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# Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force : threats to the Toronto-St. Paul's electoral district by election - June 2024

## Background

On May 21, 2024, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs, announced <sup>1</sup> that the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force (SITE TF) was to provide enhanced monitoring and assessment of foreign interference (FI) threats against the federal by-election being held on June 24, 2024, in Toronto-St. (Saint)Paul's, Ontario electoral district.

This report covers the SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) activities and observations of foreign actors' intentions and FI (foreign interference) activities directed at the June 2024 federal by-election.

## Scope and resources

The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) was initially created in 2018 and given the mandate to enhance monitoring and assess foreign interference threats directed at federal general elections. In

2023, the Government requested SITE (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections) 's activation during federal by-elections.

On May 29, 2024, the SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) produced a classified baseline threat assessment on the Toronto-St. (Saint) Paul's by-election taking into consideration potential FI (foreign interference) indicators specific to the Toronto-St. (Saint) Paul's region, for the Deputy Minister Committee on Intelligence Response (DMCIR) <sup>2</sup>.

The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) then provided DMCIR (Deputy Minister Committee on Intelligence Response) weekly updates on FI (foreign interference) and violent extremism threats to the by-election from May 21 to July 3, 2024, based on weekly situation reports (SITREPs). The weekly SITREPs (situation reports) considered input from each SITE (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections) member agency.

The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) offered an unclassified briefing on foreign interference to political parties, including information on the cyber foreign interference threat, the roles and responsibilities of SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force), and resources for political parties to protect themselves. The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force), in collaboration with the Privy Council Office (PCO), provided this briefing in June 2024.

The current report covers the SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) observations of foreign threat actors' intentions and activities relating to FI (foreign interference) as well as any observations of threats of violent extremism with respect to the Toronto-St. (Saint) Paul's

by-election. It is based on analysis, reporting and observations from classified and unclassified sources that were reviewed from May 21 to July 2, 2024. The vote was held on June 24, 2024.

## SITE TF members and role

The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) is currently chaired by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and consists of representatives from the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and Global Affairs Canada (GAC). The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force)'s role is to help safeguard the Canadian federal elections from FI (foreign interference) by:

- providing a clear point of engagement with the security and intelligence community for government partners that are engaged in related work.
- reviewing and focussing intelligence collection, assessment and open-source analysis related to FI (foreign interference) in Canada's democratic process in a coordinated manner.
- providing situational awareness for government partners, senior public servants and other relevant partners.
- promoting the use of intelligence, assessment and open-source information analysis in the protection of electoral processes through sharing with partners or, when respective mandates permit, taking action to mitigate the threat.
- providing political parties with advice and guidance during a SITE (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections) briefing, including an

overview of common cyber threats and best practices for IT (information technology) security.

- providing enhanced monitoring of cyber incidents.
- offering political parties a 24/7 hotline service<sup>3</sup> to obtain centralized support if party or candidate communications, email, or social media accounts are compromised.

## Foreign interference

The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) defines foreign interference as an “activity conducted or supported by a foreign state/actor that is detrimental to Canadian national interests and is clandestine, deceptive or involves a threat to a person.” In the context of Canadian electoral processes, the objective of FI (foreign interference) is to affect electoral outcomes and/or undermine public confidence in Canadian democratic institutions.

### Observations on foreign interference

The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) monitored for FI (foreign interference) directed at the Toronto-St. (Saint) Paul's electoral district by-election from May 21 to July 2, 2024. The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) did not observe any indication of FI (foreign interference) activities directed at the by-election during the specified time period. No cyber incidents were detected to suggest that any foreign state actors were specifically targeting Elections Canada's infrastructure from May 21 to July 2, 2024.

# Violent extremism

While the SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) is focussed on FI (foreign interference), the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service) have mandates and authorities to investigate threats of violent extremism. For the June 24, 2024 by-election, the SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) committed to reporting any threats of violent extremism directed at the by-election.

## Observations on violent extremism

The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) monitored for threats of violent extremism directed at the by-election from May 21 to July 2, 2024. The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) did not observe any threats of violent extremism directed at the Toronto-St. (Saint) Paul's electoral district by-election during the specified time period. The SITE TF (Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force) did not identify any direct threats to the by-election in social media, message boards, chatrooms, online forums or news media relating to the by-election. No direct threats to any of the candidates, nor to the administration of the election, were identified.

- 1 Government of Canada announces measures to protect Toronto-St. (Saint) Paul's by-election from foreign interference.
  - 2 During federal general elections, as per the Cabinet Directive on the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol, the protocol is administered by a group of five senior civil servants initiated to respond to incidents that occur during the caretaker period. Incidents that occur outside of the caretaker period are addressed through regular Government of Canada operations.
  - 3 Supported by CSE (Communications Security Establishment)'s Canadian Center for Cyber Security, the 24/7 hotline service will continue to be available to political parties for reporting of cyber incidents until one month after the election. When the hotline is activated, it triggers an immediate response to minimize damage and restore normal operations.
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