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Critical Election Incident Public Protocol (CEIPP)

TOP LINE MESSAGES

- The Critical Election Incident Public Protocol (CEIPP) allows for a Panel of senior public servants to communicate with Canadians during a federal election in a clear, transparent and impartial manner, should there be an incident that meets the threshold threatening the integrity of the election.
- During the 2021 General Election, the CEIPP Panel received regular security briefings, including from the Security and Intelligence Threats to the Election Task force (SITE) of which Global Affairs Canada is a member.
- The Panel did not observe any activities that met the threshold for public announcement or affected Canada's ability to have a free and fair election.

PRINCIPAUX MESSAGES

- Protocole public en cas d'incident électoral majeur permet à un groupe de hauts fonctionnaires de communiquer avec les Canadiens lors d'une élection fédérale de manière claire, transparente et impartiale, en cas d'incident qui atteint le seuil menaçant l'intégrité de l'élection.
- Au cours de l'élection générale de 2021, le comité du Protocole a reçu des séances d'information régulières sur la sécurité, y compris de la part du Groupe de travail sur les menaces en matière de sécurité et de renseignements visant les élections, dont Affaires mondiales Canada est membre
- Le Comité n'a observé aucune activité qui atteignait le seuil d'annonce publique ou affectait la capacité du Canada à tenir des élections libres et équitables

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SUPPLEMENTARY MESSAGES

- The threshold for making an announcement is very high, as it should be. The Panel is meant to be a last resort measure. If the Panel continually informs Canadians of incidents that do not meet the threshold it risks calling into question the robustness of our democratic institutions.
- There are inherent difficulties in establishing a clear-cut line of what constitutes an incident of foreign interference in the context of a federal election.
- First and foremost, measuring impact and attribution in a short time period, can be difficult, if not impossible, as the lines between domestic and foreign, and covert and overt activities, are increasingly blurred.
- Global Affairs Canada (GAC) supports the Panel with regular security briefings as a member of SITE. RRM Canada represents GAC at SITE and monitors the **online information environment** for signs of **foreign state-sponsored interference** using open source methodologies. Canada is also committed to working with international partners to stop the spread of disinformation that undermines democracies.

UPDATE

An independent evaluation of the Protocol, its implementation and effectiveness in addressing threats, is required after every election. Through document review, interviews and research, a substantial review is completed and a classified report with findings and recommendations is presented to the Prime Minister and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarian (NSICOP). An unclassified version is later released publicly.

An independent evaluation of the 2021 federal election is currently underway by Mr. Morris Rosenberg, a former Canadian public servant. An unclassified version of this report, including his findings and recommendations, is expected to be submitted shortly.

SUPPORTING FACTS AND FIGURES

- Ahead of the 2021 federal election, CSIS released a public report on Foreign Interference Threats to Canada's Democratic Process to better inform Canadians of this serious threat.

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- As this report shows, foreign states target our democratic process to covertly influence Canadian public policy, public opinion and ultimately undermine our democracy.
- Although Canada's electoral system is strong, foreign interference can erode trust and threaten the integrity of our democratic institutions, political system, fundamental rights and freedoms, and ultimately, our sovereignty.
- The Government of Canada aims to sensitize Canadians to the threat by raising awareness of these issues, and help build resilience to protect a democratic and free Canada.
- In both the 2019 and 2021 federal elections, the Panel determined that no foreign interference that threatened Canada's ability to have a free and fair election and that warranted public communication, was detected.

BACKGROUND

The Critical Election Incident Public Protocol is a mechanism for senior public servants (the Panel) to communicate clearly, transparently, and impartially with Canadians during an election in the event of an incident or incidents that threaten the integrity of a federal 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. The Critical Election Incident Public Protocol has a limited mandate. It is initiated to respond to incidents that occur during the caretaker period, and that do not fall within Elections Canada's areas of responsibility.

The Protocol includes provisions for: informing candidates, organizations or election officials if they have been the known target of an attack; briefing the group of senior public servants at the heart of the Protocol; informing the Prime Minister and other party leaders (or their designates) that a public announcement is planned; and notifying the public.

The Protocol 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, who are responsible for jointly determining whether the threshold for informing Canadians has been met, whether through a single incident or an accumulation of incidents.

In advance of the 2021 General Election, the Panel began meeting in May 2021. In total the Panel convened four times prior to the beginning of the election period in August. The Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force (SITE) briefed

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the Panel on the threat environment. The Panel began working through scenarios to develop a common understanding of the threshold for intervention.

The 2021 election was called on August 15. From then until election day on September 20, the Panel held six weekly meetings. SITE would provide a briefing with any information and intelligence available to it at the time of each Panel meeting, and it was the Panel's responsibility to determine whether the threshold was triggered or whether there were other interventions required based on the intelligence provided. None of information presented in these briefings rose to the level of meeting the threshold.