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## Transcript - Minister of Public Safety Marco Mendicino participates in a CIGI virtual event entitled Canada's National Security A Discussion the Honourable Marco Mendicino - June 27, 2022

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**DATE/DATE:**  
 June 27, 2022 2:00 pm (EDT)

**LOCATION/ENDROIT:**  
 Web-Cast, Ottawa, ON, Canada

**PRINCIPAL(S)/PRINCIPAUX:**  
 Minister of Public Safety Marco Mendicino

**SUBJECT/SUJET:**  
 As part of the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI)'s continued work on reimagining a Canadian national security strategy; Minister of Public Safety Marco Mendicino participates in a CIGI virtual event entitled: "Canada's National Security: A Discussion with The Honourable Marco Mendicino" to discuss the changing global landscape, the changing threat landscape, its implications for Canada's national security, and the reimagining of national security and intelligence practices to better safeguard future economic growth, innovation, sovereignty and Canada's national interests.

**Aaron Shull:** Welcome. Thank you for joining us this afternoon for a discussion with the Public Safety Minister of Canada, the Honourable Marco Mendicino, and my colleague Maithili Mavinkurve. My name is Aaron Shull; I'm the Managing Director and General Council at CIGI or the Centre for International Governance Innovation. It's a pleasure to have you with us today.

At CIGI we're a public policy research institute or a think-tank for short. In our work we try and strive to make the world a better place through the power of ideas, through trusted research and influential analysis. For the past two years CIGI's undertaken I would say a major research project aimed at reimagining a national security strategy.

But what we did was very different. We started from the assumption that at a think-tank we didn't know it all and that our business model was broken. We tend to chase policymakers after the fact with our reports and say: hey listen to us. But what we started by doing was saying to policymakers: would you welcome this initiative, would you work with us, could we work together?

We were blown away by the level of support. We had 250 experts from around the world engaged in the project, we had current government officials, we had CEO's from the fastest scaling tech

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companies in the country, we had academics and civil society all leading to the final report written by my colleague Wesley Wark and I.

And it's in this vein that I am absolutely delighted to welcome the Minister. Minister Mendicino was first elected as a Member of Parliament for Eglinton-Lawrence in 2015. He has previously served as the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. As a Member of Parliament he has been a champion for local investments in public transit, affordable housing and supported youth-driven programs aimed at creating more employment opportunities and safe spaces. Before entering politics Minister Mendicino served as a federal prosecutor for nearly 10 years helping to fight against organized crime and bring terrorists including members of the Toronto Eight Team to justice. Minister Mendicino, welcome and thank you so much for joining us.

And my – my colleague here with me who's going to engage in this armchair discussion with the Minister is Maithili Mavinkurve. Maithili is the Vice-President of Data at TradeX. She's also the first female founder of an artificial intelligence company in the country. And it's really quite amazing because she can talk about policy policy but then can sit down and code you an algorithm. But her real claim to fame is that she's also a CIGI fellow with me. So welcome Maithili, welcome Minister; it's a pleasure to have you with us.

So it's not often I get to sit down with the Minister of Public Safety, so we've got a number of questions that we want to ask, but to you at home or tuning in from the office please free to ask questions as well through the magic of the internet you're going to be able to push your questions right to my tablet and I'll be able to pose them to the Minister or Maithili will be able to pose them to the Minister.

So let's dive right in. I wanted to talk about transparency. So your Department is spearheading the National Security Transparency Commitment that was announced in 2017. Can you tell us about that commitment and give us your view on the progress because in my mind national security requires license and social license and that requires transparency. So can you talk to us about that Minister?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** I'm happy to talk about that. And first and foremost I just want to say a big thank you to CIGI and to you Aaron and Maithili for the conversation that we're about to have and really to thank everybody who is in the space and online for all the work that you do and the thought leadership that you show at CIGI. And I quite like your metaphor of having to chase down you know not only leaders in politics but right across the continuum on engaging.

And I – I think one of the themes that I want to emphasize throughout this conversation is the need to engage not only within government but beyond government, in the economy, industry leaders, community leaders who care a lot about our country. And obviously as we think about where we are at coming out of a two-year pandemic and wanting to propel ourselves forward national security does find itself very much at the forefront of our thoughts.

So I would begin by emphasizing some of the things that we have done including trying to make brave strides in transparency. So I don't know how many law geeks or wonks there are; I am one, I am a self-confessed, here we are, I see a few hands going up, maybe a few online. I still enjoy reading the law; I still enjoy reading statute even though I'm now in politics. But for those of you who are familiar with this space you will know that the introduction and passage of law Bill C-59 was a watershed moment for transparency in national security.

Why? Because among other things it created NSIRA, it created NSICOP. And again for those who are you know familiar with those acronyms you will know that these are branches of government that shine a light on – on the important and sensitive information that the government uses to keep Canadians safe.

So NSIRA, the National Security Intelligence Review Agency, can look at just about anything that our national security agencies intersect with in terms of information and then provide reports which can then be consumed by the public. Similarly the National Security Intelligence Committee of



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Parliamentarians is a vitally-important organ of government made up of parliamentarians that has broad-ranging access to information which intersects with national security.

Why is this important? Because without transparency we cannot have trust and confidence in government. And I think we need to do more on that front. C'est – c'est tellement important que nous continuons de faire des progrès sur la valeur de transparence en matières de la sécurité nationale. Et avec ces deux exemples on peut faire ce progrès.

But we also need to be sure that we're working again outside of government. And I think whether it's working with economic leaders, whether it's working with academic leaders the more light that we can shine on how we protect Canadians by addressing and mitigating against national security threats, the more we can build trust, faith and confidence in our institutions.

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** Thank you Minister; excellent. So let's kind of move on to the next question. How can your government ensure that Canadians are properly informed about the national security threat environment and the response measures that are in place?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Well one thing that I think we have made a very concerted effort at is being more outward-facing. And I want to give a – a particular shout-out to the officials and the public servants that work within our national secur – national security community who I think are very alive to the fact that traditionally historically you know there's almost been like this shroud around the work that – that we do when it comes to national security.

And I was kind of kidding with my team beforehand that you know folks think about national security, they think about spies or espionage or you know foreign interference; all of which are you know very real and tangible threats to our national security, but pulling the curtain back is something that I think CSIS and – and frankly all agencies within government have made a very deliberate and conscious effort to do.

So how are we doing that? We've had the Director go out and give very public talks, David Vigneault, about how it is that we're protecting against new and emerging threats, whether we're talking about ideologically-motivated extremism which is featured prominently in the most recent report filed by CSIS, or whether or not we're talking about disinformation. And if there's one sort of thought that I would like to register with all of you and within your own communities, again whether you're in business or the private sector or whether you're in academia, it's that the phenomenon of disinformation poses a unique and accelerated and quantum threat, not only to Canadian democracy but all democracies.

And the more outward-facing I think we can be about that, whether it's through public speeches by the leaders of public safety and national security agencies, whether it's through the reports that are filed by the Committee of Parliamentarians that are charged with the responsibility to look at this particular area, whether it's through the work of NSIRA, I think that that will help to build trust and confidence.

And why is that important? Because the whole point of disinformation is to tear at the social fabric that brings us together by undermining that trust and confidence. And I think we need to be – we need to level with – with each other about how we're going to tackle that. And again it's not just about the work that we're doing in government; this needs to be a whole-of-country endeavour, it needs to be a national project. We need to work closely with the private sector, we need to work with industry leaders, we need to work with academia so that we are flagging disinformation, so that we are finding ways to get ahead of disinformation, so that we are becoming a more digitally-literate population so that we can mitigate against the threat of disinformation.

And the more outward-facing I think government can be, the more collaborative we can be with the entire country on that front, then the better I think we can create a democracy that is resilient, competitive and – and hopeful and optimistic going forward.

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**Aaron Shull:** No I – I couldn't agree more. And maybe just a couple of thoughts in response. And I don't want this to sound like I'm – I'm being sycophantic because I'm not, but the engagement that we had with government officials on this project was really quite exceptional. You had mentioned the talk with David Vigneault. We did one with Shelly Bruce who is the Chief of the – the CSE; we did one with Vincent Rigby when he was the National Security Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister. I'm fairly certain that was the only time in the history of the country that's ever happened.

So I mean as – as an objective observer it's clear that there's a willingness to engage that I think is really important. And to your point it's because the threats are different, the world looks different. International security used to be about protecting – protecting us from you know wars over there. Pandemics, climate change, cyber, disinformation; I don't think there's a Canadian dinner table that hasn't been touched in some way by these things.

So we need to open up the conversation. I just appreciate the – the willingness. And again I say that you know with – with objective evidence of that actually being the case.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Can I just pick up on one thing too because I think you've highlighted some of the positive things that we in government are doing, but I also want to give a nod to industry leaders and those who understand that in order for Canada to succeed we really do need to engage and collaborate.

And I just want to say that particularly as it relates to disinformation we need to continue to work very closely with big tech, we need to work very closely with thought leaders in the innovation space, we need to engage directly with social media platforms you know who play such a – an incredibly vital role in – in offering a platform which can connect people and can share information, but speaking quite candidly and not only from my own experience but I think one that we all share there is just the proliferation of disinformation on platforms that I think really is a call to all of us to really think about how can we flag this information?

You know what it that we can do to make our population more digitally-literate? How is it that we can you know not only make sure that government has the tools that are necessary to regulate in this space but equally to ensure that there are the appropriate incentives within the free market to make sure that we're all really attuned to what those threats look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. That's something that I know is – is something that I'm very excited about being – being able to do because if we address that then I think we're a leader in that space.

And again this is not just something that happens in Canada; disinformation is posing a real challenge to democracies around the world.

**Aaron Shull:** Yeah, No I – I couldn't agree more. So I mean I guess part of – part of this flows to your – your human capacity, your human resourcing, the people that make up the institutions around you. And obviously if you're going to be engaging with the world and you're going to be engaging with Canadians you need to have institutions that look like and reflect the diversity that is in Canada.

And so I really want – I wanted to pick up on this because I know it's been a priority in a number of the agencies. Can you talk to us a little bit about what you're doing to reflect that diversity that is the country to – to be more inclusive? And for what it's worth and this is an area that's you know traditionally been quite insular because you know we were keeping – we were keeping secrets away from the Soviets and so there's a natural kind of centr – centripetal force there but you have to open up now and you have to be more inclusive. So can you talk to us about that?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Well absolutely. And – and one of the things that I recently did was issue new updated mandate letters to all of the agency heads within my portfolio. And one of the priorities that we underlined was the need to make sure that we are recruiting a workforce that is reflective of the diversity of our population. Canadians in order to have trust in our institutions need to



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be able to see themselves. And that's not just in the language and in the text and in making important value statements, but in the people that live and breathe and are committed to this work.

And so we need to continue to make strides on that front; recruiting more racialized Canadians, making sure that we are recruiting indigenous peoples into our institutions. Because I think quite tragically over the last number of years, and this is a problem again that has; and a challenge that has been not only restricted to law enforcement institutions but all institutions. If there isn't that reflection of our diversity then it has the effect of impacting trust and confidence.

So through these mandate letters we're redoubling our efforts to make sure that we are recruiting a workforce that does reflect that diversity. We're also making a concerted effort to have training that is culturally-sensitive. I mean one of the – the challenges that we've been very open about in our government is the pervasiveness of institutional biases including systemic racism within the – the community of public safety partners.

And again to the credit of – of those agencies they embraced that challenge. I mean they have come forward and said: yes we need to do better to make sure that we are unearthing and rooting out those biases so that we can build on that trust.

And I think that the mandate letters is a – is an important mechanism that will ensure that Canadians can hold our government accountable for that progress. And it is precisely because of the – the complexity and the challenges and the seriousness of the threat landscape as it exists today in national security through various sectors that we have to meet this challenge. And you know knowing our officials as – as I do, I'm very optimistic about that work because there is a real commitment to make that progress.

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** Yeah it's great to hear about the diversity and inclusion piece that you just mentioned. And it's such a big topic even when you're talking about the implementation of new tech – technologies like artificial intelligence as well, kind of creating biases in there. But let's move from kind of the trust piece to I guess you could say accountability. So you're a former prosecutor. And in what national security areas do you feel that more is needed to be done to prosecute offenses?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Okay, now I get to geek out because like you've basically given me this great softball that allows me to talk about my passion for the law. And it is true that I often draw my experiences in the courtroom to inform the work that I do in this file. And I think it's important to have public officials who are passionate about their work. And I am extremely passionate about the law; I'm extremely passionate about protecting Canadians. It's one of the reasons why I got into politics.

And frankly in the last six months like we have seen some very significant challenges to our – to our – our – our national security. I mean I think about the illegal blockades, I think about what sparked that moment in – in the form of extremist rhetoric that then led to like massive challenges at critical infrastructure, be it national symbols, be it our ports of entry. And I think about you know what it means to be able to ensure that we have the tools that are necessary to protect ourselves from those new phenomenon.

And so putting my old hat on I think one of the – one of the challenges that has been around for a long time is how it is that we take intelligence, that is the information that our national security apparatus collects for the purposes of identifying potential threats to national security or that could be injurious to our national security and then using that intelligence in a courtroom as admissible evidence.

Now this is an issue that – that – that again speaking very candidly I think has been a challenge not only for Canada but many other like-minded countries who base their judicial system on democratic principles. I think we need to kind of look at – at that process, make sure that there is good sharing of information but that it is done appropriately and in accordance with the principles that are there to

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protect our institutions to avoid potential conflicts, to avoid potential blurring of mandates between the intelligence community and law enforcement community.

And that is something that we are straddling right now I think. And I think you know there are protocols that do exist that allow for example CSIS to share intelligence with law enforcement, but again I think we need to be sure that those protocols are agile, that they can keep pace with the way in which some of these public order events which you know engage conventional law enforcement can spill over into national security threats.

And I think this is where you know the experiences that we have undertaken with great resilience as Canadians in coming out of the pandemic where there are big and robust debates to be had about the economy, about public health, about national security, do not then spill over into you know speech which is not lawful which can then spill over into you know speech which – which can be extremist and which can lead to violence. And I think that again this is – this is something that we need to think about very carefully.

**Aaron Shull:** Well actually I want to maybe pick up on the thread right? So the world as – as it is right now is – is – we're in a dangerous place you know? We're – we're coming out of the pandemic, thank God for that, but obviously we're now staring down a war in Europe. And you know I don't think I would be – being hyperbolic if I said we're the closest we've been to World War III since the end of the Cold War. So we're in a dangerous time in our history courtesy of – of Vladimir Putin paying willful disregard to international law and engaging in an aggressive war.

So this – the world looks very different today than it did before that war started. So what – in what ways has this changed your portfolio of work and the role of your department now that the world is at this kind of this precipice of a very precarious time?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Well I think you're right in that the current geopolitical environment is complex. But I would add to that that we also find ourselves at an unprecedented moment of solidarity when it comes to Canada's efforts along with other like-minded countries from around the world through our multilateral institutions, be it through NATO, through NORAD, through our general collaboration in the Five Eyes and other fora where we are pushing back very strongly and very firmly against Russia's illegal invasion into Ukraine.

And that is I think something that we should celebrate, and – and not in a – in a chest-thumping way at all but in a moment of resolve because what is happening in Ukraine is an absolute travesty and an – and an – an infringement on the international norms that were established coming out of the Second World War. And there is no doubt in my mind that what is occurring in Ukraine amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity. And I'll come back to how it is that we're dealing with that.

But equally what happens in Ukraine has a direct impact on democracies around the world. And yes you're right it's complex but we are also seeing I think a very rare and important moment of – of incredible solidarity on the front of what we are doing to push against Mr. Putin until he gets out. And he should get out of Ukraine; he should have done it months ago. And we'll continue to do what we can when it comes to adding to Ukraine's ability to – to fight back militarily, to continue to impose sanctions on – on – on – on those who are lending an effort to the illegal invasion and through the leadership of my Office and our Ministry to make sure that Russia has no place on Interpol which is responsible for providing security in that part of the world to make sure that we are closing the door to those who have been sanctioned economically so that they cannot come to Canada, and we've introduced legislation on that front, and so that perhaps most importantly that on the ground through our agencies that we are cooperating and sharing intelligence with the Ukrainian government so that they can identify you know how it is that they can best respond to the threats that are posed to them.

So yes you're right definitely a very challenging moment, but we should have real steel in our spine and resolve to continue to support the Ukrainian people however we can so that they can maintain



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their state sovereignty but also stand up for the organizing principles and values that – that – that – that enshrines democracy as a way of driving prosperity and peace around the world.

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** So let's bring it back home. The April 2022 Budget states that the government will conduct a comprehensive review of the anti-money laundering, anti-terrorism financing regime. What will your Department's role be in that review? And when will it be concluded? And if you could talk a little bit about the crypto piece as well that would be interesting.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Well for starters we play a policy leadership role; Public Safety does, in all matters related to national security. And again I just want to give a huge shout-out to you know the team at the Department you know who work day and night on – on really thinking about how it is that we can better protect Canadians from all those emerging threats including in the financial sector.

I mean let's face facts. No matter what aspect of life you have today you probably live some part of it online. And you know whether it's through banking or through investment or saving up for your retirement, you know those adversaries who are against Canada and Canadian interests look at exploiting that reality by going online and trying to tap into your personal information or you know steal through fraud.

And that is a real challenge that we are addressing through Budget 2022 through among other things additional re – reinforcements in terms of res – resources to RCMP and to other agencies within the space, but equally showing policy leadership through the creation of a new financial agency which is something that I will be working very closely with our Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Chrystia Freeland, on.

Why is this important? Well precisely for the reason that you identified. There are new non-conventional ways in which people are investing around the world including through the emergence of crypto currency. Now I think like every new technology and every new innovation there are potentially opportunities there for us to explore. But we have to be eyes-wide-open about the fact that with those new emerging trends in innovations that there are risks and threats which can be exploited by – by our adversaries; state and non-state.

And – and so where crypto currency is used for the purposes of subverting law enforcement, where crypto currency is being used for the purposes of subverting transparency and accountability, the government needs to work very closely with the financial sector to make sure that we are protecting Canadians.

And I know that that is something that we are deeply and profoundly committed to doing again across the country so that we can seize these opportunities but that we can do it in a way that really ensures that there is trust and confidence in our institutions and in a way that is transparent with Canadians so that Canadians can make the best possible informed choices when it comes to their finances, both present and future.

And that is something that I think will be advanced very significantly, not only through the investments that we're making in Budget 2022, but through the policy leadership that is being demonstrated by my Department.

**Aaron Shull:** So I don't think any conversation with the Public Safety Minister would be complete if we didn't talk about 5G. So let's – let's jump in on that. So obviously in your mandate letter it said you were directed to introduce legislation to safeguard Canada's critical infrastructure. And there's obviously been lots of movement on this including 5G telecommunications network. You – you can't pick up a newspaper without seeing a story about this. So can you talk to – talk to us about your efforts on – on 5G and – and kind of walk us through some of the thinking and some of the action on that file?

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**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Mais la question sur la 5G est très – très importante. On avait introduire un nouveau projet de loi pour adresser cette menace à la sécurité nationale parce que avec l'opportunité de sanctionner (sp) et toute cette technologie importée à notre – à notre économie. Et il faut – il faut rester en garde de toutes les menaces.

So I think that there are enormous opportunities with – with 5G and beyond. And those are – those technologies as applied to you know various aspects of life, be it you know in – in finance, be it in technology and telecommunications, be it in transportation, be it in the development of our national energy and resources. It's critically important that we are eyes-wide-open on this front. And that's why we stated our intent not long ago to ban two actors which pose a – in our view a significant threat in the space of – of 5G and within the telecommunications sector to make sure that as we develop those technologies we're doing it in a way that is safe and secure.

You'll also recall that within the last week and a half or two weeks we introduced a piece of legislation that will update the Telecommunications Act to ensure that security is expressly identified as a fundamental objective of that Act, and in addition to that introducing another piece of legislation that is called the Critical Cyber Security Protection Act that will yes provide new tools when it comes to this space, but I want to really emphasize to you it's not just about creating new legislative tools, it's about fortifying and strengthening the relationship with industry and the economy and the business sector.

I mean from where I sit it is so important that government collaborate with the private sector so that we can leverage all of the opportunities that exist before us. And so engaging with all of you, getting your input into how we can implement this legislation so that we understand what the business realities are as you weave and develop your new technologies to stay competitive is reflected in our – in our legislation, in our regulations, is vital to our success, it is absolutely vital to our success. And when you look at this legislation it's all about that, it is about building those – those bridges of collaboration, it is about engaging.

And whether it's specifically in the sector of 5G and beyond or the telecommunications sector or whether it's in the other critical sectors that are identified within this legislation, it is imperative that we keep those lines of communication open. Otherwise I think we're – we're sort of – we're – we're playing with one hand you know sort of tied behind our back.

And I think just knowing again the challenges that are before us and knowing the strength and the resilience of the Canadian economy and all that we have going for us, I mean I would just as soon as we've got you know two hands forward and – and ready to tackle all of the opportunities so that we can accelerate our economic recovery, so that we can remain competitive, so that Canada can continue to be a leader when it comes to being a driving and positive force in the world. And that is something that I'm very optimistic about.

**Aaron Shull:** So I'm going to kind of pull on a thread then on cyber security. And – and the reason I'm going to ask this question is because I'm going to try my best to do it in French. And I'm going to repeat it in English just in case I get it wrong, but I'm going to do my best.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** The Prime Minister said to me you know we did a press conference a couple of weeks ago, he said: tu dois pratiquer ton français. So I try to live up to that. So this is now an opportunity for you to show your ability as a Francophile.

**Aaron Shull:** Well no, j'étudie français dans le – l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi pour cinq semaines one summer and it was a – one of the best summers of my life. So here – here goes nothing.

Votre lettre de mandat fait référence au plan d'action national sur la cyber sécurité. Pouvez-vous nous donner plus le détail sur ce plan et le travail en cours ainsi que concerne la cyber sécurité? So for those who didn't catch all of that, I said: your mandate letter references the National Cyber Security Action Plan. Can you tell us what this is and just walk us through the work that's being done



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on the cyber security plan because it's – you know it's hard to have a conversation about 5G and the threats in the world and – and then without like divorcing it from a detailed plan of what we're actually doing on cyber security.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Exactement. Donc il y a un plan d'action qui est la comme un outil pour le gouvernement pour mettre un focus sur les ressources. Il y a trois motifs dans ce thème ou trois piliers. Il ya le pilier de collaboration, de résilience et innovation. Ça c'est les trois piliers. Donc avec ce plan d'action on peut mettre un – un – un bon effort pour la diversification de notre workforce, pas seulement dans les – les agences dans mon portfolio mais même partout a le gouvernement. Il y a un effort pour renforcer les lignes de communication entre tous les agences qui travaillent dans l'espace qui est impliqué par la sécurité nationale, la sécurité publique. Et au même temps et finalement il y a un effort de rester en garde de tous les menaces qui – qui – qui sont – qui sont une partie de – de le landscape.

So in a nutshell there are sort of three main pillars to the Cyber Security Action Plan which is really a tool to focus on efforts around resilience, collaboration and innovation. And here we make an effort to diversify our workforce, to make sure that that workforce has all of the tools and the resources that it is nec – that are necessary to meet the challenges and also to make sure that we are collaborating, not only internal to government but that we are keeping those lines of communication open outside of government.

And I think here this is one of the main themes that I'm trying to emphasize in our conversation today is that national security requires engagement, it requires that we are all rowing in the same direction, not only within government but with all of you and the various constituencies that you represent. And the Action Plan is part of a – a sort of a broader I think policy architecture around the cyber security strategy which has – which has been put into place, a strategy that we are in the process of renewing.

And that itself is also part of a broader national security strategy which you know I know we're coming to in our conversation but the last time we had a national security iteration was in 2004. And I know you know there's a lot of thinking that is being put into whether or not you know we need a new one. And I'm very mindful of this report right here, a little bit of a plug for – I see Wesley Wark in the audience applauding, but a plug for this report and obviously I know CIGI was very much involved with that.

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** So in your view what are some of the benefits of applying a multi-stakeholder approach to national security strategy? I know it's been a long time since we've had our – our last strategy updated so you can touch on that a little bit in terms of what the merits are. But what are some of the challenges to engaging stakeholders in this – in this environment?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Yeah, it's – it's a really good question. And I think one of the challenges is obviously to be again very candid and open and transparent about the challenges that – that we – that we face when it comes to the work that we do in national security. And I do think that that means again levelling with all Canadians that institutional biases, systemic barriers; I'm seeing you know some communities disproportionately intersect with national security and public safety partners is a way to build trust.

And I think we have made strides and we need to continue to make more strides in really opening up and pulling back the curtain on how it is that we do this important work. And again I know my departments and my agencies are really committed to having those conversations with communities right across the country. And there's more work to be done.

And I think only good can come from that because if we are – if we are being candid, if we're being open, if we're really united in this work then we can mitigate not only mitigate those – those challenges as we face them, but we can further strengthen the trust and the confidence in our institutions.

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So I think that's one of the challenges that we – that we – that we face collectively and it's one that again I'm – I'm very hopeful and optimistic that we're going to be able to meet knowing the goodwill within government and among Canadians to – to – to do just that.

As it relates to like the question of you know modernizing or refreshing our national security strategy, let me say a couple of things. First the last time there was a publication on the subject matter of a national security strategy was in 2004 which came in the aftermath of 9/11. And there was an obvious moment and juncture there for Canada to really reflect on how it is that we can better protect ourselves from at the time you know new emerging threats around domestic terrorism.

We're no longer in that moment. We're in a different moment now where there are new threats and new challenges. And we've spoken about it in the form of disinformation, in the form of hostile state act – activities which can manifest through foreign interference or through cyber attacks or through ransomware. The landscape is changing always, it's evolving.

And I want to assure the folks at CIGI and all Canadians that in that environment we are constantly reassessing what those threats are. And we are using those assessments to inform our strategies in real time. And the work that we have done in the last six months alone has been to take quantum steps forward to ensure that we are equipping government as well as our economy, our democratic institutions and communities and individuals with all of the tools that they need to protect and mitigate against those threats and to further strengthen our democracy and our country.

At the same time I also think that because we are at this you know I think this inflection point that it does merit a national conversation. And that's one of the reasons why we're here today is to build on the work that has been done by CIGI as you chase after us for all the right you know – posing all the right questions and hopefully coming together with the right answers to – to devise solutions.

And I you know do want to really commend the work of Aaron and Wesley when it comes to this report which among other things talks about greater transparency, updating legislative tools, building stronger lines of communication across society, between government and the private sector, and yes examining how it is that we can be sure that our national security strategy does really reflect the challenges. I embrace that as a Minister. I think our government embraces that conversation and that's how we will continue to propel ourselves forward.

**Aaron Shull:** No and I – I mean I really appreciate that and I mean that in the truest sense of the word. And you'd said we were talking about multi-stakeholderism and that means there's multiple stakeholders at the table including groups like ours. It means we've got to chip in too, right? This is not just about governments, this is about governance. And I remember it was David Vigneault said national security's a team sport. I agree, right? So it's not just about what government does or what – what the government can do, but it's about a societal approach to making sure that we're safe and that we're secure and that we have the life that we want. We've all got to chip in on this thing.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Absolutely. And you know again sort of brainstorming this conversation with – with the team before we came here. You know the fact is that – that – that yes national security is – is a paramount objective, like in order for us to you know fully I think make the best of the Canadian experiment we do have to think very much with open eyes about what challenges there are. And I think again about some of the informal conversations I've had with people in this room.

I mean (inaudible) last night on the way to Ottawa, we talked about the role that – that government can – can play to set the appropriate conditions for Canadian innovation success and how – I mean Canadians are such great innovators. We invent new technologies, we are great conceptualizers of new ideas which – which – which are unique and have such a value. I think the next important step that we should take as a country is how we can take those ideas to scale and make sure that there are Canadian successes for Canadian workers and Canadian companies. And that is something that is very much I think related to and impacted by national security.



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And I think about the work that we're doing you know across government. I think about the work that CSE is doing in the Canadian Cyber for Centres Security, working closely with small and medium-sized enterprises like offering just good, smart tips on how to protect your idea, your concept from potential threats to you know to your – to your business model, whether it's through ransomware, whether it's through you know better firewalling, etc.

I mean I could not agree more that it has to be a whole-of-society approach. And again I mean I think CIGI plays a really important role as a thought-leader and as a convener for those conversations and one that we're very happy to be engaging in.

**Aaron Shull:** Yeah, I just wanted to say one more thing and then we – we'll go to questions from the audience because you – you really hit on something and it's not lost. Like there's intellectual property lawyers in the audience, there's intellectual property lawyers, yeah, lawyers everywhere. There was intellectual property lawyers that were part of this project, the Strategic IP Council. It wasn't by accident.

And indeed when I asked Maithili to – she – she led the group that dealt with emerging technology on the project. And that wasn't by accident either because we wanted to bring folks that were not traditionally thought of as national security experts onto the team because they weren't thought of – they didn't think of themselves of national security experts and the world didn't – didn't appreciate that their work was deeply enmeshed in a national security, only it is, right?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Absolutely. And you know i – i again i think because of the – the opportunity that – that – that stems from a competitive idea, a new – a new technology, a new piece of intellectual property, that – that it's really, really important again that – that not only government but that the developers of those ideas outside of government in the industry are really you know – are – are really working together to make sure that the tools and you know the various things that we put into place to protect that idea so that it can be cultivated, so that it can be you know maximized as a value that can do good and that can generate prosperity and growth is so incredibly important.

And I think one of the things that coming out of this conversation we're going to be doing over the course of the summer is doing a – really a full court press when it comes to engaging all of you and I think Canadians to protect the Canad – the Canadian economy.

And this is an opportunity I think for you to bring your best advice, your best recommendations to the government. And we – you know we do that in a variety of ways, it's – it's not only about you know devising new law and new administrative tools and regulation, etc. but really making sure that we understand how we can set the conditions for success, not only at the development and innovation stage but equally beyond that.

And I think that's the kind of feedback that I've gotten, I know many of my colleagues have gotten, which is okay great we have this idea, now how do we take it to scale, how do we make sure that we are leveraging those ideas beyond so that Canada can continue to assert its economic potential not only here but around the world? And that's something that should motivate us. I mean we have a lot going for us, I mean tremendous geographic space and diversity. And our people.

I mean Canadians are extraordinary people. I mean we have really emerged yes out of the pandemic being tested but we have risen at every single critical juncture to the occasion. And that is I think a reflection of I think everybody's commitment to continue to double down on the Canadian experiment. And that is something that should be singularly motivating for all of us. And yes, nation – national security fits into that. And yes, collaborating with all of you and Canadians fits into that. But it's really rallying around that Canadian idea. And that's something that inspires me.

**Aaron Shull:** So we're going to go to – we've got to go to questions from the audience. I promise – I promise. Do you want to go the first one? We've got one.

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**Maithili Mavinkurve:** Yeah, sure. Yeah we've got one from anonymous. (crosstalk) I hope these have been Q-ayed (sp). There are communities of people who have not traditionally had access to being eligible to apply for national security or intelligence work. For example those who have lived in poverty or are disabled and do not have resources to obtain the prerequisite degrees or work experience. It seems that this is a significant portion of the potential talent pool that is untapped. I understand that there are inclusionary efforts being fielded. Does that include anything to aid in the recruitment of the non-traditionally educated or funding offered to train them?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** The short answer is yes. And we – we talked a little about that in our conversation about how through the issuing of new mandate letters we've really put an emphasis on diversifying our workforce within the government and making sure that we are looking at a – at a wide array of – of tools but equally experience. I mean I think one of the reasons why we want to diversify our workforce it is – it is because the lived experiences of the individual who becomes a member of the public safety national security community really forces the institution to evolve and to reform so that we can enhance trust and confidence.

And I think you know the – the – the question really does align with the work that we are undertaking as we mentioned throughout our conversation.

**Aaron Shull:** So I've got one from the Business Council of Canada. So governments are no longer the only target of adversaries. Businesses are caught in the crosshairs also. Do we need to modernize Canada's national security to enable closer collaboration between business and Canada's national security agencies?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Unequivocally yes. And I want to give a shout-out to the Business Council of Canada and – and Goldy Hyder who I you know speak with often about that very – that very challenge. And again we've been really coming back to what I think one of the central themes of this conversation is which is the need for engagement, particularly with industry leaders but equally small and medium-sized enterprises. I mean what is it? Something like 75% of our economy is driven by small and medium-sized businesses. We tend to think about some of the – the like the bigger employers out there because they disproportionately hire and employ large numbers of individuals.

But the reality is that it is the small and medium-sized entrepreneur, the person who goes out and decides to take a leap of faith in themselves and the idea that they bring to the economy that is one of the main propellers in engines of our – of – of our growth and our prosperity. And so equipping tho – that part of the economy with the tools they need can only be maximized and achieved if we are engaging in.

And I think whether it's through my portfolio or some of the other portfolios we mentioned, the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security is a great way to build those bridges and to really get the best possible advice, but equally offer some support to those parts of the economy which are essential to our – our – our future prosperity.

**Aaron Shull:** So we – we've got a couple of C-26 questions coming in. Do you want to go the one from – from Georgia?

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** Yeah.

**Aaron Shull:** Yeah?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Georgia, United States or Georgia ...

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** Georgia, the person.



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**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** The person. Right on. Okay. Not that I would be adverse to having an international audience, it's all good.

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** How does the Department of Public Safety plan to prioritize cyber security and critical infrastructure protection? What are the plans for Bill C-26 in the fall?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** So, two things I would say in response. One: Bill C-26 which as I said will both update the Telecommunications Act to include security as a fundamental objective for the telecommunications sector and offer some additional new tools to the government to work very closely with what we're calling designated operators and then the second part of that Bill which is the Canadian – uh sorry, the Critical Cyber Protection Act. And that too will allow our Department to work very closely with industry leaders to identify sectors that are vital to national security; so finance, technology and telecommunications, transportation and energy.

And the tools there are really about again fortifying relationships with industry leaders so that we can mitigate against new and emerging threats in the various and many forms that we have been describing throughout.

But it's not just C-26. I do want to come back to the work that we are doing around the Cyber Security Action Plan, around the renewal of the cyber security strategy, and yes around I think a broader conversation around how we protect our national security that allows us to remain very vigilant and agile and nimble to respond to new threats as they emerge.

**Aaron Shull:** So we were talking earlier about the – the duty of candor. And I was debating whether or not to ask a question on it because you start to get into the weeds of law pretty quickly on that one. But there's actually a question from the audience on duty of candor, so we can geek out for a minute. So – and I actually read the – the NSIRA's report on this was – was – was really solid. I think they did a great job. So NSIRA in its recent report talked about the need for the strengthened – strengthening of the duty of candor in the work of national security agencies. This is important both for our national security and for the rule of law. How do you do your part to ensure that this duty is strengthened?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Well candor is I think a prerequisite to transparency. And you can't have transparency if you are not being candid. And I think this is an area where you know admittedly my Department and the agencies that work within it including the ServIS have really doubled down and have raised the bar so that as we do the work of identifying threats to national security we are being on the up-and-up and really leveling as much as possible with Canadians, with other institutions including the courts so that we can shine a light on this work and do it in a way that builds trust and confidence in our institutions.

I also think we need to be again outward-facing. We have to engage with a broad range of communities, especially those who as I say who have been I think who – who have seen a disproportionate intersection with our public safety and national security partners where admittedly we have seen challenges around systemic biases and – and barriers that – so that as we are engaging and as we are being upfront about what those challenges are we're having a two-way conversation. It's not just government that's kind of devising these new solutions; we're really taking that advice in, integrating it into our – our toolkit and equally continuing to work with the broader community as we go forward.

And that can – that can manifest in the law, in new tools, etc., in new programs, in new – in new services and supports. And I think that's how we raise the bar around transparency. It is by being candid with one another and with various institutions about what the challenges are.

**Aaron Shull:** That sounds good. Do you want to do the ones who are going to – some from in – in-person? Do you want to do Wesley's question?

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**Maithili Mavinkurve:** Yeah, that's the one I was going to do. So Wesley has a question.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Wesley Wark. I am so shocked to see you here.

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** His question is: Minister, your profile contains agencies that are part of Canada's War Crimes Program. Is Canada doing enough to assist the Ukraine with war crimes investigations?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Yeah, I want to – thanks Wesley for asking that because I'd meant to come back to that in – in the answer regarding Ukraine. But you know first and foremost as you may recall we've nearly tripled out RCMP resources in dispatch to the international criminal court. This is a dedicated team that will help to collect information and evidence which could be used in subsequent prosecutions to hold those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice including all the way up to Mr. Putin. And I think that needs to be stated unequivocally.

I will also say that one of the great challenges that we face on that front is getting access to the evidence and making sure that we collect it as much as possible in real time. And it is my understanding that Ukraine has already undertaken a number of prosecutions already which I think is encouraging because it shows that government's ongoing capacity to not only defend itself against the existential threat of an illegal incursion and invasion, but equally to make sure that as you know those who are engaging in these – these awful and atrocious crimes are being brought to justice.

And I think Canada has traditionally played a leadership role when it comes to setting up the conventions around this going all the way back to Pearson and the United Nations and the conventions that – that – that – that came out of – out of that you know leading through to the ICTY and the ICTR, Louise Arbour and – and her role there, coming up to the present day. And I think it's – it's a way for us not only to ensure that justice is delivered on behalf of the Ukrainian people and everybody who has been subjected to a war crime, but it's a way to fortify democratic values which are being put to the test.

And you know the test is not just with you know Canadian institutions. I cannot emphasize that enough. This business about you know challenging democracies around the world is the product of a very concerted effort by our adversaries to undermine faith in those institutions as a deliverer of prosperity and growth and inclusion.

And Canada has to play a role. I mean what other country can you think of that is a living embodiment of the ability to live you know and – and grow in peace and in harmony with diversity as a hallmark of our population? That's right here. That's this country. And you know I think our work in – in – in holding those who are accountable for undermining that experiment here but you know especially in Ukraine right now is a fundamental part of the way in which we can continue to show that leadership on the world stage.

**Aaron Shull:** So we've got a good one coming in from the audience. And it's – it goes right at the tension between this – this need for transparency and the need for secrecy. So the question reads: civil society and the private sector are still digesting Bill C-26 on the – the cyber security Bill. One of the things that has stuck out is the reliance on secret courts and evidence. Can you comment on how this aligns with the themes of openness and collaboration?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** I would say that from the standpoint of you know the need to be able to balance those two interests, that is to say yes to make sure that we protect information which you know if it was broadly disclosed could pose a threat to our national securities. So I think about the various technologies that we deploy to protect Canadians every single day when you navigate you know your life online, we use strategies and firewalls etc. to protect all of us with the need to be open and transparent about how we strike that balance is critical. And I think it ties into what you know I think one other questioner posed in the form of the duty of candor.



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And I think the work that we do with different institutions, especially with the courts, is a great way to live up to those values where we can again really be – be very open about how it is that we protect Canadians while at the same time making sure that information which is sensitive to Canadian interests. I'll take another obvious example like we dispatch our Canadian military abroad to ensure that Canadian interests and our allies are protected. Of course we would not want to publish exactly where they're going to be or what they are going to be doing until it was safe for them to do so.

So I'm using I think some fairly obvious examples where it is important that we protect that information to protect Canadians who are serving abroad as well as Canadian interests while at the same time being very open and very transparent about how we can collect intelligence, how and – and where we – we use legislative tools. And that is work that we undertake not only within our own Department, not only within our agencies within our Department, but within other institutions.

And I think through our engagements, through our conversations with Canadians right across the country the more we're open about that the more I think we fortify trust and confidence and we can strike that balance as we need to.

**Aaron Shull:** Thank you Minister. Now we're moving to the lightning round of our conversations. We've got about four minutes left. So – but there's a question right at the top from Christopher that I thought was a good one.

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** Yeah this is a good one. So just coming back to kind of the – the diversity piece and kind of finding talent, one of the ways to encourage diversity in the national security community is to expand from where individuals can work. So if we require individuals to work from Ottawa as an example it will restrict who applies to and works within the community. What efforts are underway to expand where individuals can work from such as those who want to work for CSE or other Ottawa-bound agencies?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Yeah, fantastic question. And I think the pandemic taught us that we could innovate and evolve so that there was more opportunity to work remotely. And – and clearly as we do that and especially if you work for an agency that is implicated in national security or public safety we want to be sure that those remote working setups are also secure. And I will tell you that I think we've made just incredible strides on that front.

And it's – it's a means to a very laudable end. And what is that end? To have a more inclusive and flexible and diverse workforce. And I think it kind of also touches on one of the other questions that we got which is how do we reach into the talent pool of some of those parts of society you know that – that have not conventionally you know been recruited proactively to come and work within our public safety community or our national security community.

And I think these – these remote working engagements as long as they are secure is a great way to do just that. I also think by the way, I'm just looking at the room; I met Emma just before we started our conversation today. I think about you know the up-and-coming generation, I think about how it is that we you know came to work traditionally; it was showing up, working at a desk or working you know on-hands at a job. Young people I think are – are – are you know making their way into their professional careers with you know a very different perspective on – on where and how they can leverage technology to work.

And so again this is another opportunity for engagement, really going out there and thinking about young people and how we can do the important work of national security and public safety as seen through the eyes of the next generation coming up is – is a great way to diversify our workforce as well.

**Maithili Mavinkurve:** Yeah, 100%. So I don't know if we have any time for more questions ...

**Aaron Shull:** That – that's the show, unfortunately.

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**Maithili Mavinkurve:** I think – I think we're going to have to wrap up. So thank you very much Mister – Minister Mendicino for this fascinating conversation. I'll try and wrap it up in like – in probably five words that I heard today. So trust, transparency, confidence, collaboration and the final one which is homework for all of us; engagement. So I think we all have to play a role in – in how we move forward with national security.

So I hope you enjoyed this event. If you would like to watch it again or share it with your colleagues we will be posting this on CIGI's YouTube channel shortly. So please subscribe to CIGI online on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn to keep up-to-date on upcoming events and publications. Thank you and have a great day.

**Aaron Shull:** Thank you very much everyone. (applause).

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