Critical Election Incident Public Protocol – the Panel

Incident Evaluation

The Panel will be responsible for evaluating potential election interference incidents:

Disinformation

- Deep fakes
- Fake and manipulated news sites
- Amplification – bots
- Inauthentic SMP use

Cyber Attacks

- Hack and leaks
- Data manipulation
- Denial of Service

Person-to-Person, Espionage, and Interference

- Nomination interference
- Blackmail
- Bribery
- Infiltration
- Physical threats/ intimidation
- Illegal contributions

Who

Are the intended targets?
- ☐ Voters
- ☐ Marginalized groups
- ☐ Specific groups – divisive issue; gender etc.
- ☐ Electoral Process
- ☐ Political Parties, leaders, candidates or officials
- ☐ Other

Is doing it?
- ☐ Foreign state
- ☐ Third party or state proxy
- ☐ Domestic actors
- ☐ IMVE
- ☐ Unknown
- ☐ Other

Why

Are they doing this?
- ☐ Erode public trust in democracy
- ☐ Influence the outcome of election
- ☐ Anarchy
- ☐ Financial gain
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Unknown

Key Panel Considerations

The degree to which the incident(s) undermine(s) Canadians' ability to have a free and fair election
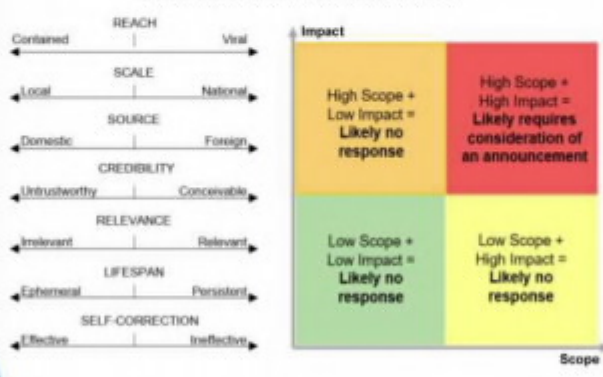
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The degree of confidence officials have in the intelligence or information

+

The potential of the incident(s) to undermine the credibility of the election

Determining whether the threshold has been met will require considerable judgement that reflects the context around the incident – assessments can be made using certain parameters including, but not limited to:

Electoral incidents impact assessments

REACH
Contained —— Viral

SCALE
Local —— National

SOURCE
Domestic —— Foreign

CREDIBILITY
Untrustworthy —— Conceivable

RELEVANCE
Irrelevant —— Relevant

LIFESPAN
Ephemeral —— Persistent

SELF-CORRECTION
Effective —— Ineffective

Impact

High Scope + Low Impact = Likely no response	**High Scope + High Impact =** Likely requires consideration of an announcement
Low Scope + Low Impact = Likely no response	**Low Scope + High Impact =** Likely no response

Scope

Announcement Considerations

🔊 Purpose   👥 Messenger

Severity of an incident — Degree of intervention in the election

Purpose:
- Information / Awareness
- Mitigation
- Reassurance
- Set the record straight
- Notice of election interference

Messenger:
- PCO / Department Communications
- Clerk and/or Panel members
- Heads of Security Agencies
- Elections Canada

- ✓ Within mandate of Panel
- ✓ All other steps exhausted
- ✓ Impact on election
- ✓ National security risks
- ✓ Differential effect on specific people or groups

Toronto Troubles
COVID-19 Scenario

On polling day, a number of polling stations in four Toronto ridings are not able to function at all (or shut down on the first of the 3-day polling period) because of COVID-19 cases among its staff. Other stations in these ridings are also impacted as poll workers are now refusing to show up or leaving out of fear of exposure, leaving stations to operate at less than half capacity. As a result, the CEO determines that in-person voting will be postponed at all four of these ridings, and that the results of the election will be delayed .

This is a very close election, and the results of these ridings could tip the balance of the election in favour of the incumbent party.

Inject 1   As soon as the announcement is made, what seems to be large-scale online effort to supress voting by taking advantage of the situation appears on multiple platforms. Numerous Tweets and Facebook posts appear that inflate the risk of catching COVID-19 when voting in person, some even encourage people to refrain from going out to vote. Rumours of outbreaks in workplaces, including grocery stores and pharmacies in the ridings appear and later announcements from companies such as Loblaws, Shoppers Drug Mart, and Amazon appear. A few hours later, the companies hold a press conference stating that these announcements are false, however a barrage of Tweets, and a discussion group on Reddit from people claiming to be employees allege that the companies are covering up how bad the breakouts really are. In addition, disinformation around the ineffectiveness of vaccines ramps up substantially.

Inject 2   An op-ed by a reputable newspaper opines that the entire election should be scrapped, as it is difficult to tell how many people have not voted because of COVID-19 fears, even beyond the ridings currently affected. Less reputable, but populist pundits begin surmising that all votes after Election Day are illegitimate, and should not be counted. The online discussion builds on these narratives and under the hashtag #NotWorthIt encourages people not to vote because the risk of COVID-19 is not worth it as the election will be scrapped anyways.

Inject 3   SITE meets with the Panel and gives a preliminary assessment that there is a coordinated, inauthentic social media campaign afoot, and at the moment, it appears to be domestically driven. The speed of which the narrative appeared to amplify the message and the use of bots makes the S&I community quite confident in this assessment.