

Richmond MP rebuts Chinese consul-general's criticism of politicians

Maria Rantanen

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Kenny Chiu has beaten Liberal incumbent Joe Peschisolido. | Maria Rantanen

Steveston-Richmond East MP Kenny Chiu took offence at the consul-general of China in Vancouver, Tong Xiaoling, for targeting politicians who criticize the Chinese government's actions in Hong Kong.

Tong, who was previously the deputy commissioner at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong, went on the airwaves on a Chinese language program and

criticized “individual foreign politicians” for slandering, criticizing and making irresponsible comments about the national security legislation (NSL) in the “name of human rights.” She made the remarks on the Richmond-based Chinese-language radio station AM1320.

She claimed the NSL is supported by the majority of Hong Kong residents and has received “overwhelming support” from the international community.

Tong said on the radio program that politicians who criticize the NSL are interfering in China's business – saying that China doesn't interfere with other countries' business – and that all politicians who try to intervene in China's internal affairs are violating international law.

The NSL allows the Chinese government to arrest and try people who are critical of the People's Republic of China whether that's in China, Hong Kong or abroad. The law supersedes Hong-Kong's common law system and officials are in the city to monitor that the law is adhered to.

Chiu said he's grateful Canada cut off its extradition treaty with China, because this new law could mean Canadians who are critical of the Chinese government could be tried in China. However, this is just “reactive” step and the “bare minimum” that should be done, Chiu said, and he'd like the Canadian government to exert political pressure on China, noting Canada's China policy is from the 1980s.

“I am concerned the Canadian general public is not aware of how dire the situation is,” Chiu said, noting China is acting more aggressively in Canada.

“Hong Kong is a battleground of this struggle, which is why Canadians should pay attention,” he added.

Chiu himself has been openly critical of the Chinese regime. He said Tong's comments seem targeted towards politicians like himself who are of Chinese descent. Chiu moved from Hong Kong to Canada when he was 19, and he asserts he's a Canadian politician, not a Chinese-Canadian politician.

Chiu sat this week on the federal Special Committee on Canada-China Relations, which was struck late last year with the support of Conservatives, NDP, Bloc Quebecois and independent MPs and has met 11 times since January.

Chiu was substituting for a colleague at the committee's 10th meeting.

The committee heard from several NGOs about the Hong Kong situation, the plight of the Uighur population in west China as well as other topics. Groups speaking to the committee included Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the National Endowment for Democracy.

One witness spoke about his first-hand experience with police brutality in Hong Kong during the 2019 protests, Chiu explained.

Chiu said he would be supportive of some kind of “lifeboat immigration program” for protestors in Hong Kong. He envisions a program that would any protesters charged in Hong Kong under laws that go against Canadian law – for example, freedom of assembly – to be given refuge in Canada.

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