privy Council Office will develop a strategy to better communicate with Canadians about the Protocol and how it fits within the suite of measures to counter foreign interference and protect democratic institutions.
5	The government's plan and public communications should acknowledge that the problem of interference occurs both before the election is called and during the caretaker period. It should be clearer on how and by whom pre-election interference will be addressed, beyond saying that it will be handled through normal ministerial channels.	The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, with the support of the Privy Council Office and the Minister of Public Safety, will look for opportunities to increase communications with Canadians about threats to democratic institutions and electoral processes at all times, irrespective of the electoral calendar.
6	The government should consider options to ensure that the Panel is well-prepared in advance, and as much as possible, continuity of members is maintained between elections.	The Privy Council Office will ensure Panel members are in a permanent state of readiness to assume their Panel-related responsibilities by briefing new Panel members within three months of being appointed to their new position to explain Panel roles and responsibilities.
7	Briefings of the Panel should begin much earlier in the mandate and include non-government actors with expertise on interference and disinformation.	The Privy Council Office will ensure Panel members are in a permanent state of readiness to assume their Panel-related responsibilities by briefing new Panel members within three months of being appointed to their new position to explain Panel roles and responsibilities. Beginning in spring 2023, Panel meetings will be held regularly.
8	There should be an opportunity for a review body to assess the decisions of ministers with respect to the use of threat reduction measures during the caretaker period.	NSICOP and NSIRA may undertake reviews in accordance with their mandates.
9	The government should consider amending section 6.0 to provide that, barring any national security or public interest reasons, an	Following Mr. Rosenberg's report, the Government is reviewing the Cabinet Directive and examining possible changes.

23 Countering an Evolving Threat

Recommendation		Key Actions and Next Steps
	announcement would be made if the threshold is met.	
10	The government should consider removing the fourth sentence in the final paragraph of section 6.0 and clarifying that actual or potential impact is one of several considerations that the Panel takes into account in exercising its judgment as to whether the threshold has been met.	Following Mr. Rosenberg's report, the Government is reviewing the Cabinet Directive and examining possible changes.
11	There should be further study of the issue of whether the Protocol should be amended to provide for the possibility of announcements below the threshold set out in section 6.0.	Following Mr. Rosenberg's report, the Government is reviewing the Cabinet Directive and examining possible changes.
12	There should be an effort made to provide briefings to political party representatives at downtown Ottawa secure locations.	During electoral periods, the Privy Council Office will ensure briefings to political party representatives take place at downtown Ottawa secure locations.
13	The times for briefings of political party representatives should be fixed in advance, with flexibility to address urgent situations.	During electoral periods, the Privy Council Office will ensure a schedule of briefings is provided to political party representatives as soon as possible following the issue of the writ.
14	The national security agencies should develop a program of unclassified briefings to increase the awareness of Members of Parliament and Senators on foreign interference and on election interference and on measures they can take to safeguard themselves and their online information.	New briefings will be made available to Parliamentarians and staff.
15	The Protocol should be maintained with the modifications noted in this report.	The Cabinet Directive remains in effect and, therefore, the Protocol will be in place for the next federal elections. Changes will be considered as indicated herein.
16	Public communications on the Protocol should emphasize the full range of activities that occur during the caretaker period, rather than being focused on the announcement by the Panel.	The Privy Council Office will develop a strategy to better communicate with Canadians about the Protocol and how it fits within the suite of measures to counter foreign interference and protect democratic institutions.