

TOP SECRET [] /LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY
2023 02 21

BRIEFING TO THE PRIME MINISTER’S OFFICE ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE THREATS TO CANADA’S DEMOCRATIC INSTIUTIONS

Unauthorized Releases of Classified Information

- Since November 2022, *Global News* and *The Globe and Mail* have published several media articles that reference classified information on PRC foreign interference efforts in Canada, with a specific focus on elections. (TAB 5)
- **CSIS takes these leaks extremely seriously.** They present a direct threat to the integrity of our operations, []

[]

[]

- We are **working closely with PCO and departmental security officials** to identify the source of these leaks.

[]

TOP SECRET/[redacted]/LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY
2023 02 21

[redacted]

Assertions in Media Reporting

- [redacted]

(TAB 3)

- We know that the PRC clandestinely and deceptively interfered in both the 2019 and 2021 general elections. In both cases, these FI activities were pragmatic in nature and focussed primarily on supporting those viewed to be either 'pro-PRC' or 'neutral' on issues of interest to the PRC government.
- [redacted] at least 11 candidates and 13 staff members, were **implicated** in PRC FI networks [redacted] This included members of multiple political parties.

[redacted]

- Reporting also suggests that, on at least one occasion, the PRC [redacted] [redacted] transferred approximately **\$250,000** [redacted] *to the staff member of a 2019 Federal Election candidate, and then to an Ontario MPP*

- [redacted]

- In general, however, PRC [redacted] provide direct and indirect financial support to Canadian electoral candidates. [redacted]

[redacted]

TOP SECRET [] //LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY
2023 02 21

- In **2021**, the PRC FI activities were almost certainly motivated by a perception that the Conservative Party of Canada was promoting a platform that was perceived to be anti-PRC.



- We also observed online and media activities aimed at discouraging Canadians, particularly of Chinese heritage, from supporting the Conservative Party, leader **Erin O'Toole**, and particularly Steveston-Richmond East candidate **Kenny Chiu**.

- []

[] the timing of these efforts to align with Conservative polling improvements; the similarities in language with articles published by PRC state media; and the partnership agreements between these Canada-based outlets and PRC entities; all **suggest that these efforts were orchestrated or directed by the PRC**.

- It is difficult to assess the impact of these activities on elections []
[] who voted for whom or why).
 - However, the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force, in its **After Action Report on the 2019 election**, assessed that **these activities did not have an impact on the overall outcome**.
 - In 2021, the **Critical Election Incident Public Protocol Panel, or Panel of Five**, did not determine that FI activities were serious enough to warrant a public notification.

Briefings and Products

- PRC foreign interference, and in democratic institutions specifically, has been briefed and discussed broadly across the Government of Canada since 2018. **(TAB 2)**

3/6

TOP SECRET/[]/LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY
2023 02 21

- Between June 2018 and December 2022, **CSIS provided 34 briefings to either [s. 39] Cabinet Ministers, and other senior officials on foreign interference, including in the 2019 and 2021 elections.**
- This includes briefings to Ministers Gould, Blair, Mendicino, and Ng; senior officials on the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol Panel of Five; and the Prime Minister in February 2021 and last October.
- Multiple additional FI briefings on the 2019 election were provided to **Elections Canada, the Chief Electoral Officer, and the Office of the Commissioner of Canada Elections.**
- In addition to verbal briefings, both Elections Canada and the Office of the Commissioner were invited into the CSIS building at regular intervals to read intelligence products related to FI in the 2019 Election.
- As part of the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force, CSIS also regularly **briefed secret-cleared members of political parties on foreign interference threats to the 2019 and 2021 elections.**
- For example, in 2021, CSIS provided a classified briefing to the Liberal Party of Canada []
- Between May 2017 and October 2022, CSIS disseminated 49 intelligence products on PRC FI in elections, more than half of which discussed interference in the 2019 election. These were provided to PCO and the NSIA.
- Since May 2021, CSIS has also delivered defensive briefings on FI to **71 MPs, 15 Federal Ministers, 5 Senators, 12 Provincial/Territorial Premiers or Ministers, 6 Mayors, and 8 municipal councillors.** (*Partial list at TAB 13, for DIR eyes only*)
- [] involvement with 11 candidates in the 2019 election in a February 2020 intelligence assessment that was shared with key Government of Canada partners []. [] has never briefed or shared details on the 11 specific ridings, candidates, or their party affiliations.
- Multiple Cabinet Ministers, [s. 39 Cabinet Confidence] and senior officials have been briefed on the role of co-optees and proxies in PRC foreign interference efforts in Canada in general.

4/6

TOP SECRET// [] /LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY
2023 02 21

- For example, in April 2019, **then-Minister of Democratic Institutions Karina Gould was briefed** []
- In February 2021, I **briefed the Prime Minister on PRC-linked individuals interfering with the 2019 Liberal nomination in Don Valley North.** s. 39
s. 39 Cabinet Confidence []
s. 39 Cabinet Confidence []
- CSIS has also spoken publicly about foreign interference threats in general and to democratic institutions, as well as those emanating from the PRC.
 - We have **prioritized outreach and engagement with communities** across Canada to build awareness and resilience.
 - We have also **published several unclassified products**, such as “Foreign Interference and You,” “Foreign Interference Threats to Canada’s Democratic Process,” and “Protecting National Security in Partnership with All Canadians” that outline (in several languages) concrete ways that Canadians can defend themselves against national security threats, such as foreign interference.

Conclusion

- Better protecting Canadian democratic institutions against FI will require a shift in the Government’s perspective and a willingness to take decisive action and impose consequences on perpetrators.
- State actors are able to conduct FI successfully in Canada because there are few legal or political consequences. FI is therefore low-risk and high-reward.
- While proposed initiatives, such as a foreign agents registry, would prove helpful, they must be considered as part of a wider toolkit.

○ []

○ []

TOP SECRET /LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY
2023 02 21

- The responsibility to counter these harmful activities must be shared across government, including provincial and municipal partners. Even those without investigative responsibilities must also take action under their own authorities to detect, disrupt, and publicize FI activities.
- Until FI is viewed as an existential threat to Canadian democracy and governments forcefully and actively respond, these threats will persist.