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Government of Canada
Privy Council Office

Gouvernement du Canada
Bureau du Conseil privé

National Security and Intelligence
Advisor to the Prime Minister

Conseiller à la sécurité nationale et au renseignement
auprès du Premier ministre

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0A3

DEC 22 2023

SECRETMEMORANDUM FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

c.c.: Ian Shugart, Ian McCowan

NATIONAL SECURITY BRIEFINGS TO PARLIAMENTARIANS

(Decision Sought/Signature Required)

SUMMARY

- Briefings by Canada's security agencies to parliamentarians on both cyber threats and foreign interference in Canada would support informed debate on these issues and better position parliamentarians and political parties to protect themselves from such threats.
- This proposal includes unclassified briefings for all Members of the House of Commons and Senators, as well as classified briefings to recognized party leaders in the House and up to three additional personnel, such as party officials or caucus members, by officials from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE).

s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence

Background

- The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) has recommended in two separate reports that "[in] the interest of national security, members of the House of Commons and the Senate should be briefed upon being sworn-in and regularly thereafter on the risks of foreign interference and extremism in Canada."
- More recently, the President of the Queen's Privy Council, when appearing before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on 17 November 2020, offered that national security officials

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could provide a briefing to the committee on disinformation and foreign interference as it relates to Canadian democratic institutions. The briefing has not yet been scheduled.

- Then, on 18 November 2020, the House of Commons passed a Conservative opposition day motion calling on the Government to develop a plan to combat China's "growing foreign operations here in Canada and its increasing intimidation of Canadians living in Canada".
- Foreign interference is hostile activity undertaken by foreign states, typically covertly, against Canadians or residents of Canada, as well as Canadian institutions. It is distinct from normal diplomatic conduct or acceptable lobbying activities. Countries engage in foreign interference to further their own strategic interests or to damage Canadian interests.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the threat of foreign interference, which Canada's security and intelligence community increasingly recognizes as one of the most serious threats to Canada's national interest.
- Likewise, the cyber domain has become an important enabler of a variety of threats to the security and prosperity of Canada. During the pandemic, cyber threat actors have been continuing their attempts to defraud Canadians. As you may recall, malicious actors also used stolen Canadian credentials to access client accounts [redacted] [redacted] the Canada Revenue Agency.

Proposal

- In view of the growing threat in the cyber domain and from foreign interference, including to Canada's political parties and parliamentarians, it is proposed that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) provide briefings as follows:
 - The Ministers of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and National Defence invite all Members of Parliament and Senators to attend virtual unclassified briefings. Such briefings could raise the level of awareness generally among parliamentarians as to the threats to Canada and Canadians, including to parliamentarians themselves. Given the COVID situation, these briefings would be conducted virtually.
 - There would also be significant value in providing individual SECRET-level briefings to each of the leaders of recognized parties in the House of Commons, which would serve to highlight more specific risks, including to political parties themselves. To enable the leaders and/or their political party to act on the information

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provided, the leaders should be invited to identify up to three additional individuals (e.g. caucus or party officials) to participate in these briefings. Accordingly, I propose that you sign the letters at **Tab B** to advise opposition leaders of this opportunity. In so doing, you would authorize officials to coordinate with opposition leaders' offices, including the preparation of temporary access waivers and confidentiality agreements by the Privy Council Office Chief Security Officer. Such agreements must be signed by the party leaders and their invitees in order for them to receive classified information. You may also wish to consider designating party officials to receive the same briefings on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada.

s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence

PCO Comment

- Foreign interference and cyber threats in Canada are not limited to individuals or entities in the executive branch of government. As lawmakers and politicians, all Members of Parliament are at risk of targeting by foreign interference and cyber operations, as are many of their constituents.
- Unclassified briefings to all parliamentarians would enhance their understanding of the growing cyber and foreign interference threats to Canada and Canadians. Building awareness of these threats is an important means to improve Canadian resilience against them.
- These briefings may also serve as a first step towards implementing the NSICOP recommendation and, if successful, could be a model for subsequent briefings on other issues of national security concern, including on extremism.
- Based on the experience of the 2019 federal election, some party leaders may choose not to accept an invitation to classified briefings. Nevertheless, it is in the best interests of Canadian democracy to brief any and all who do.

V. Rigby
Vincent Rigby

Attachments

Lafortune/MacDonald

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TAB | A
Onglet

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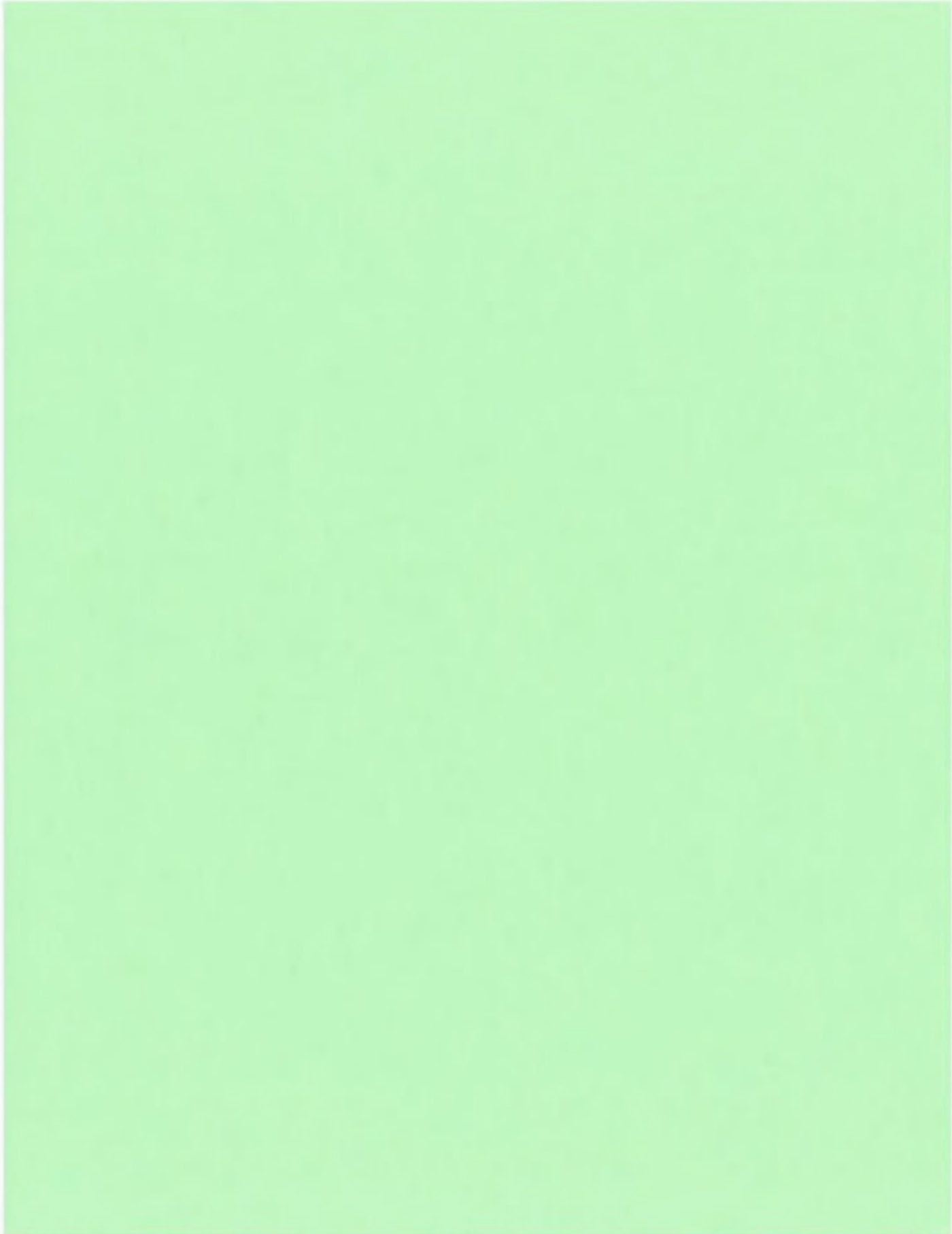
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s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence



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TAB | B
Onglet

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PRIME MINISTER · PREMIER MINISTRE

Dear Mr. O'Toole,

There has been a worrisome rise in both cyber threats and foreign governments seeking to further their own interests within Canada through deceptive, corrupt, covert, threatening or illegal means. Examples of such foreign interference include attempts to bribe, coerce or intimidate individuals to elicit information or to influence behaviour. Targets may include prominent Canadians, members of ethnic diaspora communities within Canada, politicians or government officials.

Such behaviour is unacceptable to all Canadians, no matter their political leanings, because it undermines the very foundations of our democratic system.

In view of these growing threats, I have asked the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of National Defence to coordinate unclassified briefings for all Members of Parliament and Senators by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) on the risks of foreign interference and cyber threats.

Furthermore, I am writing to you, as well as all the leaders of recognized parties in the House of Commons, to advise you that more detailed, classified briefings from CSIS and the CSE on both the cyber and foreign interference threats are available to you personally, should you wish to receive it. I have asked the National Security and Intelligence Advisor, Mr. Vincent Rigby, to have his staff coordinate these briefings with your office.

So as to enable you to take action on the information contained in the classified briefings, I invite you to identify up to three additional individuals to participate, such as other members of your caucus or party staff. Furthermore, I have agreed to waive the standard security clearance requirements so that you and your invitees can receive the SECRET-level information required for this purpose. Please note that you and the other participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement with respect to any classified information that you receive.

I hope that you will find these briefings helpful.

The Hon. Erin O'Toole
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

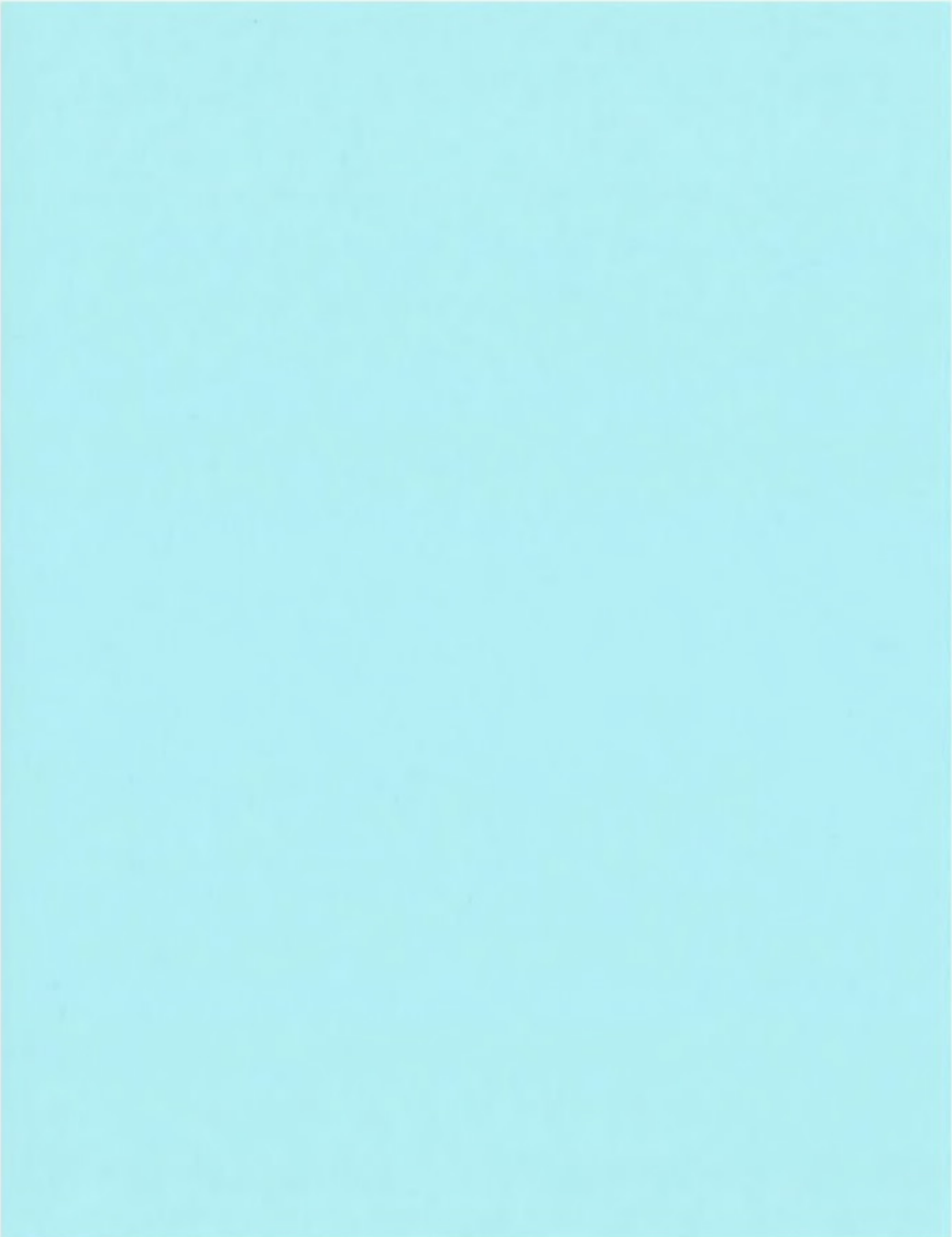
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Similar letters have been sent to the leaders of the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois.

Sincerely,

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CANADA

PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

Cher M. O'Toole,

Nous observons une tendance inquiétante où des gouvernements étrangers cherchent à servir leurs propres intérêts au Canada en ayant recours à des moyens illégaux ou clandestins ou encore en utilisant la menace, la corruption ou la dissimulation. Ainsi, certains gouvernements étrangers tentent de soudoyer ou d'intimider des gens pour leur soutirer de l'information, pour influencer leur comportement ou encore essaient de les contraindre à agir contre leur gré. Des Canadiens de renom, des membres des diasporas établies au Canada, des politiciens ou encore des représentants du gouvernement font partie des personnes ciblées. De plus, nous observons un phénomène similaire concernant les menaces cyber.

De tels comportements sont inacceptables pour les Canadiens – quelles que soient leurs convictions politiques – parce qu'ils sapent les bases mêmes de notre système démocratique.

Devant ces menaces grandissantes, j'ai demandé au ministre de la Sécurité publique et au ministre de la Défense nationale de coordonner la tenue de séances d'information non classifiées à l'intention de tous les députés et sénateurs. Le Service canadien du renseignement de sécurité (SCRS) et le Centre de la sécurité des télécommunications (CST) seront chargés d'assurer la prestation de ces séances d'information qui porteront sur les risques d'ingérence étrangère et les menaces cyber.

De plus, je vous écris, à vous et aux chefs de tous les partis reconnus de la Chambre des communes, pour vous informer que le SCRS et le CST pourraient, si vous le souhaitez, organiser à votre intention des séances d'information classifiées plus détaillées. J'ai demandé au conseiller à la sécurité nationale et au renseignement, M. Vincent Rigby, de demander à son personnel de communiquer avec votre bureau pour coordonner la tenue de ces séances d'information.

Pour vous aider à donner suite aux renseignements fournis dans le cadre de ces séances d'information classifiées, je vous invite à choisir jusqu'à trois autres personnes (comme d'autres membres de votre caucus ou encore du personnel de votre parti) qui pourraient y assister. De plus, j'ai accepté de déroger aux règles habituelles en matière de cote de sécurité pour que vos invités et vous-même puissiez

L'hon. Erin O'Toole
Chambre des communes
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0A6

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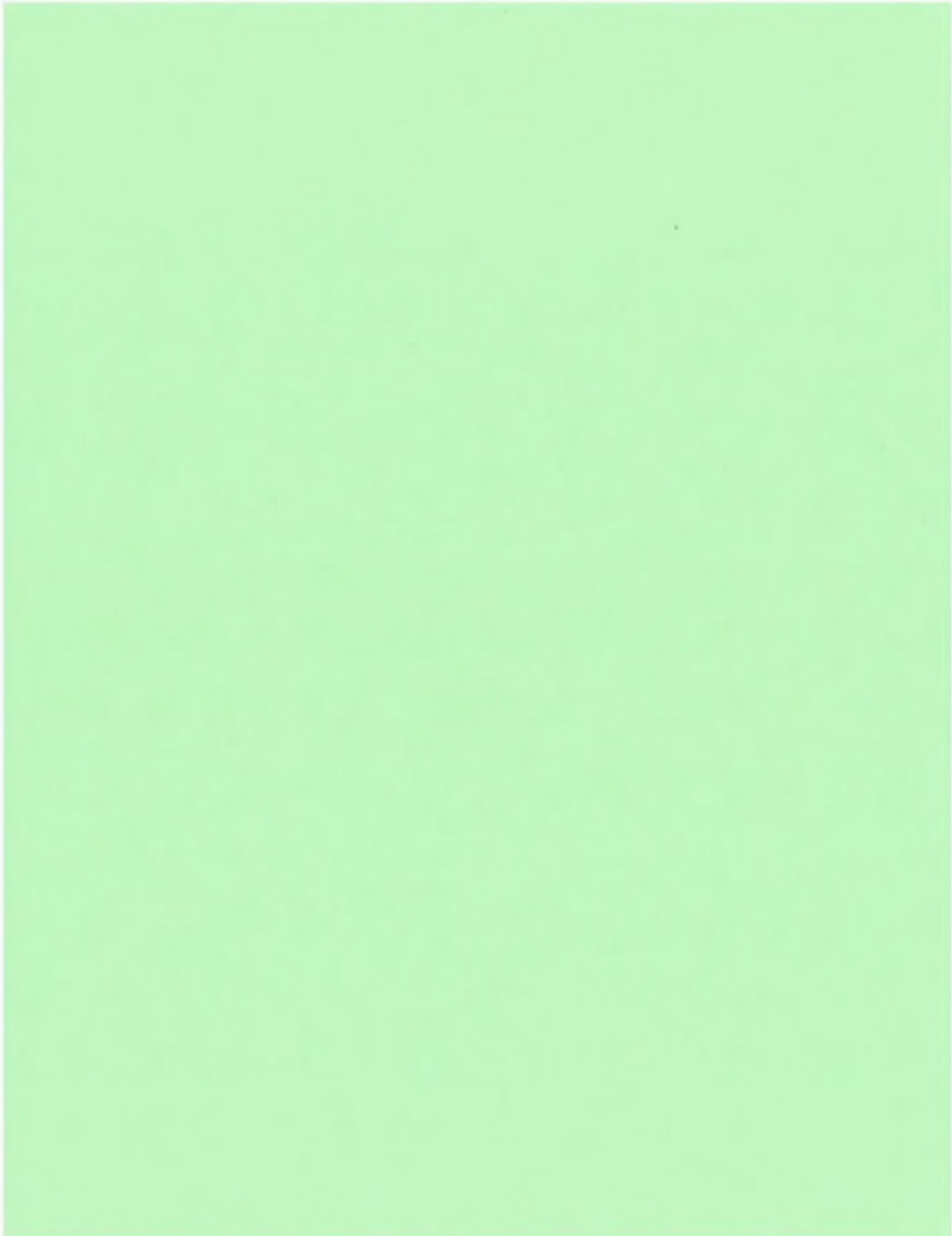
recevoir de l'information de niveau SECRET dans le cadre de cet exercice. Veuillez prendre note que vos invités et vous-même devrez signer une entente de non-divulgateion de l'ensemble de l'information classifiée à laquelle vous aurez ainsi accès.

J'espère que ces séances d'information vous sembleront utiles.

Une lettre semblable a été envoyée au chef du Nouveau parti démocratique et au chef du Bloc québécois.

Cordialement,

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PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

Dear Mr. Singh,

There has been a worrisome rise in both cyber threats and foreign governments seeking to further their own interests within Canada through deceptive, corrupt, covert, threatening or illegal means. Examples of such foreign interference include attempts to bribe, coerce or intimidate individuals to elicit information or to influence behaviour. Targets may include prominent Canadians, members of ethnic diaspora communities within Canada, politicians or government officials.

Such behaviour is unacceptable to all Canadians, no matter their political leanings, because it undermines the very foundations of our democratic system.

In view of these growing threats, I have asked the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of National Defence to coordinate unclassified briefings for all Members of Parliament and Senators by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) on the risks of foreign interference and cyber threats.

Furthermore, I am writing to you, as well as all the leaders of recognized parties in the House of Commons, to advise you that more detailed, classified briefings from CSIS and the CSE on both the cyber and foreign interference threats are available to you personally, should you wish to receive it. I have asked the National Security and Intelligence Advisor, Mr. Vincent Rigby, to have his staff coordinate these briefings with your office.

So as to enable you to take action on the information contained in the classified briefings, I invite you to identify up to three additional individuals to participate, such as other members of your caucus or party staff. Furthermore, I have agreed to waive the standard security clearance requirements so that you and your invitees can receive the SECRET-level information required for this purpose. Please note that you and the other participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement with respect to any classified information that you receive.

I hope that you will find these briefings helpful.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

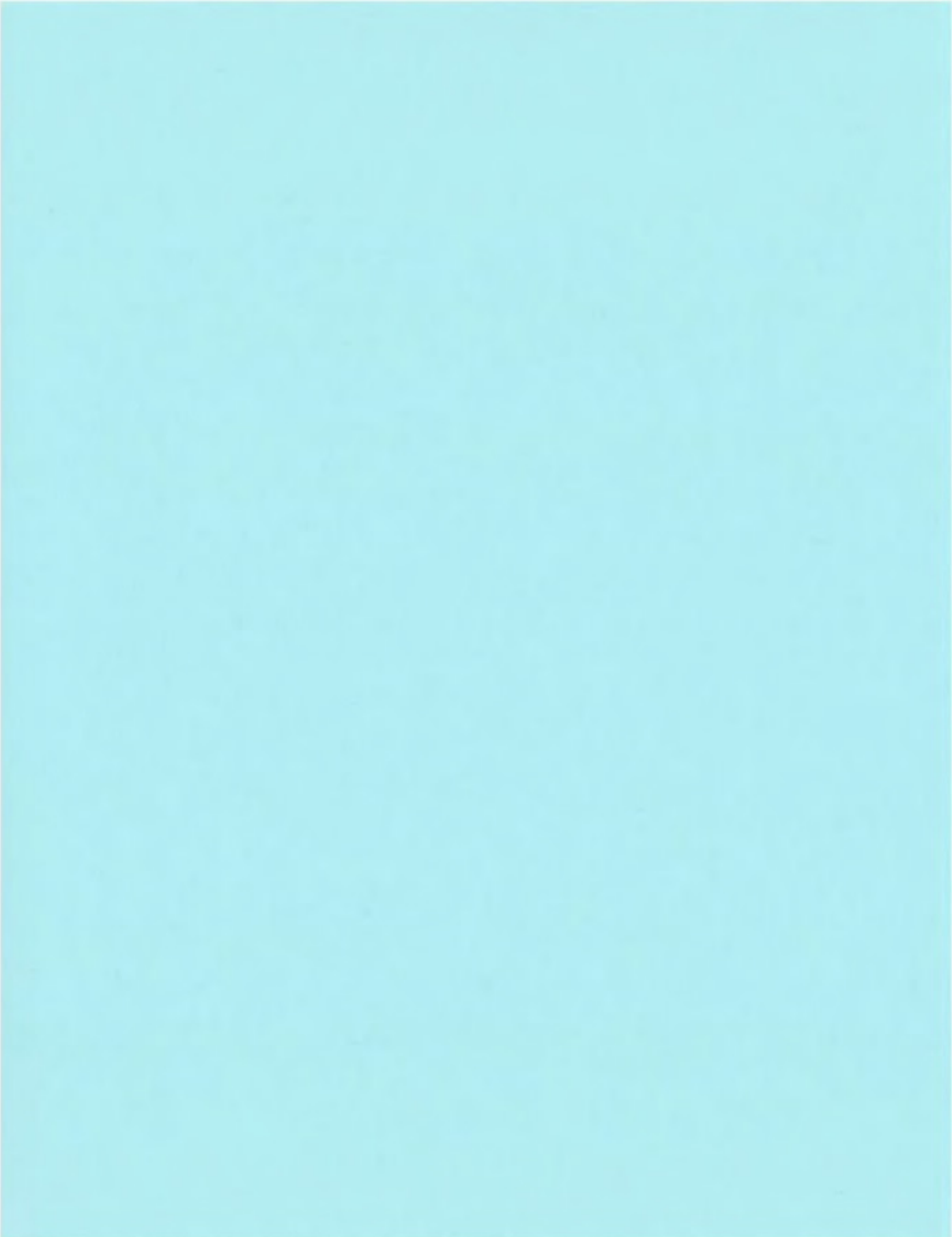
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Similar letters have been sent to the leaders of the Conservative Party of Canada and the Bloc Québécois.

Sincerely,

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De tels comportements sont inacceptables pour les Canadiens – quelles que soient leurs convictions politiques – parce qu'ils sapent les bases mêmes de notre système démocratique.

Devant ces menaces grandissantes, j'ai demandé au ministre de la Sécurité publique et au ministre de la Défense nationale de coordonner la tenue de séances d'information non classifiées à l'intention de tous les députés et sénateurs. Le Service canadien du renseignement de sécurité (SCRS) et le Centre de la sécurité des télécommunications (CST) seront chargés d'assurer la prestation de ces séances d'information qui porteront sur les risques d'ingérence étrangère et les menaces cyber.

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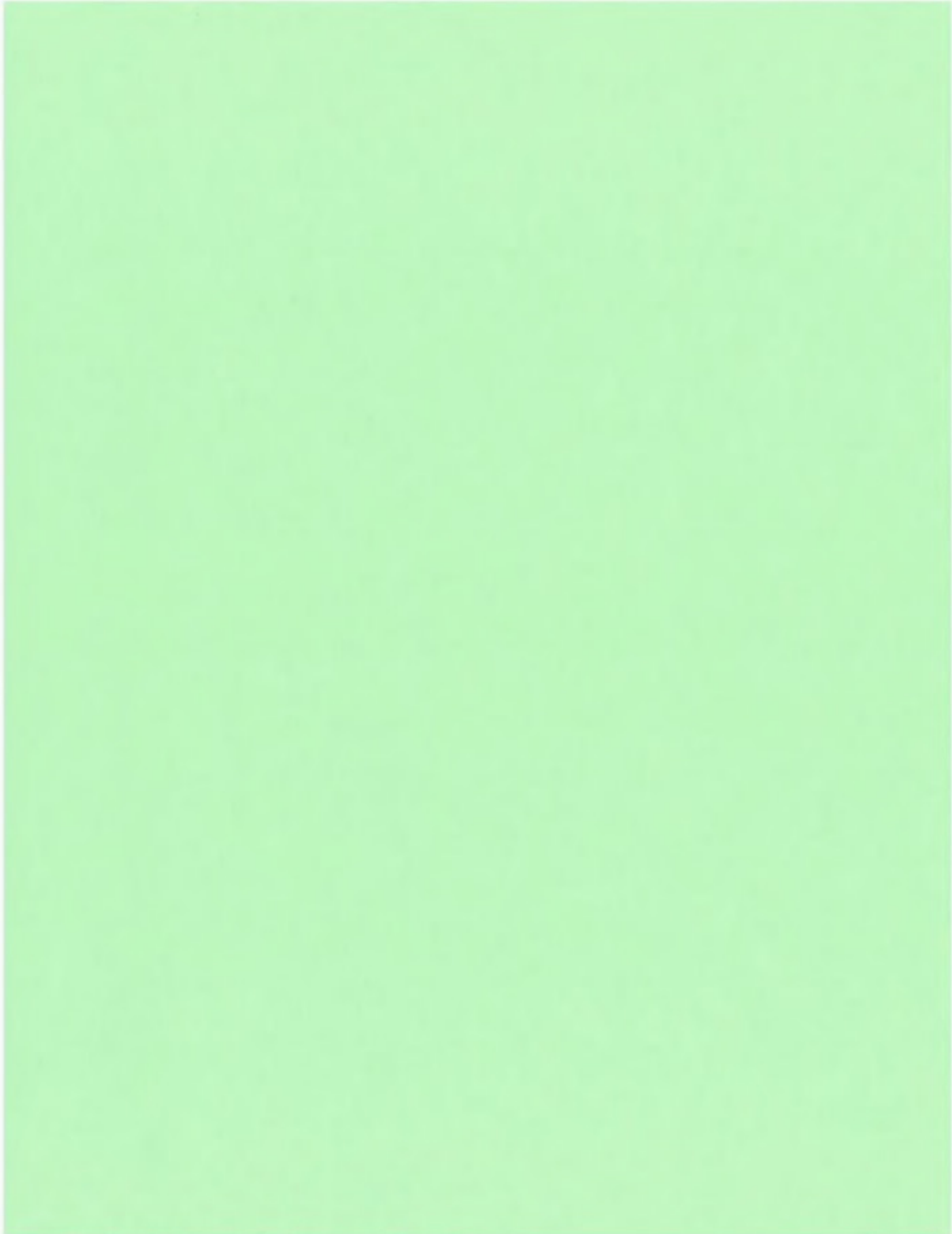
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Dear Mr. Blanchet,

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Mr. Yves-François Blanchet
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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