

**IN THE MATTER OF THE PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN  
FEDERAL ELECTORAL PROCESSES AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**


**AFFIDAVIT OF MARCO MENDICINO**

I, Marco Mendicino, of the City of Ottawa, in the Province of Ontario, AFFIRM THAT:

1. On February 23, 2024, I was interviewed by Counsel to the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions (“Commission Counsel”) in my capacity as the former Minister of Public Safety.
2. On March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024, I was examined by Counsel to the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions (“Commission Counsel”) in my capacity as the former Minister of Public Safety.
3. In advance of the public hearings, Commission Counsel prepared a public summary of my interview and examination, which was reviewed for National Security Confidentiality (“NSC”).
4. In the course of the NSC review, some of the information was necessarily removed or nuanced in order to protect the disclosure of information that could be injurious to the critical interests of Canada or its allies, national defence or national security.
5. I have reviewed the public summary of our evidence, a copy of which is attached as **Exhibit “A”** to this affidavit (the “Unclassified Interview Summary”).
6. I have reviewed the public summary of our evidence, a copy of which is attached as **Exhibit “B”** to this affidavit (the “Unclassified *In Camera* Examination Summary”).
7. The Unclassified Interview and Examination Summary and the Unclassified *In Camera* Examination Summary contain an accurate account of the publicly disclosable information that I provided to the Commission. I do not wish to make any changes, additions, or deletions to the Unclassified Interview Summary and the Unclassified *In Camera* Examination Summary. Insofar as the Unclassified Interview Summary and the Unclassified *In Camera* Examination Summary contain information provided by other interview and examined participants, that information is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

8. I adopt the contents of the Unclassified Interview Summary and the Unclassified *In Camera* Examination Summary ascribed to me as part of my evidence before the Commission.

AFFIRMED before me in the city of Ottawa  
in the Province of Ontario on April 16<sup>th</sup> 2024

 LSO # 866995

Commissioner for Taking Affidavits

  
MARCO MENDICINO

This is Exhibit "A" referred to in the Affidavit of  
Marco Mendicino, affirmed before me this  
16<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2024



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Commissioner for Taking Affidavits

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## Interview Summary: Marco Mendicino

**Member of Parliament (“MP”)** and former Cabinet Minister Marco Mendicino was interviewed by Commission counsel on February 23, 2024. The interview was held in a secure environment and referenced classified information. This is the public version of the classified interview summary that was entered into evidence in the course of the Commission’s in camera hearings held in February and March 2024.

### Notes to Reader

- Commission Counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets to assist the reader.
- This summary has been prepared pursuant to subclause (a)(iii)(C)(II) of the Commission’s Terms of Reference. It discloses the evidence pertinent to clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of the Commission’s Terms of Reference that, in the opinion of the Commissioner, would not be injurious to the critical interests of Canada or its allies, national defence or national security.
- This summary contains information that relates to the Commission’s mandate under clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of its Terms of Reference. Information provided during the interview that relates to other aspects of the Commission’s Terms of Reference has been omitted from this summary, but may be adduced by the Commission at a later stage of its proceedings.
- This summary should be read with the Institutional Reports prepared by the Government of Canada.

### Background

Mr. Mendicino served as the **Minister of Public Safety (“Minister of PS”)** from October 26, 2021 to July 26, 2023. Prior to his career in politics, he worked as a lawyer. He was elected as the MP of Eglinton–Lawrence in 2015, and served as the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship from 2019 to 2021. MP Mendicino served as the Ontario Caucus Chair, a role he held between 2015 and 2017. He was also the Ontario Campaign co-chair during the 2019 federal election, and served on the National Steering Committee for the Liberal Party of Canada during the 2021 federal election.

### General Description of Public Safety

Mr. Mendicino stated the paramount responsibility of the Minister of PS is to keep Canadians safe. The Minister is accountable for the **Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (“CSIS” or “the Service”)**, **Royal Canadian Mounted Police (“RCMP”)**, **Canadian Border Security Agency (“CBSA”)**, **Correctional Service of Canada (“CSC”)**, and **Parole Board of Canada (“PBC”)**. As Minister, Mr. Mendicino saw it as his responsibility to ensure these agencies did their job.

When asked about his relationship with the Deputy Minister of Public Safety, his Chief of Staff, and the heads of agencies he oversaw during his tenure, Mr. Mendicino stated these relationships were kept close to facilitate flow of information to his office. He noted that his relationship with the

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heads of each of the five agencies is laid out in statute, and he ensured that each of the agency heads felt able to reach out to him directly as Minister. This happened as needed, and he recalled one occasion during the 2022 Convoy in Ottawa [the Convoy was a group of individuals who travelled to Ottawa to protest COVID-19 policies] when RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki reached out to him directly to discuss the Convoy.

As Minister, **foreign interference (“FI”)** was a top priority. By 2021, there was a sense that FI was pervasive and a growing challenge. The topic came up in both daily and weekly briefings. As Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship, he was aware of the national security threat posted by FI in Canada. Mr. Mendicino used as an example of an FI threat the potential exploitation of Canada’s international students’ visa program.

## **Information Flow**

### **Briefings on FI**

Mr. Mendicino recalled briefings he received early into his tenure as Minister of PS. The briefings covered FI, and in particular, FI relating to the **People’s Republic of China (“PRC”)**.

At this early stage of his tenure, he was absorbing information on the FI threat. The key takeaway for him was that the overall results of both 2019 and 2021 elections were not compromised. He also recalled wanting to know more about actions taken to mitigate the threats.

### **FI during the 2021 Election**

Mr. Mendicino said that it was during a briefing on December 13, 2021 that he learned of a specific FI matter which had occurred during the 2021 federal election.

### **CSIS Subject of Interest**

Mr. Mendicino was briefed on intelligence concerning the activities of a CSIS subject of interest near the end of 2021 or the beginning of 2022.

### **Erin O’Toole and Kenny Chiu**

Mr. Mendicino noted that, until the briefing of December 13, 2021, he was not aware of the Chinese-language media activities potentially aimed at discouraging Canadians from supporting the Conservative Party of Canada, party leader Erin O’Toole, and another candidate, Kenny Chiu.

### **Han Dong**

Mr. Mendicino was not aware of the intelligence surrounding Han Dong’s 2019 nomination as the Liberal candidate for Don Valley North, before becoming Minister of Public Safety. He noted, however, that organizing diaspora communities and bussing potential voters to polling stations are ordinary campaign practices. He could not recall the date he first became aware of the Han Dong allegations.

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**India**

Mr. Mendicino was briefed on Indian FI in 2021. While he would have asked whether action was required on his part, generally speaking, this briefing would have been for situational awareness only.

He noted that there is some sensitivity in how Indian FI is reported in the security and intelligence community. For example, the term “Khalistani extremism” is very charged language, and in some cases, may trigger backlash within the community. He referenced certain reports which provoked a response because of the language used.

**Russia**

Mr. Mendicino was briefed on Russian FI as Minister of PS. The main concern relating to Russia was the threat of cyber-attacks and intimidation of Russian diaspora communities. He noted that Russian FI is mostly opportunistic, and that he understood that while Russia had the capabilities to interfere with Canada’s elections, doing so did not appear to be a top priority for them at the time.

**Kenny Chiu**

Mr. Mendicino was referred to reporting related to Conservative MP Kenny Chiu and the 2021 federal election. MP Mendicino was briefed on this issue, but did not recall seeing this particular piece of reporting.

Mr. Mendicino underscored that the overall results of the 2021 election were not compromised.

**Other Intelligence Reporting**

Mr. Mendicino was referred to a 2021 report regarding PRC FI activities regarding the 2021 federal elections. He could not remember if he was briefed directly on this intelligence report.

Mr. Mendicino was also referred to another piece of intelligence regarding potential interference during the 2021 election. He could not recall being briefed on this issue, but said it was possible a briefing had occurred. He expressed skepticism at the activity reported.

**Meeting on May 18, 2023**

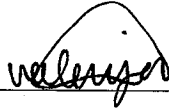
Mr. Mendicino was referred to a set of notes<sup>1</sup> indicating that he was present at a meeting during which the media leaks were discussed on May 18, 2023. Mr. Mendicino remembered the meeting, and indicated that the meeting was called to update various Ministers on PRC FI as a result of the media reporting of the leaks. He noted that a CSIS subject matter expert was present to provide relevant context.

The meeting participants reviewed the accuracy of the information reported in the media, including inaccurate claims that the PRC had transferred \$250,000 to select federal election candidates.

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<sup>1</sup> CAN017676.

This is Exhibit "B" referred to in the Affidavit of  
Marco Mendicino, affirmed before me this  
16<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2024



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Commissioner for Taking Affidavits

Unclassified

## *In Camera* Examination Summary: Marco Mendicino, Member of Parliament for Eglinton—Lawrence

Marco Mendicino, Member of Parliament for Eglinton—Lawrence and former Minister of Public Safety was examined by Commission counsel on March 6, 2024 in an *in camera* hearing. Counsel for the Attorney General of Canada appeared on behalf of the Government of Canada and had the opportunity to examine the witness. The hearing was held in the absence of the other Participants.

### 1.1 Notes to Reader:

- Commission Counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets to assist the reader.
- This summary has been produced in reliance on subclause (a)(iii)(C)(II) of the Commission's Terms of Reference. It discloses the evidence pertinent to clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of the Commission's Terms of Reference that, in the opinion of the Commissioner, would not be injurious to the critical interests of Canada or its allies, national defence or national security.
- This summary contains information that relates to the Commission's mandate under clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of its Terms of Reference. Information provided during the examination that relates to other aspects of the Commission's Terms of Reference has been omitted from this summary, but may be adduced by the Commission at a later stage of its proceedings.
- This summary should be read with the unclassified interview summary prepared by Commission Counsel.



## 2. Examination by Commission Counsel

- [1] Mr. Mendicino confirmed the accuracy of the summary of his interview and adopted it as part of his evidence before the Commission.

### 2.1 Background

- [2] Mr. Mendicino was appointed Minister of Public Safety following the 2021 federal election. He served in this role until July 26, 2023. He understood that the most important function of the Minister of **Public Safety (“PS”)** is to keep Canadians safe.
- [3] As Minister of Public Safety, Mr. Mendicino received intelligence from various agencies. After he took the position, he was briefed on what his mandate would be. This mandate implicated the PS Department, as well as a number of agencies for which he was directly responsible, including the **Royal Canadian Mounted Police (“RCMP”), Canadian Security Intelligence Service (“CSIS”), Canadian Border Security Agency (“CBSA”), Correctional Service of Canada (“CSC”), and Parole Board of Canada (“PBC”).**
- [4] Prior to becoming Minister of PS, Mr. Mendicino was responsible for the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada portfolio, which he held between 2019 and 2021. He was first elected in 2015 for the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence located in the region of Toronto. For the years preceding his time in Cabinet, he held a number of different positions, such as Ontario Caucus Chair and Parliamentary Secretary to a number of portfolios, including Justice, as well as Infrastructure and Communities.

### 2.2 Information flow

- [5] In the early days when Mr. Mendicino first took on the PS portfolio, the priority for the Department and the agencies was to situate Mr. Mendicino in his role and mandate, in addition to the priorities laid out in the Prime Minister’s mandate letter to Mr. Mendicino. One of the top priorities would have been **foreign interference (“FI”)**, which by that time, was a pervasive, persistent, sophisticated threat to Canada’s national security and was a known issue.

- [6] Mr. Mendicino testified that he would have been provided with background briefings on FI at the outset of his mandate. The information came to him in a variety of different forms, including oral briefings from the agencies, including CSIS. In some cases, oral briefings were supported by written documentation. As an example, Mr. Mendicino explained that he received clear documentation as part of the ministerial approval of CSIS warrants. In compliance with the law under the *CSIS Act*, Mr. Mendicino reviewed the warrants very carefully, especially when they involved FI. Mr. Mendicino also explained that he would receive comprehensive written documentation in addition to oral briefs to support decisions taken under his statutory authorities pursuant to the *Investment Canada Act*. Written documentation was also submitted to Mr. Mendicino in addition to oral briefings when threat reduction measures were proposed or contemplated.
- [7] Mr. Mendicino received a continuous and regular flow of intelligence as Minister of PS. He received briefings weekly and sometimes daily. He confirmed that raw intelligence was occasionally shared with him. In the early days of assuming the role, Mr. Mendicino testified that it was clear to him that there were numerous hostile actors who were trying to undermine Canada's national security by attacking various institutions, such as academic and economic institutions. He understood that various diaspora communities would be the target of these hostile actors.

## 2.3 Specific Briefings and Incidents

### 2.3.1 December 13, 2021 Briefing

- [8] Mr. Mendicino testified on a briefing he received from the CSIS Director David Vigneault on December 13, 2021 on the following topics:
- a) Efforts by a foreign state threat actor to interfere, in a clandestine and deceptive way, in democratic processes during the 2021 election;
  - b) Observations during the 2021 election of online and media activities against Mr. Erin O'Toole and Mr. Kenny Chiu that were potentially tied to the People's Republic of China, and the assessment that there was insufficient information to affirmatively attribute the campaign to this foreign state; and

c) Apparent efforts by another foreign state actor to interfere, in a clandestine and deceptive way, in democratic processes during the 2021 election.

[9] Mr. Mendicino emphasized that, as part of his early briefings as Minister of PS, he recalled that the key takeaway was that the 2019 and 2021 elections were free and fair and that the overall results of both elections were not compromised. Mr. Mendicino testified that he certainly took that as a source of comfort; otherwise, he would have been putting back to his officials some very direct questions about what to do about it.