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DES RENSEIGNEMENTS ET DES CONSEILS FIABLES POUR UN CANADA SÛR, SÉCURISÉ ET PROSPÈRE.

Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force

Threats to the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun (QC) &
Elmwood-Transcona (MB) electoral districts
by-elections – October 2024

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Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force - Threats to the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun (QC) & Elmwood-Transcona (MB) electoral districts by elections – October 2024.

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Executive summary

On July 29, 2024, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs, announced that the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force (SITE TF) would provide enhanced monitoring and assessment of threats against the federal by-elections being held on September 16, 2024, in LaSalle-Émard-Verdun (QC) and Elmwood-Transcona (MB) electoral districts¹.

This report covers the SITE TF activities and observations on potential foreign interference (FI), violent extremism or cyber threats directed at the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun and Elmwood-Transcona federal by-elections.

Ultimately, the SITE TF did not observe any threats directed at the by-elections during the specified time period.

Background

The SITE TF 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 of Canada requested SITE's activation during federal by-elections².

Currently chaired by Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS), the SITE TF is an operationally focused intergovernmental body mandated to enhance monitoring and analysis of FI and violent extremism threats during federal elections. SITE core member agencies are the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), with the Privy Council Office (PCO) as observer. The SITE TF provides a single point of contact within the security and intelligence (S&I) community to review and focus electoral FI reporting from SITE agencies and partner agencies, monitor threat related activities, produce threat assessment(s), reports and briefings, where appropriate, to increase situational awareness and intelligence response.

SITE TF's monitoring of the by-elections

The SITE TF met weekly between July 29, 2024 and September 23, 2024 to review and discuss intelligence collection, assessment, and open-source analysis of FI activities during the by-elections.

¹ [Government of Canada announces measures to protect by-elections from foreign interference - Canada.ca](#)

² [Government of Canada announces measures to protect by-elections from foreign interference - Canada.ca](#)

On August 9, 2024, the SITE TF produced a baseline threat assessment on the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun and Elmwood-Transcona by-elections taking into consideration potential FI indicators specific to the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun's and the Elmwood-Transcona's regions, for the Deputy Minister Committee on Intelligence Response (DMCIR).³

The SITE TF then provided regular updates on potential FI, violent extremism and cyber threats directed at the by-elections to DMCIR and the Elections Security Coordinating Committee (ESCC) from August 6 to September 25, 2024. These updates are based on weekly situation reports (SITREPs), which includes input from each SITE member agency.

The SITE TF also offered unclassified briefings to political parties on cyber and emerging threats, misinformation and disinformation, generative artificial intelligence and deepfakes. The SITE TF, in collaboration with the Privy Council Office (PCO), provided these briefings in July and August 2024.

Observations on foreign interference

The SITE TF 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 is to affect electoral outcomes and/or undermine public confidence in Canadian democratic institutions.

The SITE TF underlines that sophisticated, pervasive and persistent FI activities constitute a serious threat to Canada's national security and the integrity of Canada's democratic institutions, all year long, and not just during election periods. Foreign states that engage in FI target all levels of government in Canada—including federal, provincial, municipal and Indigenous—and various facets of Canadian civil society (e.g., diaspora groups, the general public, media entities). FI activities transcend party lines, ideologies and ethnic backgrounds. For certain foreign states, FI activities are part of their normal pattern of behaviour in Canada and often peak during election periods.

The current report specifically focussed on threats directed at the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun and Elmwood-Transcona federal by-elections from July 29 to September 23, 2024. While monitoring the by-elections, the SITE TF agencies have been considering tactical information collected under their respective mandates.

The LaSalle-Émard-Verdun by-election

During the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun by-election, SITE TF observed minimal promotion of an ultimately unsuccessful candidate. While these endorsements were of unknown origin, they were displayed through Chinese language media news sources that have been linked to the People's Republic of China (PRC). Although the promotion activities monitored during the referenced

³ 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 (<https://www.canada.ca/en/democratic-institutions/services/protecting-democracy/critical-election-incident-public-protocol/cabinet.html>).

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period are coherent with known FI methodologies, at the time of reporting, the SITE TF has no information that demonstrates this promotion was directed by an FI actor. The SITE TF further assesses that electoral outcomes for the by-elections have not been impacted in this regard.

The SITE TF also did not observe activities that are clandestine, deceptive or involves a threat to a person. As such, based off currently available information, the SITE TF assesses that these activities do not constitute FI directed at the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun by-election.

The Elmwood-Transcona by-election

During the Elmwood-Transcona by-election, SITE TF did not observe any indication of FI activities directed at the by-election during the specified period.

Cyber incidents

No cyber incidents were detected to suggest that any foreign state actors were specifically targeting Elections Canada's infrastructure from July 29 to September 23, 2024.

Observations on violent extremism

While the SITE TF is focussed on FI, the RCMP and CSIS have mandates and authorities to investigate threats of violent extremism. For the September 16, 2024 by-elections, the SITE TF committed to reporting any threats of violent extremism directed at the by-elections.

The SITE TF monitored for threats of violent extremism directed at the by-elections from July 29 to September 23, 2024. The SITE TF did not observe any threats of violent extremism directed at the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun and Elmwood-Transcona electoral districts by-elections during the specified time period. The SITE TF did not identify any direct threats to the by-elections 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.