



Public Inquiry Into Foreign Interference in Federal  
Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions

Enquête publique sur l'ingérence étrangère dans les  
processus électoraux et les institutions démocratiques  
fédéraux

**Public Hearing**

**Audience publique**

**Commissioner / Commissaire  
The Honourable / L'honorable  
Marie-Josée Hogue**

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Human Rights Violations

Neil Chantler

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Yuen Pau Woo

Sikh Coalition

Balpreet Singh

Prabjot Singh

Bloc Québécois

Mathieu Desquilbet

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Ottawa, Ontario

--- The hearing begins Thursday, September 19, 2024 at 9:32 a.m.

**THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please.

This sitting of the Foreign Interference Commission is now in session. Commissioner Hogue is presiding.

The time is 9:32 a.m.

**COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Mr. Sheppard.

**MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Good morning, Madam Commissioner. For the record, it's Daniel Sheppard for the Commission.

Before we get started with any evidence today, there's a few housekeeping matters we'd like to get out of the way.

The first is that when the representatives from the Office of the Commissioner for Canada Elections testified, when the Commission attempted to bring up the French version of the interview summary it was not available on the system. We're now able to enter that as an exhibit.

It does not need to be brought up, but the document ID is WIT 91.FR.

**--- EXHIBIT No. WIT0000091.FR:**

Résumé de l'entrevue : Bureau de la  
Commissaire aux élections fédérales  
(Caroline Simard et Carmen Boucher)  
(l'étape 2)

**MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And secondly, the



Commission is going to be bulk entering a series of overview reports into the record in both French and English, and I'll simply indicate what those are and their document IDs.

Overview Report: Other reviews and investigations of foreign interference (updated), COM580.EN and COM585.FR.

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000580.EN:**

Overview Report - Other Reviews and Investigations of Foreign Interference (updated).pdf

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000585.FR:**

Rapport sommaire - Autres examens et enquêtes IE (mise à jour).pdf

**MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Overview Report: Federal government entities involved in foreign interference matters (updated), COM581.EN and COM581.FR.

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000581.EN:**

Overview Report - Federal Government Entities Involved in Foreign Interference Matters (updated).pdf

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000581.FR:**

Rapport sommaire: Entités gouvernementales fédérales intervenant dans les affaires d'ingérence étrangère (mis à jour)

**MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Overview Report: Foreign Agent Registries, COM582.EN and COM582.FR.

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000582.EN:**

Overview Report: Foreign Agent  
Registries.pdf

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000582.FR:**

Registres des agents étrangers

**MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Overview Report:  
Introduction to Intelligence Concepts, COM583.EN and  
COM583.FR.

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000583.EN:**

Overview Report: Introduction to  
Intelligence Concepts.pdf

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000583.FR:**

Rapport sommaire : Introduction aux  
concepts du renseignement.pdf

**MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Overview Report:  
Summary of Countering Foreign Interference Act (Bill C-70),  
COM584.EN and COM586.FR.

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000584.EN:**

Overview Report: Summary of  
Countering Foreign Interference Act  
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**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000586.FR:**

Rapport sommaire : Résumé de la Loi  
sur la lutte contre l'ingérence  
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**MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Overview Report:  
Parliament and the Legislative Process, COM589.EN and  
COM589.FR.

**--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000589.EN:**

1 Parliament and the Legislative  
2 Process

3 **--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000589.FR:**

4 Le Parlement et le processus  
5 législatif

6 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And finally, Overview  
7 Report: Political Parties' Rules and Processes, COM591.EN and  
8 COM591.FR.

9 **--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000591.EN:**

10 Overview Report - Political Parties'  
11 Rules and Processes

12 **--- EXHIBIT No. COM0000591.FR:**

13 Rapport sommaire - Règles et  
14 processus des partis politiques

15 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And so the Commission  
16 would ask that all of those reports be entered as exhibits.

17 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So it is. Thank you.

18 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And with that  
19 exhilarating start to the day now dealt with, the Commission  
20 would like to begin with a series of witnesses representing  
21 political parties with representation in the House of  
22 Commons.

23 We're beginning today with Mr. Jon Irwin and  
24 Mr. Robin Marty from the Green Party of Canada. If the  
25 witnesses could please be affirmed.

26 **THE REGISTRAR:** All right. So we'll start  
27 with Mr. Irwin. Could you please state your full name and  
28 then spell your last name for the record?

1                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** My name is Jonathan  
2 Irwin, last name spelled I-R-W-I-N.

3                   **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you.

4                   **--- MR. JONATHAN IRWIN, Affirmed:**

5                   **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you.

6 [No interpretation]

7                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** M-a-r-t-y.

8                   **THE REGISTRAR:** Merci.

9                   **--- MR. ROBIN MARTY, Affirmed:**

10                  **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you very much.

11                  **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Thank you very much.

12                  **--- EXAMINATION IN-CHIEF BY MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:**

13                  **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** So let's start with  
14 some basic introductions. Mr. Irwin, could you tell the  
15 Commissioner who you are and a little bit about your position  
16 within the Green Party of Canada?

17                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely. Happy to.

18                  Good morning, everybody. My name is Jonathan  
19 Irwin, I'm then Interim Executive Director of the Green Party  
20 of Canada. Been in this position only for a short time. I  
21 started in early August 2024, but I had the pleasure of  
22 joining the Green Party back in November of 2023 initially as  
23 the Director of Finance and Administration.

24                  **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And Mr. Marty, if you  
25 could also introduce yourself?

26                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Sure. My name is Robin  
27 Marty. So I'm currently the National Campaign Director for  
28 Green Party of Canada. I'm working for the Green Party since

1 2015 in many different positions. So and I'm Director of  
2 Mobilizing as well since 2021.

3 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: All right. Let's do a  
4 little bit more housekeeping if we can. Could the Court  
5 Operator please pull up WIT76.EN? And while that is being  
6 pulled up, gentlemen, you recall being interviewed by  
7 Commission counsel on August 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2024. Is that right?

8 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

9 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes, that's right.

10 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: And following that  
11 interview, a summary was prepared by Commission counsel and  
12 shared with you, and that's the document we have up. Have  
13 you had an opportunity to review it for accuracy?

14 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: We have, yes.

15 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: And is it accurate to  
16 the best of your knowledge, information, and belief?

17 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

18 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

19 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: And are there any  
20 corrections, additions, or deletions you would like to make  
21 to this summary?

22 MR. ROBIN MARTY: No.

23 MR. JOHNATHAN IRWIN: No, we had a chance to  
24 make any necessary adjustments prior to coming today. So  
25 everything looks great.

26 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: And so, you adopt this  
27 summary as part of your evidence today before the Commission?

28 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

1 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: We do.

2 --- EXHIBIT No. WIT0000076.EN:

3 Interview summary - Green Party of  
4 Canada (Jon Irwin and Robin Marty)  
5 (Stage 2)

6 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: Okay. And just for the  
7 record, although it does not need to be brought up, the  
8 French version will also be exhibited. It is WIT76.FR.

9 --- EXHIBIT No. WIT0000076.FR:

10 Résumé d'entrevue : Parti vert du  
11 Canada (Jon Irwin et Robin Marty)

12 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: The next document I  
13 would like to bring up is GPC1\_EN. Can you please confirm  
14 that at the request of Commission counsel, the Green Party  
15 prepared an institutional report?

16 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: That's correct.

17 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: And this is a copy of  
18 that report. Have you had an opportunity to review this  
19 document?

20 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

21 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

22 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: And you can confirm  
23 that it is accurate and that you wish to adopt it as part of  
24 your evidence before the Commission?

25 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

26 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

27 --- EXHIBIT No. GPC0000001.EN:

28 Response to: Foreign Interference

1 Commission / Commission sur  
2 l'ingérence étrangère

3 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Okay. Thank you. And  
4 that can be brought down.

5 So with those preliminaries out of the way,  
6 I'd like to start by talking to you about political parties  
7 as potential targets of foreign interference in Canada. So  
8 I'll start with a general question, and that's, do you  
9 believe that in Canada political parties are a potential  
10 target for foreign interference activities?

11 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

12 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes, without question.

13 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And why is that without  
14 question?

15 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Well, that's -- I think  
16 political parties are -- could be under threat with a  
17 nomination, any nomination contest we nominate candidates, we  
18 elect MPs, we are forming governments. So there is like just  
19 position of power behind political parties which mean  
20 potential foreign interference and threats.

21 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely. Yeah, I  
22 second what Robin said. I feel that we're, you know, at risk  
23 of being interfered with by foreign bad actors. Are controls  
24 in place? You know, we do our best as political parties here  
25 in Canada, but let's face it, the bad guys are always a step  
26 ahead.

27 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And that's with respect  
28 to political parties themselves. Will you have a similar

1 view about members of Parliament being targets of foreign  
2 interference?

3 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

4 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And do you have a  
5 similar view about candidates of -- in elections, being  
6 potential targets of foreign interference?

7 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes. Candidates and  
8 leadership contestants, obviously.

9 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely. Yeah, I  
10 believe it's at the individual level where the foreign  
11 interference would have the greatest impact. That's you  
12 know, getting the -- getting an individual in a position of  
13 power within a political party would be the ideal spot for  
14 bad actors from other nations to have an impact on our  
15 political system in general.

16 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Okay. The Green Party  
17 is the smallest of the political parties that has  
18 representation in the House of Commons. And one of the  
19 themes that came out of your interview with Commission  
20 Counsel were some of the unique aspects of being a smaller  
21 political party. How does that play out in your minds in  
22 terms of the vulnerability of the Green Party as being a  
23 target of foreign interference?

24 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Well, we can start by  
25 speaking about resources, right? So politics is about --  
26 also about money and as like, a small party, we have less  
27 money, so we have less resources, so we are less equipped to,  
28 you know, fight against any potential foreign interference or



1 threats against the party. So we are working -- we have to  
2 be sometimes innovative with a decision we're making to  
3 protect the party and this institution. So that reality as  
4 being like, a small party, we have less resources, so we are  
5 more vulnerable in some extent.

6 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah, the lack of  
7 resources is definitely a challenge for us when it comes to  
8 protecting our party from foreign interference. While we are  
9 a relatively small party today, that may not be the case  
10 tomorrow, and we expect to go in the direction of growing.

11 We are very much in a period of growth and  
12 rebirth at this point. That includes an increase in our  
13 membership. We are implementing strategies to grow our  
14 membership and with that rapid growth comes an inability for  
15 us internally to review individuals, you know, beyond the  
16 basic checks and balances.

17 So that's kind of the trade off that we're  
18 accepting at this point. But we're certainly not happy about  
19 the risks that are inherent to the process currently.

20 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** In your interview, one  
21 of the comments that you made is that while the Green Party  
22 can't eliminate the risk of foreign interference, it can  
23 reduce it. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about some  
24 of the tools and strategies that are available to you in  
25 order to try to address some of those foreign interference  
26 risks that you face?

27 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yeah, so we -- after the  
28 2019 general election we've implemented some new processes

1 with vetting and screening of candidates and also leadership  
2 contestants. So we are, for example, working now with an  
3 external company to do like, professional screening of any  
4 potential candidates that want to run for us. It includes  
5 like social media vetting, internet search, and so we are  
6 working with professional company doing it for big  
7 corporations, not just political parties.

8 So of course it's -- it hasn't been  
9 implemented. It was in our discussion during the interview.  
10 We didn't implement this new process necessarily for foreign  
11 interference, because we were not speaking about foreign  
12 interference in 2020. It was for over malicious actors we  
13 were seeing trying to integrate the party, for example  
14 individuals that were not sharing values and the policy of  
15 the Green Party that we could see as sometimes even  
16 extremists, the far right. So trying to bring policies that  
17 are not in line with Green Party.

18 So working with this new process and with  
19 this external company, we've been able basically to catch the  
20 individuals willing to run for us for during a general  
21 election and wanted basically to derail the policy as well.  
22 It can be, like, people being pro-life, or people being,  
23 like, with, like, racism, or antisemite comments on social  
24 media that we could not see, but it doesn't be, like,  
25 necessarily responsive on foreign interference. It was --  
26 today, I think, this process definitely help us against  
27 foreign interference, but it's imperfect because we -- let's  
28 be honest, a malicious actor working or being affiliated with

1 a foreign state or foreign company, corporation will not be  
2 really publicly advocating for a foreign state if you are --  
3 been working for; right? So it will be more secretive. So  
4 it's a good tool that we have, but it's -- we allege it's  
5 imperfect and it hasn't been built for that purpose.

6 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPHARD:** M'hm.

7 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Exactly right. That's  
8 basically the point that I wanted to make as well. The Green  
9 Party of Canada, we're looking out for interference in  
10 general, so whether that's coming from a foreign body or  
11 whether it's, you know, at home in our own nation, we're very  
12 aware of the risks involved with that, and we do our best to  
13 protect ourselves from it, but there are limitations to what  
14 we can do.

15 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So you feel that you're  
16 not well equipped for countering foreign interference?

17 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

18 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Correct, yeah.

19 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And is it an issue when  
20 it comes to the vetting you've described, is it an issue of  
21 resources available to the party, or is it a limitation  
22 inherent in the vetting process itself? What isn't going all  
23 the way to counter the foreign interference threat?

24 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** I think kind of both. We -  
25 - I think if I'm going to this external professional company  
26 doing vetting and saying, like, okay, we want to catch any,  
27 like, potential interference threat coming from, you know, a  
28 foreign state agent, they will respond to me, what are you

1        talking about? Like, spy? Like, they will just respond we  
2        can't do that. We are -- you know, we are not like an  
3        intelligence -- we're not CSIS. And so the limitation is  
4        also the fact of whether even the company we are using, we  
5        could not improve or process necessarily with this company to  
6        respond to this level of interference. So I think -- I feel  
7        we are doing the maximum that we can with our resources and  
8        with the tools that are available to us, but I think we need  
9        to go to somewhere else where we could have, like, more  
10       sources from the government and maybe from the CSIS to work  
11       with local parties, to help, maybe, with specific vetting or  
12       on candidates and leadership contests.

13                    **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah, the lack of  
14       resources is our biggest challenge, for sure. When we're  
15       looking at allocating a hundred thousand dollars and we're  
16       deciding, okay, how best are we going to use these dollars  
17       from a spending perspective, you know, protecting ourselves  
18       from the risk of foreign interference is not number one  
19       because we have, you know, relatively few staff and we're  
20       trying to, you know, change the country. So there are some  
21       trade-offs and it's quite unfortunate. You know, if there  
22       was ever an opportunity for the government to provide  
23       political parties, specifically those who have MPs in office  
24       collected, I think it would be a wonderful idea if there was  
25       an opportunity for a specific funding to be provided to these  
26       organisations to focus specifically on protecting our nation  
27       from foreign interference. I think that's really the best  
28       logical option that hopefully will be available one day.

1                   **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Let's talk a little bit  
2 more then about supports available from the government. In  
3 your interview, you noted that your party's leader, Ms. May,  
4 has a top-secret security clearance; is that right?

5                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Right.

6                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** That's right.

7                   **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Does the Green Party  
8 have any other members or staff with a security clearance  
9 that would allow them to receive classified information from  
10 the Government of Canada?

11                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** No.

12                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** I don't believe so, but  
13 if I'm being -- you know, telling my whole story, I actually  
14 -- one of my early positions in my career was across the  
15 street in the West Memorial Building. I was actually a  
16 property accountant there roughly in 2001. And given the  
17 location where I was working, I was required, I believe --  
18 I'm going from memory -- I believe I had secret clearance at  
19 one point in time. You know, here we are 23 years later.  
20 I'm sure that's long lapsed, but I just wanted to mention  
21 that.

22                  **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And does the Green  
23 Party have any current plans to try to obtain a secret  
24 clearance for a staff member, so that they could receive  
25 classified information from the government?

26                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** No plans immediate that  
27 I'm aware of. Mind you, we are very willing to take those  
28 necessary steps to have access to the information that I feel

1 would be very beneficial to our party for this specific  
2 reason that we're meeting today.

3 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Okay. The Commission  
4 also anticipates hearing evidence that the SITE Task Force,  
5 and that's the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections  
6 Task Force within the Government of Canada has also offered a  
7 series of unclassified briefings to political parties in  
8 connection with byelections that have taken place since the  
9 44<sup>th</sup> general election. And we anticipate that the evidence  
10 that we will hear is that the Green Party did not participate  
11 in at least the most recent briefings in 2024. First can I  
12 ask, were you aware that unclassified briefings were being  
13 offered to political parties around the byelections?

14 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** No, not on myself.

15 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** I was not aware either,  
16 but it comes kind of back to resources, if I'm being honest  
17 again. We are, you know, a small group of staff, and we're  
18 very taxed, and we accomplish as much as we can in a given  
19 day, and it's very possible that we were notified, and it  
20 simply just fell through the cracks. So I can't say with  
21 certainty that we were not notified of this. In retrospect,  
22 I think I speak for both Robin and myself when I say that we  
23 certainly would have appreciated participating in those  
24 sessions. I think they'd be very valuable to us.

25 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And so I take it, it  
26 wasn't -- there wasn't an objection or a conscious decision  
27 on the part of the Green Party to decline participation in  
28 that process?

1                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Certainly not.

2                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Certainly not, no.

3                   **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** So if the Green Party  
4           hasn't participated in those unclassified briefings, and  
5           aside from the leader, does not currently have someone to  
6           receive classified information from the Government of Canada  
7           on foreign interference threats, where does the Party look to  
8           to obtain information about foreign interference issues?

9                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** The only place where we  
10          received extensive information on foreign interference was at  
11          the ACPP of Election Canada, so the Advisory Committee of  
12          Political Parties. The first time in September 2023, we had  
13          the CSIS coming for a presentation on foreign interference to  
14          all political parties, and explaining and showing the  
15          different threats, examples of interference that has been  
16          notified in 2021 general election. And we had the  
17          opportunity also to discuss again in June of this year, 2024,  
18          at the ACPP meeting of this year of some proposal rules or  
19          new rules that Election Canada were thinking to implement and  
20          wanted the major, I will say, or political party's feedback  
21          on this ---

22                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** I'll second that.  
23          Elections Canada I feel did a great job bringing foreign  
24          interference to the forefront, especially during the ACPP  
25          meeting in June of this year. I, unfortunately, was not part  
26          of the political sphere last year, so I did not get to take  
27          part in the session where CSIS was in attendance, but it was  
28          certainly beneficial as a group to sit down with our fellow,

1       you know, political parties to discuss foreign interference  
2       in general and to get an opportunity to provide feedback  
3       directly to Elections Canada on the various new procedures  
4       that they're suggesting. There was a lot of pushback from  
5       the political parties in terms of what Elections Canada  
6       brought forward. The general consensus seemed to be, and I  
7       shouldn't speak for other political parties, but the vibe  
8       that I got from the room was essentially, again, focusing  
9       largely on resources and the fact that it felt like Elections  
10      Canada was putting the emphasis on political parties  
11      specifically to be responsible for protecting our nation from  
12      foreign interference. It felt like there were increased  
13      demands coming our way with no additional support. So that  
14      was a little bit concerning.

15                   **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Could you talk a little  
16      bit about what some of those demands were? What were some of  
17      the things being discussed that you felt would be challenging  
18      for a party with limited resources?

19                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah, so I'm just going  
20      back from memory at this point, and I can't speak to the  
21      specific suggestion that they brought forward, but if I  
22      recall correctly, they suggested that each political party  
23      should essentially have a full-time member dedicated to this  
24      specific initiative. And if I'm looking at the staff of the  
25      Green Party of Canada, I'm thinking, my goodness, okay, if  
26      we're going to dedicate one whole full-time equivalent to  
27      this role, where do I, you know, reallocate that -- those  
28      funds from? So there's going to be another area in our



1 organization, whether it's communications, whether it's, you  
2 know, IT, or another department all together, that's going to  
3 have a negative impact on us specifically. And, you know,  
4 regardless of the size of the political parties, I think they  
5 all felt the same way.

6 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yeah, I can complete with  
7 there were, like, some proposals on basically, like, more  
8 reports being submitted by local associations, by EDAs when  
9 there is, like, nomination contests, to these closing events,  
10 the number of candidates. So we were just pointing out that  
11 it will be -- the administrative burden on the volunteers and  
12 EDAs is already very high. It's already an issue. And it's  
13 growing. So we were mentioning -- it was mentioned that it  
14 will be, again, additional administrative burden on  
15 volunteers that will probably just result with volunteers,  
16 and we're already seeing it, like just abandoning their  
17 volunteering with political parties because the number of  
18 reports and rules that they need to follow on the ground are  
19 becoming, like, an issue.

20 There were some counterproductive proposals  
21 as well, like Elections Canada proposed maybe we could  
22 organize the -- your nomination contest. And I don't think  
23 Elections Canada realized the number of hours it will require  
24 from them, like responding all the different questions from  
25 any member on the ground and the potential conflicts when we  
26 are managing nomination races on the ground. I don't think  
27 they realize what the political party is involved.

28 And last thing, and for me it was even more

1 counterproductive, was, like, to disclose the number of votes  
2 in a nomination contest publicly, which for me is just giving  
3 to any foreign knowledge actors evidence that, let's say, the  
4 number of votes to get, like, an MP elected, so let's say we  
5 can take, like, the Conservative Party, for example, in a  
6 Conservative riding, the nomination contest is happening, and  
7 the number of votes is very low to get, like, a nomination  
8 contestant nominated for the Conservative Party, it will just  
9 be like an evidence to any foreign state or foreign actor  
10 that this knowledge that, "Oh, this is really, like, -- it  
11 really takes, like, really low number of votes to get, like,  
12 an MP elected in this riding."

13 So I think these measures I think came with  
14 good intention, but with lack of thought, because at the end,  
15 I think it will result even with something worse, where we're  
16 disclosing, like, information with the world.

17 So that's what the conversations were about.

18 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** With the little time I  
19 have remaining, I'd like to talk a little bit about  
20 membership rules with respect to the Green Party. So I  
21 understand it that in order to become a member of the Green  
22 Party, an individual needs to be either a citizen or a  
23 permanent resident. Is that correct?

24 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Correct.

25 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

26 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Okay. I'm curious as  
27 to why the Green Party draws the line at permanent residency,  
28 as opposed to, for example, citizens only on the one hand, or

1 anyone who resides in Canada on the other?

2 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** I cannot say why. I just  
3 will mention that we, the Green Party, we didn't change our  
4 rules around membership for a long time. I'm involved since  
5 now almost a decade in the Green Party and the rules didn't  
6 change. So it has always been permanent resident or Canadian  
7 citizen to be a member of the Green Party and each member  
8 becoming -- joining the party needed to wait 30 days, a  
9 month, before being able to vote in any election of a Green  
10 Party, like nomination contest, leadership, internal  
11 governance election.

12 So I don't have an answer for why the line  
13 has been drawn there. For me it just makes sense that  
14 permanent residents have, like, rights, have been screened  
15 already. So -- and they can -- that -- these individuals can  
16 donate to a political party; right? So -- which, you know,  
17 like, -- so but I'm just guessing that when the line has been  
18 drawn there, it's because permanent resident can donate --  
19 well, so why excluding them?

20 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah, I think this  
21 process, it allows us to have some control over who is  
22 getting involved with the Green Party of Canada. Looking at  
23 it from my accounting lens, I'm seeing these donations come  
24 in and the transactions come in, and every individual who  
25 donates to us has to provide their full address. So we're  
26 able to see, okay, where does this person actually reside?  
27 If it's outside of Canada, those monies are going back.  
28 We're not keeping those. We don't want anything to do with

1       that. That's just one control mechanism that we currently  
2       have in place that we stand by.

3                   **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And the other aspect of  
4       the Green Party's membership rules I'd like to ask you about  
5       is the age cut off. So I understand it that to become a  
6       member, you have to be at least 14 years of age or older. Is  
7       that right?

8                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** That's correct.

9                   **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And, of course, voting  
10      age is 18. And so I wonder, why is it that the Green Party  
11      sets the membership age below the age at which a person can  
12      actually cast a vote in an election?

13                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** To get more participation  
14      of young voters, to be -- to young people before, you know,  
15      below 18. We are, you know, advocating to decrease the age  
16      of voting in Canada as the Green Party. And I think it's  
17      important in terms of -- well, democracy for young people to  
18      start voting in a political party, understanding how it  
19      works, and I think -- and we get, like, engagement from young  
20      people in our party because they can -- they feel they can  
21      participate in participate in policies, new policies being  
22      voted, and so long answer short is ---

23                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** No, that's it. We're  
24      looking ahead to the future as a party and our young Greens  
25      are wonderfully talented. They get really involved. They  
26      bring a lot of great energy. And, you know, even looking at  
27      our federal council, one of the members, I believe he's 16  
28      years old at this point in time. His contributions to the

1 group are outstanding and we're so lucky to have an  
2 individual like that at our governance level. Young Greens  
3 are huge contributors to what we do.

4 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Do you think that  
5 younger people are potentially more vulnerable from being  
6 coerced, or exploited, or manipulated from foreign actors  
7 than an adult might be?

8 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** With my experience as  
9 director of mobilizing, looking at all the applications, we  
10 had more issues with older people than younger people. So I  
11 think we have to be cautious about -- because the youth  
12 membership is free in our Party, so this is something we are  
13 looking into because that's an area that could be vulnerable  
14 for us, right. So we could have like some malicious actors  
15 trying to signing the youth membership for free, so we are  
16 screening and looking at any new membership, youth  
17 membership. If there is a distortion with like a member of -  
18 - a new member -- new members coming, we will look into it.

19 Saying that young people will be more -- like  
20 more threat of or could be more manipulated by foreign  
21 actors, I don't think so more than adult.

22 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** I agree with you, Robin.  
23 I think young people today -- and I probably shouldn't  
24 generalize, but your typical younger generation is far more  
25 advanced from a technological standpoint. They've grown up  
26 in the digital age and they're more aware of the risks that  
27 come with that new technology.

28 So I agree with Robin, and I think it's the

1 older generation, my generation and above, that are probably  
2 more vulnerable, if anything.

3 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Mr. Irwin, Mr. Marty,  
4 thank you very much for your time.

5 Madam Commissioner, those are my questions.

6 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

7 I have one question for you. Am I right in  
8 saying that you do not permit the purchase in bulk of  
9 membership?

10 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** That's correct.

11 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

12 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So it's one by one even  
13 for the youth or for any -- anybody, it's necessarily one by  
14 one and you verify the address as well as the -- what else do  
15 you verify? Address and phone number, or...?

16 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Credit card.

17 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Credit card. It's paid  
18 usually through -- by a credit card, yes?

19 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah.

20 It's -- I think from a cash perspective, I  
21 think we've literally received about \$20 in 2024 from members  
22 and individuals, so 99.9 percent of our transactions are  
23 through credit card or electronic funds transfer, so we're  
24 able to verify, you know, the location is, what their  
25 address. We can verify where those funds are coming from  
26 that way, so definitely depend on that additional check and  
27 balance for the Canadian requirement.

28 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

1                   So the first one to cross-examine is counsel  
2                   for Jenny Kwan.

3                   **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MS. MANI KAKKAR:**

4                   **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Good morning, Commissioner.  
5                   Good morning, Mr. Marty and Mr. Irwin. My name is Mani  
6                   Kakkar, and I'm counsel for Jenny Kwan.

7                   I'm going to shift gears a little bit and ask  
8                   you about something that I think you were alluding to your  
9                   generation and above may have less familiarity with, which is  
10                  TikTok. And I wanted to know, first -- let's maybe just  
11                  start with an understanding of how your Party may use TikTok  
12                  or allow for its use.

13                  Right now, as a political Party, do you use  
14                  TikTok?

15                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** No, we don't.

16                  **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** And do you allow  
17                  candidates, those that are running in a nomination race or a  
18                  leadership race, to use TikTok?

19                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes, we do.

20                  **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** And do you have any rules  
21                  or guidance around their use of TikTok?

22                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Not that I'm aware of.

23                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Not currently that I  
24                  know of, either.

25                  **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Okay. I'd like to  
26                  CAN4358\_0001.

27                  I'm not sure if you've had a chance to review  
28                  this document, and I'm not going to be going into it in a

1 whole lot of detail, but if you just see on that first page,  
2 this is an analytical brief produced by CSIS on TikTok that's  
3 been made public through this Commission process. And it  
4 says that:

5 "TikTok, the People's Republic of  
6 China's first western-centric social  
7 media application, has the potential  
8 to be exploited by the PRC government  
9 to bolster its influence and the  
10 highly addictive short video  
11 application owned by PRC's ByteDance  
12 allows access to sensitive user data  
13 and, despite assurances to the  
14 contrary, personal data on TikTok  
15 users is accessible to China."

16 In light of this, would you consider changes  
17 to your current policies regarding the use of TikTok by  
18 candidates, those running in nomination or leadership races?

19 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Well, I think it goes back  
20 to the discussion we had before, changing to what. That's  
21 where -- exactly where we need reports and guidance, right,  
22 what policy we need to implement. We can draft a new policy  
23 on everything, but if we need more -- we have a lack of  
24 resources, as we have been saying, so we will need just  
25 guidance from the government, CSIS on tell me -- tell  
26 political Parties which new policy we need to adopt and  
27 what's -- and provide some guidance.

28 However, we could draft a new policy tomorrow



1 about TikTok and one for Meta and one for X and -- but will  
2 it be a good policy, will it be good enough. You know what I  
3 mean? We will need like more direction and guidance, so.

4 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** I appreciate that.

5 And so I guess it's fair to say, then, that  
6 this wasn't a topic that was covered at the ACP meeting that  
7 had CSIS representatives there. This was not necessarily a  
8 part of that conversation.

9 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct. Yeah, I look  
10 at this document and I personally have not seen this before.

11 I understand where we're trying to go in  
12 terms of the protection here, but to focus specifically on  
13 TikTok, I think, is a big mistake. I think social media as a  
14 whole is a serious risk, so I think just to focus on one  
15 specific platform would be a little bit foolish, if I'm being  
16 honest.

17 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** And I appreciate the  
18 commentary. And I think here the sort of distinguishing  
19 factor in some cases has been the ability of foreign states  
20 to access and use that information. And what makes TikTok  
21 potentially different in some respect is the ability of a  
22 foreign state that we've seen conducting FI activities in  
23 Canada having access to that personal data and that  
24 information.

25 But I understand from your testimony that  
26 you're saying that if you were provided the tools that you  
27 would consider making those changes, whether it's for TikTok  
28 or other social media platforms.

1                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely.

2                   **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Okay. And would you --  
3 actually, I'm going to switch now to maybe getting a better  
4 understanding of the Green Party's willingness to adopt  
5 perhaps a uniform set of rules.

6                   So both CSIS and NSICOP have found that  
7 nomination races, leadership races are impactful targets for  
8 FI actors. I'm happy to sort of take you to descriptions of  
9 each, but if you have already agreed that that is the case, I  
10 wanted to ask you some specific questions about baseline sets  
11 of rules regarding membership and voting nominations and  
12 whether your Party would be amenable to those.

13                   So for example, would your Party set a  
14 minimum verification requirement for member IDs and  
15 residences?

16                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** We would. I think I'd  
17 be hesitant to say absolutely yes because I look at, you  
18 know, your question from the Green Party's perspective. If  
19 we're going to increase our rules, it could potentially lead  
20 to a drop in membership. And I think if we implement, you  
21 know, additional controls that have that type of impact, I  
22 think all political Parties should be required to follow suit  
23 to keep the field, you know, level as possible from a  
24 competitive standpoint.

25                   **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** I appreciate that.

26                   And so right now, for example, you don't  
27 verify whether someone who has declared themselves to be a  
28 Canadian resident or a citizen is, in fact, Canadian resident

1 or a citizen. I believe I read in your interview summary  
2 that no proof is required. Is that correct?

3 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** That's correct.

4 So there is -- when -- for someone becoming a  
5 member, they need to -- there is a question like do you  
6 certify that you are a Canadian citizen or a resident  
7 permanent, so they need to check that box. So this is -- and  
8 if they do not, they cannot proceed.

9 So again, there is a level of trust, right.  
10 For every political Party, like when you have thousands and  
11 thousands of members joining your party, you need -- you  
12 cannot, like, verify one by one, like, individual, if they  
13 are indeed a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. You  
14 have to -- you know, if someone is disclosing that they are,  
15 that's their responsibility as well.

16 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Right. Yeah, the ID  
17 verification not only comes in when we're looking at the  
18 young Greens joining our group, and where they are not  
19 interested in paying the small membership fee, that's where  
20 we do that additional check.

21 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Okay. And do you have a  
22 process in place right now for those members that aren't  
23 young Greens and are paying by credit card to match their  
24 credit card information with their identification or to know  
25 that the person isn't using, perhaps, someone else's credit  
26 card, or address, or residence, but is using their own?

27 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Not currently.  
28 Unfortunately, we don't have the capacity or the

1 technological ability to do that at this point in time.

2 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Okay. And so what I hear  
3 is that if this was a level playing field and all political  
4 parties had to verify identification in the same way, and  
5 perhaps for smaller parties, were given additional resources  
6 to do so, that you would be willing to do that?

7 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** That's correct.

8 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely.

9 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Okay. One of the things  
10 that the NSICOP report, which reviews your nomination process  
11 as well, has suggested is that they should be governed by the  
12 *Canada Elections Act*. Do you have any thoughts on that sort  
13 of recommendation?

14 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** So you mean like for  
15 Elections Canada to oversee and conduct nomination contests?  
16 That's ---

17 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Yeah, that a similar set of  
18 rules, or ones that are specific for nomination processes,  
19 would govern those processes and it would be through the Act,  
20 as opposed to different political party's rules ---

21 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** M'hm.

22 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** --- that you would have  
23 sort of a standard set of rules under the Act that would  
24 govern these processes.

25 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Well so it's going back to  
26 our previous conversation a bit earlier on, like, it depends  
27 what's the -- like, what is under the Act. And that was the  
28 whole discussion for hours at the ACP meeting, is Election

1 Canada will over -- like, implement new rules with reports  
2 for EDA that conduct the nomination contests on the ground to  
3 -- or is Elections Canada will completely conduct as, like, a  
4 general election? And I don't think they can do that. They  
5 don't understand, like, the nature of a nomination contest on  
6 the ground, where you have, like, tensions, you can have  
7 complaints, you have, like, -- so the Commissioner of  
8 Elections Canada will be -- will receive a lot of complaints  
9 to look at.

10 So we're not necessarily against. We're just  
11 saying -- we're told just -- well, we've told Elections  
12 Canada it's really, really complex. It's not just, like,  
13 "Oh, well we'll just oversee the nomination contest," and  
14 that's it. So it's what rules and what staff allocation they  
15 can provide and I -- we are -- the consensus with all  
16 political parties, that we are struggling -- we were  
17 struggling to understand how Elections Canada will be able to  
18 include nomination contests in the Act. But I think this is,  
19 like, an ongoing conversation and Elections Canada was also  
20 trying to get feedback from political parties maybe to tweak  
21 their proposals that -- and their recommendations.

22 So that's -- long story short, it's complex  
23 and it's not like just yes, no, we agree, or we disagree.  
24 It's we need to see and we need -- the conversations need to  
25 continue on exactly what Elections Canada wants to do with  
26 it.

27 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** And I appreciate that that  
28 was a fairly broad question. Maybe narrowing it into a more

1 specific point, one of the other recommendations was that the  
2 -- from NSICOP was that interference in nomination and other  
3 political party processes be criminalized in Canada, meaning  
4 that if you were to interfere, let's say in this case it's FI  
5 activities, that breach the rules, that those would be  
6 criminal sanctions. Would you have any views on  
7 criminalizing FI in the nomination process or other party  
8 processes?

9 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** On paper it's a good thing.  
10 Again, the implementation, I would like to -- I will have  
11 questions. You know, the political aspect needs to be  
12 thought; right? So I'm saying that my opponent is, like,  
13 under, like, political interference with, like, -- and he's a  
14 malicious foreign actor and breaching the rules, so I made a  
15 complaint. What will be, like, the decision regarding that  
16 situation? So my opponent is under direct influence, I  
17 think, so I make a complaint.

18 So I just -- on paper, I think we had this  
19 discussion as it's a good step forward, but the  
20 implementation of it, when we think about the political  
21 aspect and we would like to see how it plays.

22 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** I appreciate that. And my  
23 very last question is actually just to think about the Green  
24 Party. You had mentioned that you're a smaller party, that  
25 you feel like foreign interference is perhaps -- that you're  
26 a less likely target for it, given your current size,  
27 although there's always room for growth and you may not be in  
28 the future. But can I ask that if you viewed your likelihood

1 of being a target for FI in ridings where you have someone  
2 elected, or you have in the past, or you're a fairly solid  
3 competitor to other mainstream parties, would you agree that  
4 your ability to be a target in those ridings is no different  
5 than some of the larger parties?

6 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Absolutely. We -- the  
7 comment about we are potentially less a target is also  
8 probably because we -- as a small party, we are doing things  
9 really professionally. We have not -- we didn't change our  
10 membership rules in the last few years to try to increase,  
11 massively, our membership, like as some political parties  
12 did.

13 And I feel that during the ACP meeting,  
14 there was also a comment being made that there is, like, we  
15 don't have the same rules across different political parties  
16 and there is one that is major one that is allowing anyone  
17 becoming a member for free, that's also a comment we made,  
18 that we feel we're less a target because we're probably less  
19 vulnerable in that aspect with our rules.

20 But in our -- absolutely we are -- we can be  
21 a target for any riding where we're competitive, or even if  
22 we're not; right? When we implemented process, vetting  
23 process, it was not just about foreign interference. As I  
24 said, it's because we were seeing that we were becoming  
25 vulnerable for malicious actors that were, you know,  
26 extremist groups that were trying to infiltrate political  
27 parties, et cetera. So we are constantly a target, as any  
28 other party. And it's -- even smaller parties can be more

1 vulnerable because the number of memberships are lower as  
2 well, so you can, like, take control of local association, or  
3 the governance of a party, with less votes.

4 So it's -- long response again, but it's  
5 short is yes, we can be a target.

6 MS. MANI KAKKAR: Thank you so much.

7 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: Thank you.

8 Counsel for the Concern Group.

9 --- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. DAVE WHEATON:

10 MR. DAVE WHEATON: Good morning. I'm Dave  
11 Wheaton. I'm counsel for the Chinese Canadian Concern Group.

12 I'd like to follow up on something you  
13 mentioned earlier, which you expressed that requiring parties  
14 to disclose vote counts could actually help foreign actors  
15 identify vulnerable ridings. Did I understand that  
16 correctly?

17 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: Can you speak a bit  
18 louder?

19 MR. DAVE WHEATON: Oh, my apologies.

20 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: You're very tall and the  
21 mic is ---

22 MR. DAVE WHEATON: Better now?

23 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: --- quite low.

24 MR. DAVE WHEATON: Okay. So to follow up on  
25 something you had mentioned earlier, you had expressed that  
26 requiring parties to disclose vote counts could actually help  
27 foreign actors identify vulnerable ridings. Did I understand  
28 that correctly?



1                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** That's correct.

2                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

3                   **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** Well and so would you  
4 agree then that in making changes to our system, there's  
5 actually a risk of making our institutions less resilient to  
6 foreign interference?

7                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** M'hm.

8                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely. Yeah, we  
9 have to be very careful what changes we make.

10                  **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** And would you also agree  
11 that there's a risk of changing things just for the sake of  
12 changing things, rather than making a difference?

13                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** That's correct.

14                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

15                  **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** And to follow up on  
16 something else you've said, I think you've expressed in your  
17 interview summary that it felt like Elections Canada was  
18 unloading responsibility of protecting against foreign  
19 interference onto political parties. Is that right?

20                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** That's right.

21                  **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** And you've also expressed  
22 a concern earlier that the Green Party lacks the resources to  
23 tighten security themselves. Correct?

24                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

25                  **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** So would you agree that we  
26 should be careful about how we delegate responsibility for  
27 detecting foreign interference, so that we ensure we actually  
28 have the capacity to meet our objectives?

1                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

2                   **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** Would you agree that then  
3 by delegating responsibility to the parties, we are again at  
4 risk of making our institutions less resilient?

5                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah, the potential is  
6 there. It depends how implementation actually looks in  
7 practice.

8                   **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** And in your view, could  
9 delegating that responsibility create an unfair advantage for  
10 parties with greater resources than the Greens?

11                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Absolutely.

12                  **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** Okay. Thank you. Those  
13 are my questions.

14                  **THE CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

15                               Next one is the Attorney General.

16                  **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MS. RYANN ATKINS:**

17                   **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** Good morning.

18                               It says on the website of the Green Party of  
19 Canada that there are six principles that the party follows,  
20 and one of them is participatory democracy, right? You need  
21 to audibly say yes.

22                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

23                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

24                   **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** Another one is respect for  
25 diversity?

26                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

27                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

28                   **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** And if I can marry the two

1       together, is it fair to say the Green Party supports the  
2       democratic participation in Canada of people from diverse  
3       backgrounds?

4                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

5                   **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** All Canadians, yes.

6                   **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** When people from diverse  
7       backgrounds participate in our democracy it enriches and  
8       strengthens that democracy?

9                   **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

10                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

11                  **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** And in Canada people can  
12       participate in democracy in a variety of ways. I'm going to  
13       list a few. They can vote in elections; correct?

14                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

15                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** M'hm.

16                  **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** They can volunteer with  
17       political parties?

18                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

19                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely.

20                  **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** They can express their  
21       views on political issues?

22                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

23                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

24                  **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** They can comment on and  
25       engage with the platforms put out by political parties?

26                  **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

27                  **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

28                  **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** And all of this is healthy

1 activity in a free and fair democracy?

2 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

3 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Absolutely.

4 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Would you agree with me  
5 that in our efforts to combat foreign interference, we need  
6 to be careful not to undermine the very democracy and  
7 democratic values that we're striving to protect?

8 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Absolutely.

9 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

10 MS. RYANN ATKINS: And so, it's important not  
11 to limit or discourage the democratic participation of  
12 Canadians?

13 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

14 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

15 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Including people from  
16 diaspora communities?

17 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

18 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Of course.

19 MR. RYANN ATKINS: For example, it's  
20 important not to discourage people from diverse backgrounds  
21 from volunteering for political campaigns. Is that fair?

22 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

23 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Absolutely.

24 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Or voting in democratic  
25 processes?

26 MR. ROBIN MARTY: M'hm.

27 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

28 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Or expressing their

1 political views?

2 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

3 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

4 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Even when those views are  
5 critical of the platform of a political party?

6 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

7 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Absolutely.

8 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Even if the party thinks  
9 the criticism is unfair?

10 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

11 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yeah, we welcome all  
12 comments, absolutely.

13 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Thank you. Those are my  
14 questions.

15 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: Thank you.

16 So it's a good start this morning. We are  
17 again, just on time. So we'll take a 20 minute break. Thank  
18 you very much for your time.

19 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes. Thank you very much.

20 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: You're free to go.

21 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Thank you for having us.

22 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: So we'll come back at  
23 10:50.

24 THE REGISTRAR: Order, please.

25 This sitting of the Commission is now in  
26 recess until 10:50 a.m.

27 --- Upon recessing at 10:29 a.m.

28 --- Upon resuming at 10:53 a.m.

1                   **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please.

2                   This sitting of the Foreign Interference  
3 Commission is now back in session.

4                   The time is 10:53 a.m.

5                   **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** [No interpretation]

6                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mrs. Commissioner,  
7 just before we start with Mr. Desquilbet, Mr. Sheppard, my  
8 colleague, says that he would like to table the summary of  
9 the interview with the Green Party representative, so it  
10 would be GPC1\_FR. GPC1, the French interview summary for the  
11 Green Party.

12                   So, GPC1\_FR, it's the French interview  
13 summary for the Green Party.

14                   Sorry, the institutional report, yeah. Thank  
15 you.

16                   **--- EXHIBIT No. GPC0000001 FR:**

17                   Réponse à : Foreign Interference  
18 Commission / Commission sur  
19 l'ingérence étrangère

20                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Could we swear in the  
21 witness?

22                   **THE REGISTRAR:** Mr. Desquilbet, could you  
23 please tell us your full name and spell your last name for  
24 the steno transcription?

25                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** My name is Mathieu  
26 Desquilbet. D-e-s-q-u-i-l-b-e-t.

27                   **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you very much.

28                   **--- MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET, Affirmed:**

1 THE REGISTRAR: Go ahead.

2 --- EXAMINATION IN-CHIEF BY MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:

3 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: Good morning, Mr.  
4 Desquilbet.

5 So you met the lawyers of the Commission on  
6 August 23rd, 2024.

7 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes.

8 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: And a summary of this  
9 interview was prepared following this meeting?

10 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes.

11 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: [No interpretation]

12 --- EXHIBIT No. WIT0000090.FR:

13 Résumé de l'entrevue FINALE - Bloc  
14 Québécois (Mathieu Desquilbet) (étape  
15 2).pdf

16 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: So Mr. Desquilbet, I  
17 will post the summary of the interview. You had the  
18 opportunity to approve the content of this summary?

19 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes. We went back  
20 and forth. There were a few things that were changed.

21 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: Yes. So do you agree  
22 that this is part of your testimony in front of the  
23 Commission?

24 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes.

25 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: I will also table the  
26 English translation, WIT90.EN.

27 --- EXHIBIT No. WIT0000090.EN:

28 Interview Summary: Bloc Québécois

1 (Mathieu Desquilbet)

2 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: And I will also ask  
3 the summary BLQ5 to be posted on the screen, please.

4 Mr. Desquilbet, you see this report.

5 Now, can we scroll it down?

6 It was prepared for the Commission.

7 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes.

8 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: So it is BLQ5, and  
9 there is the English version, BLQ6.

10 --- EXHIBIT No. BLQ0000005:

11 Rapport institutionnel

12 --- EXHIBIT No. BLQ0000005:

13 Institutional Report - Bloc Quebecois

14 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: Mr. Desquilbet, you  
15 are the Director-General of the Bloc Québécois?

16 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes.

17 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: Since when?

18 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: August 22nd, 2022.  
19 August 15, 2022.

20 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: So you were not in  
21 that position for the two previous elections.

22 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes.

23 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: And you have a degree  
24 in political sciences?

25 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes.

26 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: You were not in that  
27 position as Director-General, but were you working for the  
28 Bloc?



1                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Thank you for this  
2 detail. In 2019, I was working for the Party Québécois at  
3 the time. And in 2021, I had been hired as Director of  
4 Operations, so following the 2019, I was hired by the Party,  
5 so I was part of the organization but not in my present  
6 position at the time.

7                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So you were  
8 responsible for operations for the BQ and then you became  
9 Director-General.

10                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. And I worked  
11 for Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné as the Member of Parliament  
12 here in Ottawa at the time.

13                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And what are your  
14 responsibilities as Director-General of the Bloc Québécois?

15                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, it's also the  
16 National Secretary in our documents. I'm in charge of a  
17 small team. It's the permanent team, so our role is to  
18 manage the Party membership, preparation of various meetings  
19 or preparations for the election, the volunteer training  
20 program. That's what we are responsible for.

21                  Of course, the National Bureau of the Bloc is  
22 responsible.

23                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So how many employees  
24 do you have; five permanent employees?

25                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

26                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And the National  
27 Secretariat is in charge of the management of the Party  
28 finances?

1                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

2                   There's someone for membership, for  
3                   recording, for organization for finances, so.

4                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And who's the main  
5                   agent with Elections Canada?

6                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** I'm in charge of  
7                   that file.

8                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Now, with respect to  
9                   foreign intervention, I would like to ask what is the general  
10                  position of the Bloc Québécois?

11                  Does the Bloc consider that foreign  
12                  intervention -- interference in the electoral and democratic  
13                  processes in Canada is an important problem?

14                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes, absolutely.  
15                  And as soon as November 2022 when it made headlines in the  
16                  media, we were worried.

17                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Why were you worried  
18                  specifically at the Bloc?

19                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, the integrity  
20                  of our institutions, democracy, these are very important  
21                  values for the people in Quebec, for citizens of Quebec, men  
22                  and women who live in Quebec.

23                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Since when has the  
24                  Bloc become aware of the problem of foreign interference?  
25                  Was it before November '22 and before it was published in the  
26                  media?

27                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, as far as we  
28                  are concerned, in Quebec we were not made aware of any

1 interference, but when we read the media reports, we realized  
2 that it was an important issue.

3 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** I also understand that  
4 the Bloc Québécois sent a complaint to the Office of the  
5 Election Commissioner in the fall of 2022 about this issue.

6 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

7 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** What was the purpose  
8 of this complaint?

9 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, we sent a  
10 letter by the leader of our Party through email and then we  
11 filed complaints in the website of the Commissioner's office  
12 and we referred to the media articles. There was no evidence  
13 as such, but we wanted an investigation to be led.

14 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** This was based on what  
15 you read in media reports.

16 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exactly.

17 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And did it apply to  
18 Quebec ridings?

19 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, we had no idea  
20 of the scope. It was important for us to investigate. It  
21 was our main concern.

22 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And what happened with  
23 the complaint that was tabled with the Office of the Election  
24 Commissioner?

25 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, we received a  
26 confirmation, but no follow-up after that.

27 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Now, with respect to  
28 internal management, is there someone in charge of foreign

1 interference in the Bloc Québécois or does any incident has  
2 to be dealt with by a particular person in your service?

3 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, with respect  
4 to the permanence of the Party, there's no person in charge  
5 of that file. It was not an issue before.

6 What we wanted to do was to make sure that  
7 the elected people, people of Quebec and everyone was paying  
8 attention to our regulation but, of course, there are  
9 spokesperson for all files in Parliament, so it's more on the  
10 Parliamentary side of things that this is important, and  
11 commissioners and committees and so on.

12 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** I don't want you to  
13 betray any secret of the Party, but were there internal  
14 discussions about foreign interference with the secretariat  
15 or with Members of Parliament?

16 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** For any important  
17 file, of course there are discussions, but -- I can't say  
18 anything else about that, in fact.

19 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Now, if I deal with  
20 various vulnerable components for political Parties,  
21 particularly with respect to the leadership race and other  
22 things like that for potential candidates' races for the  
23 Party, am I right to say that there are two possibilities for  
24 the Bloc Québécois with respect to this procedure, that is,  
25 someone takes part in a race or is designated by the Party?

26 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exact.

27 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And what is the  
28 favourite method for the Bloc?

1                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, we are a very  
2 democratic Party, so towards our membership it's obvious that  
3 when there's an assembly to determine who's the candidate,  
4 that's a privilege way for our Party and for our militants,  
5 for our members. But in some cases in some ridings where the  
6 organization is limited and if there's an election, well, we  
7 need to have representatives in each riding so then some  
8 candidates are appointed by the Party. In 2021, there were  
9 few of those because of the pandemic.

10                   **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** There were more?

11                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** There were less  
12 assemblies and more candidates who were appointed because of  
13 the various challenges that it raised.

14                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Now, with terms of --  
15 in terms of designation, could you tell us how the Bloc  
16 Québécois proceeds to designate or to nominate a candidate  
17 for a riding?

18                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, there are many  
19 possibilities, but the two most obvious method and most  
20 privileged methods are that people raise their hand and say,  
21 "I would like to be a candidate for the Bloc" and then, of  
22 course, there's a meeting. There's an investigation about  
23 the candidate.

24                   In some cases, it's the Party approaching  
25 some people to be our candidate in this or that riding  
26 because we want to have top quality candidates and we also  
27 want to have good representativity in terms of diversity,  
28 parity, gender equivalence and so on and so forth.

1                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So once you approach a  
2 candidate or if a candidate offers his candidacy for a  
3 riding, how do you reach a decision? Is there a vote to say  
4 there will be an assembly, is there a vote at the National  
5 Secretariat, or what?

6                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. It's during  
7 meetings of the National Bureau of the Party that it is all  
8 approved.

9                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Are there vetting for  
10 potential candidates by the Bloc?

11                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

12                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** What is the method?

13                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, there are many  
14 methods. First of all, we ask a form to be filled by each  
15 and every candidate, very diversified questions about their  
16 residence, their ideology, their political position. And we  
17 check any kind of criminal activity in the past of that  
18 person and we ask them to tell us if there are issues. But  
19 we counter-check on social media or in press review to check  
20 if there's something about these people.

21                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So you look at open  
22 sources to check the past story of these people.

23                   And if there's a vulnerability for a  
24 candidate, what do you do?

25                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, in some cases  
26 the decision is negative and if the National Bureau has to  
27 make a decision, we inform them of what we found and a  
28 candidacy might be rejected. So there's a right of veto at

1       that level.

2                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:**   And how can it be  
3       implemented; when?

4                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:**   Well, at any moment.  
5       Normally, before we start with any procedure, we don't want  
6       the person to win in a given riding before saying that we  
7       don't want that candidate, so the sooner, the better.

8                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:**   But if someone is  
9       chosen, it can be vetoed later?

10                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:**   Yes.   There's a  
11       regulation in our statutes and some candidates who are  
12       representing the Bloc Québécois can be denied that privilege.

13                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:**   It is in your  
14       regulation as a Party.

15                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:**   Yes.

16                  **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:**   Now, realistically  
17       speaking, it's more difficult once someone has been voted in  
18       by the membership, but has it been done to reject, to disavow  
19       someone who had been chosen by the membership?

20                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:**   Well, personally, I  
21       did not see anything like that.   As far as I know, it didn't  
22       happen, but it could.   And this possibility is, indeed, a  
23       possibility.

24                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:**   And who can vote in  
25       such a race?

26                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:**   The members.   The  
27       membership of the Bloc in the riding where the race is taking  
28       place, where the assembly is taking place.

1                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So you have to live in  
2     the riding.

3                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yeah, you have to be  
4     a member.

5                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** How does one become a  
6     member of the Bloc Québécois?

7                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, according to  
8     our latest version of the regulation following the 2023 May  
9     assembly of the Bloc Québécois, so you need to be at least 14  
10    year old and you must have paid your membership fee. So  
11    that's the only two conditions.

12                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And 14 years and  
13    paying your assembly.

14                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Five dollars (\$5).

15                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And this amount is to  
16    be paid on a yearly basis?

17                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Each year.

18                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And so anybody can  
19    become a member of the Bloc Québécois, so Canadian and a  
20    permanent resident, anybody can become a member.

21                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. As a policy  
22    for the Party and with the resources we have from Elections  
23    Canada, we have the electoral lists, so all that we can  
24    verify is to see if that person is on the electoral list or  
25    not. If they're a permanent resident, if they're a temporary  
26    worker, we can't verify that information, so right now  
27    there's no criteria to that effect to they would have to be a  
28    citizen.



1                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** This is not a  
2 requirement. Would you ask them to prove their residency?  
3 Do you have that possibility?

4                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No. With respect to  
5 the electoral legislation, there's nothing to that effect.  
6 It's simply for the financing. You have to be a citizen or a  
7 permanent resident to be able to donate and to be 18 and  
8 over, so if somebody is to make a contribution, then they  
9 have to say that they're a citizen.

10                  **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** If somebody's not on the  
11 electoral list, does that stop them from becoming a member?

12                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No, I would imagine  
13 not because you can be a member at 14, but you wouldn't be on  
14 the electoral list. That's right.

15                  **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So there's no  
16 correlation between both.

17                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Once they -- once  
18 they're 18, then we can link up the two information sources,  
19 but otherwise, they're on the list of members but we don't  
20 have any other list to validate anything.

21                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Have you have any  
22 statistics on the number of people outside of Quebec or  
23 outside of Canada -- outside of Canada that would be members  
24 of the Bloc Québécois?

25                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. I think I  
26 provide that in the interview, and it -- 0.06 percentage of  
27 the members that live outside of Canada, so they're very,  
28 very small percentage.

1                   And these people may be living in France  
2                   right now, so they may not be a Canadian citizen.

3                   We do have citizens that live outside, and so  
4                   we have their address to be able to send them their  
5                   membership card internationally. But we don't have any way  
6                   of validating.

7                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** You don't have any way  
8                   to validate, but -- any way to prove it, but other  
9                   information, do they have to be able to -- they have to  
10                  provide their address to be able to send the address and also  
11                  email addresses?

12                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes, they can give  
13                  the address of their choice right now except if they're  
14                  making a contribution. And then you have to be a resident --  
15                  permanent resident or a citizen, so then there's more  
16                  possibility to verify.

17                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** I'll come back to that  
18                  later, but on the question of the nomination race, you're  
19                  saying that to be able to be part of a nomination race you  
20                  have to be -- you have to be a member and you have to live in  
21                  the riding.

22                  So how do you verify that the person is  
23                  residing in the riding?

24                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** All of the members  
25                  who have an address -- we also have members elsewhere in  
26                  Canada. They may be -- surprise some of you, but in the Bloc  
27                  Québécois we have Canadian people who donate that are from  
28                  Ontario or elsewhere, and those people are members of the

1 Bloc Québécois, but they can't vote for a nomination race  
2 because they don't reside in Quebec where we would have an  
3 assembly, a nomination assembly.

4 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Is it the same  
5 criteria that applies to the nomination race that would be  
6 for the leadership of the Party?

7 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** We don't ask anyone  
8 who's running for the leadership to be riding -- to be in any  
9 particular riding. Anybody could, any member.

10 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Do they have to have  
11 lived in the riding for any amount of time or if from the --  
12 if you move there on the day of the vote, that would be  
13 enough?

14 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No. If you have --  
15 if you reside there, you have the right to vote.

16 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Is it the same thing if  
17 -- to be a member of the Party, if you're a member on the day  
18 of the election you can vote, but is there any length of time  
19 that you have to be a member before you have a right to vote?

20 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** There's a 30-day  
21 delay. When you become a member of the Party, you become a  
22 member, actually, 30 days after your application has been  
23 accepted, so that would stop people from last -- inundating  
24 the Party or the riding at the last minute.

25 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And the vote, whether  
26 it is for the leadership or for its nomination race, I think  
27 that is done on location and people are present, or can it be  
28 done remotely?

1                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** This is normally  
2                   done with everyone present. It's the same as the federal  
3                   election. We have registration lists internally. You have  
4                   the whole setup as far as a regular election and people go  
5                   into booths who vote, and so everything is done on location  
6                   in presence. We have not done that virtually.

7                   This is something that we discussed during  
8                   the pandemic in 2021 when we decided that, but we did not go  
9                   ahead with that direction.

10                  With respect to the leadership race, it's  
11                  been a while that we have now -- since we've had one. The  
12                  last one, it was more by acclamation. The precedent -- the  
13                  preceding leader was also by acclamation, so we're expected  
14                  to have one often. There would be two votes possible, or  
15                  potentially three. It can be done by the mail, it can be  
16                  done by phone or through the internet and then people have to  
17                  identify themselves with their member's number and they also  
18                  have personal identification number, a PIN. And if it's sent  
19                  by mail, that would be a little bit different, a little bit  
20                  like when you had -- you got your credit card in the past.  
21                  You would get a second mail with your PIN.

22                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Of course, there is no  
23                  leadership race that's been announced, but do you have any  
24                  preparations under way?

25                  This is a sensitive question, but I'd like to  
26                  know, given that you work in more of an analog fashion in the  
27                  past, for the future leadership races, have you prepared  
28                  anything?

1                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No. This is not  
2 something that we are expecting to see in the short term.  
3 When the leadership position is available, then everything  
4 will be set in place for the race, all of the details with  
5 respect to the vote, how it will happen, the writ period, the  
6 mechanism for voting. It's at that point in time we'll look  
7 at that.

8                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So you'll be able to  
9 review the mechanisms before you have a leadership race.

10                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** That's right.

11                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** In theory, the Bloc  
12 have noticed irregularities -- have you noticed any  
13 irregularities for any -- whether it's for leadership or for  
14 anyone to be nominated for a riding? How do you go about?

15                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, I can't speak  
16 for other parties, but when, say, there are a lot of members  
17 in a particular place, whether it's for a nomination or  
18 whether it's for a leadership race, there are mechanisms in  
19 place to detect such things, so then we would do an inquiry,  
20 whether it's donations, whether it's with files.

21                         We can -- we can do the follow-up and trace  
22 it back so we would be able to know where it would come from.

23                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So you have processes  
24 in place to be able to detect any irregularities.

25                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

26                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** If there's anything  
27 that happens, do you have the possibility to be able to stop  
28 it or to suspended your races, whether it's one of the other

1 type?

2 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes, we do have that  
3 in place.

4 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: When you become a  
5 member, I know that it's the same amount and it's not a very  
6 high amount, but how is that five dollar payment made? Is it  
7 done by credit card? Can you do it with cash?

8 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: It can be done by  
9 cheque, by cash or credit card, with PayPal.  
10 We don't accept any cryptocurrency.

11 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: Is there any reason  
12 for that?

13 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: No, it's just never  
14 come up.

15 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: Do you -- does the  
16 Bloc Québécois consider that the nomination races are  
17 vulnerable for foreign interference?

18 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes. Nobody is  
19 protected. Anybody could become the target, but we have not  
20 seen -- in our history, we haven't seen that.

21 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: So you are not aware  
22 of any attempts for foreign interference during a nomination  
23 race in the past.

24 MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET: Yes, that's right.  
25 But it's not because we haven't had any that we're not  
26 setting up preventative measures.

27 MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON: And is it the same  
28 answer for leadership races?

1                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes, it would be the  
2 same thing. There is further verification that is done to  
3 validate the identity of the person, and so in the leadership  
4 races there's a greater volume, so the number of members who  
5 will be -- will increase and it depends on the number of  
6 candidates for the leadership.

7                   So each team will be selling membership  
8 cards, so there's some -- a lot more cards, but we want to --  
9 we ensure that all those people do exist and we -- and we  
10 want to ensure that it is actual human.

11                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And you said in your  
12 interview that for the leadership races that they would be  
13 less exposed than nomination races. Can you elaborate on  
14 that, please?

15                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** This was especially  
16 in the case of -- if it's a nomination race, it's done very  
17 locally, and so it's much easier to manage it. It would be  
18 easier for malicious actors to try and manipulate things, so  
19 we do try and prevent that as much as possible.

20                  When it comes to the leadership race, there's  
21 -- at the Bloc Québécois, we have several thousand members,  
22 so we are not one of the largest Parties since we're just in  
23 Quebec. But in Quebec, we represent -- we're a fairly large  
24 Party. So if there were any attempts made, malicious  
25 attempts with the leadership race, it would take -- it would  
26 take buying a lot of membership cards, and there's also the  
27 financing that we surveil also.

28                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** There was the question

1 of federal association subscriptions, and right now you have  
2 six.

3 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

4 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Can you explain why  
5 you only have six when there are 78 ridings in Quebec?

6 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** At one time, there  
7 were registered associations with Elections Canada and the  
8 number of associations has dropped when the public financing  
9 of Parties -- it was in 2015 that it stopped, the public  
10 financing.

11 So to keep our cash in 78 bank accounts, that  
12 became an issue for the management of our financing, so as of  
13 now, we share the same amount. So if somebody contributes to  
14 the Bloc, there's one pipe that goes to the riding, another  
15 portion of it would go to the national -- to the Party  
16 itself. So we share the same funding sources so it's easier  
17 to manage that with our central administration and to send  
18 out the monies to the different ridings during the elections.  
19 Candidates will open accounts for the election and we do  
20 transfer funds to those accounts.

21 But year after year, we see that there's less  
22 and less.

23 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And do you think that  
24 it would go to zero federal riding associations? Is that  
25 part of your plans, to close them?

26 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** For an association  
27 to do annual reports to Elections Canada, if they -- I think  
28 there's a certain threshold. I think it's \$10,000. If you



1 have more than \$10,000 in your account, you have to have  
2 verified, audited statements. And so if there's any changes  
3 of president and treasurer, you have to -- you have an  
4 administrative burden.

5 Also, for the volunteers with Elections  
6 Canada, there's a lot of requirements, and so -- so, really,  
7 it's the volunteers that have to administer all of that, and  
8 it really becomes a burden. And so a lot are -- just drop  
9 out on their own, and so we think that there probably will be  
10 less and less, and at some point probably in the future there  
11 may not be any left.

12 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So there's a certain  
13 centralization of the finances in the Bloc Québécois that is  
14 managed by the national.

15 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

16 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Now, if I could look  
17 at the financing -- political financing of Parties, in your  
18 interview you mention that the system of contributions right  
19 now that has been set up since 2015 could be manipulated  
20 through foreign interference. Can you explain what you mean  
21 by that?

22 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes, of course.

23 Since the public financing was abolished, the  
24 ceiling, if you will, the amounts of maximum contributions  
25 for this year is \$1,725, and it fluctuates by \$25, so it will  
26 be -- next year it will be 1,750, the maximum.

27 And so for us, this is a concern because  
28 money can influence more for the vote, more than the

1 membership cards. When we talk about influence, we can even  
2 go further than foreign interference. You can talk about the  
3 influence of malevolent groups or pressure groups.

4 So we've seen in Quebec in particular with  
5 the Charbonneau Commission -- we've seen that there have been  
6 changes to the *Electoral Act* so that it has dropped down to  
7 \$100 but to have more public funding.

8 So for us in the Bloc Québécois, this has  
9 always been something that we have asked for, which would be  
10 to come back to a public funding system that would be based  
11 on the number of votes obtained in an election and still  
12 allowing people who want to contribute the capacity to do so,  
13 but that it would be minimal. In Quebec it's \$100, but at  
14 \$1,750, it would be easier to buy -- to attempt to influence  
15 with the large amount.

16 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So the influence --  
17 the position of the Bloc is to come back to public funding  
18 for political Parties.

19 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** That's right.

20 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Do you have any  
21 examples, examples of any attempts of foreign interference  
22 through political donations?

23 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No. We had -- at  
24 the Bloc Québécois, we have people donating, some are very  
25 generous. There's our smaller amounts, all sorts of donation  
26 amounts. But we haven't seen any type of interference.

27 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Do you do verification  
28 on your donors?

1                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. And there,  
2                   once again, what I'd like to mention is that the law allows  
3                   us to -- only a citizen or a permanent resident can make a  
4                   contribution to a federal Party. But for us, we are not able  
5                   to verify whether the person is a permanent resident, and  
6                   even if they are a citizen, it doesn't mean that they're on  
7                   the electoral list because all we have is the electoral.

8                   So that we would like to be able to do better  
9                   work and we have discussions every year with Elections Canada  
10                  when they consult with the political Parties. We think that  
11                  it would be important that we be able to verify our  
12                  contributions.

13                  We admit what the person says, but we have no  
14                  way of verifying that information, so we don't have the birth  
15                  dates. So I understand we want to protect the privacy, that  
16                  is fine, but to be able to do our work with the years,  
17                  unfortunately, we've seen we don't have this data so it's  
18                  difficult for us to be able to do the work properly.

19                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So you're essentially  
20                  asking for more data from Elections Canada to be able to  
21                  verify your donors and contributions?

22                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. And even  
23                  amongst our members. We know that Elections Canada has a  
24                  list of permanent residents. We know that they have the list  
25                  of future voters, people who are not allowed to vote yet but  
26                  will be given the right to vote. That would enable us to  
27                  check not just for financing, but for our members.

28                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** To ensure that they do

1       exist.

2                   So now if I change gears a bit, I would like  
3       to tackle with you the question of misinformation and  
4       disinformation that were mentioned as tactics of foreign  
5       influence used by state and non-state actors.

6                   First of all, would you agree with  
7       misinformation and disinformation can be used as foreign  
8       interference?

9                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:**   Yes.

10                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:**   How is the Bloc  
11       fighting this disinformation and misinformation?

12                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:**   I'm not sure how to  
13       answer this question.

14                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:**   We understand it's not  
15       new, there's always been that, but with social media,  
16       convergence between traditional and social media, how do you  
17       face or respond or protect yourself against online  
18       disinformation?

19                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:**   Well, as you said,  
20       it's something happening these days not just in Quebec or in  
21       Canada. It's everywhere. We know that there's a lot of  
22       disinformation going around.

23                  It is, therefore, important for us to  
24       communicate based on facts. And it is difficult with some  
25       people who use sources that are not extremely reliable, and  
26       that's difficult to counter, not just for political Parties,  
27       but for everyone.

28                  The simple fact, for example, that we can no

1 longer share newspaper articles on Facebook or Instagram  
2 because of everything that happened with them is contributing  
3 to disinformation.

4 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Are the guidelines to  
5 help protect candidates or future candidates against certain  
6 other guidelines to protect them in terms of working the  
7 media?

8 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Not officially.  
9 Often, it comes with the fact that when does a question for -  
10 - request for interview, we ask them what's the media and we  
11 tell them to respond or not depending on their credibility.

12 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And what role should  
13 political Parties play, in general, in the fight against  
14 disinformation and misinformation?

15 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** As I was saying, for  
16 myself and the Party and the Party's administration, we play  
17 our role, but when it comes to fighting disinformation, that  
18 is something bigger than us. I think it would be at a  
19 government level to act.

20 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Are you aware of any  
21 attempts of foreign interference through disinformation or  
22 misinformation with media who are calling your candidates for  
23 interviews?

24 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, it happened in  
25 the past where some, as I said, not very credible media, but  
26 we often tell them we're just not interested.

27 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** If we come back, you  
28 indicated during your interview that the Bloc Québécois, to

1       your knowledge, was never a target of foreign interference.  
2       I would also like to tackle with you some hypotheses you  
3       expressed on this as to why the Bloc would be more protected  
4       from these foreign interference attempts.

5               You mentioned, I believe, in paragraph 8 of  
6       your interview summary that one of the possibilities is the  
7       fundamentally independentist vocation of the Party and the  
8       fact that it focuses solely on Quebecers' interests. Could  
9       you elaborate on this?

10              **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, as I said,  
11       it's a hypothesis because we have no certainties on this.

12              But by being an opposition Party in Ottawa  
13       that, realistically, could pretty much never be in power  
14       unless there be a division of votes, and even then, it's  
15       practically impossible, foreign interference will often  
16       attempt to influence people in positions of power, so  
17       mathematically, since we cannot be in power, we're less of a  
18       target because of that. That's just a hypothesis. It's just  
19       an assumption, but we have no certainties.

20              **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And you've been the  
21       official Opposition Party in '92?

22              **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** During a majority  
23       government.

24              **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And we can say that  
25       there you have a bit more power now. You are balancing the  
26       power of a minority government?

27              **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

28              **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Would your answer

1 remain the same with the fact that you do have a certain  
2 power when it comes to supporting the government or not?

3 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yeah, I'm not saying  
4 the Bloc Québécois has no power. We have power and we want  
5 to use it. But we cannot form government. That's where I  
6 meant to say that we cannot go as far as that. But why  
7 haven't we been victims of foreign interference? We're not  
8 sure.

9 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Have you considered  
10 the possibility that the political project of the Bloc  
11 Québécois, the vocation that is the independence of Quebec,  
12 to make Quebec an independent nation, could make that an  
13 attractive target for malicious foreign powers who would want  
14 to create some dissension and bring down the Canadian  
15 federation?

16 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** All Parties could be  
17 targeted for foreign interference. That's why I'm not  
18 explaining the reason. I'm just telling you that, up to now,  
19 we haven't been the target of any interference as far as we  
20 know, but it's not impossible that we could be one day.  
21 That's why we have to be careful and have the right  
22 protections.

23 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Here I would like to  
24 tackle the question of interactions with the Canadian  
25 government and its agencies.

26 During your interview, you mentioned having  
27 had meetings that were, in parts, or in all about foreign  
28 interference with Elections Canada. You had a meeting with

1 the SITE group, CSIS and the CSE -- Centre for Cyber  
2 Security, sorry.

3 Did you have further meetings than those when  
4 it comes to governmental agencies or departments?

5 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Not to my knowledge.

6 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And here, were these  
7 classified meetings?

8 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No, they were not.

9 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Did you have  
10 representatives of the Bloc Québécois who have very secret  
11 security clearance?

12 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Not to my knowledge.

13 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** We know, it's in the  
14 media as well as in your interview summary, that Mr. Yves-  
15 François Blanchet, the Party leader, was in the process to  
16 obtain a top secret security clearance to be able to consult  
17 the NSICOP report. Are you aware of this process?

18 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes, I'm aware that  
19 that process is ongoing.

20 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So for you, you don't  
21 have the possibility of receiving classified information  
22 since you do not have any members or MPs who have top secret  
23 security clearance; correct?

24 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** I do not believe so,  
25 but I'm not on the Parliament side. I'm more on the Party  
26 side, so I'm less aware of those details.

27 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** You also mentioned in  
28 your interview that you had meetings with Elections Canada as



1 well as with other political Parties about foreign  
2 interference. Could you tell us a bit more about those  
3 meetings?

4 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. So those  
5 meetings are annual meetings that we have with Elections  
6 Canada. The advisory political Party committee, it's a  
7 yearly meeting with Elections Canada and all the  
8 representatives of the political Parties to discuss also the  
9 topics.

10 I took part even before being the Director.  
11 I also took part in those meetings in the past over Zoom  
12 during the pandemic, but it's been since 2023 that we started  
13 tackling the questions of interference. Before that, it  
14 wasn't a question on the agenda.

15 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** With Elections Canada?

16 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Correct.

17 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And how did you find  
18 those information sessions to be?

19 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Very interesting.  
20 Always a chance for us to meet the other political Parties as  
21 well to discuss administration of the Parties and also some  
22 measures.

23 So I think Elections Canada wanted to get our  
24 opinion about any proposals or possibilities as to how to  
25 administer the Parties. They also seem concerned about this.

26 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** That's an answer -- it's  
27 a meeting with all the political Parties.

28 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Correct.

1                   **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** It's a meeting with all  
2 the political Parties.

3                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Correct. Over a  
4 couple days.

5                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And it's just the  
6 Parties who have seats in the House of Commons or more than  
7 that?

8                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** It's all the  
9 registered political Parties are invited. It happens that a  
10 Party will not attend, but most are invited.

11                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** You also mentioned a  
12 meeting with the SITE group in 2023. What was that meeting  
13 about?

14                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** It was around the  
15 by-election in Westmount.

16                         We had a briefing session on the  
17 possibilities of foreign interference or what we had to  
18 monitor or just warning, some tools. They wanted to give  
19 some information and, given it was a by-election happening in  
20 Quebec, we took part.

21                         We didn't take part to those outside of  
22 Quebec.

23                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And was this just your  
24 Party with the working group or were other political Parties  
25 present?

26                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** As far as I  
27 remember, the other Parties were present.

28                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And what was that

1 meeting about?

2 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** And as I said, it  
3 was really to warn us about certain things, what we had to  
4 verify and giving us the resources, the phone number if we  
5 heard of anything, et cetera.

6 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** It was preventative,  
7 so it's precisely preventative. Did you find the information  
8 given to be useful?

9 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes, all  
10 preventative information is useful.

11 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** When it comes to the  
12 working group, the SITE group, there was mention that the  
13 Bloc hadn't accepted the offer of getting classified  
14 briefings during the 2019, 2021 elections. Do you know why?

15 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** I remember that we  
16 had discussed that during the interview.

17 I didn't get an answer on this. I'm not sure  
18 why the Bloc didn't take part in those meetings. I was  
19 submitting the possibility that we forgot to answer or  
20 something like that, but, indeed, we did not take part. But  
21 I do not know the reason.

22 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And to your knowledge,  
23 it wasn't through lack of interest.

24 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No.

25 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Before the elections  
26 of 2019, how many members of the Bloc had a seat in  
27 Parliament?

28 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ten (10), 10 MPs.

1                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** That's before the  
2 elections of 2019.

3                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

4                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** In general, if I  
5 understand your answer, I understand that the Bloc would  
6 accept such an offer by the SITE group to attend a classified  
7 briefing in the future for future elections?

8                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. Like all  
9 requests we have answered since, we have accepted those. As  
10 I said, maybe in the rhythm of the elections it got lost, but  
11 for sure they will be keeping an eye out for that.

12                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** In general, would you  
13 consider that more information should be communicated by the  
14 government and the agencies to political Parties?

15                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. As I said,  
16 anything that can help in the prevention where it can be  
17 useful, and more information is always good. And if there  
18 are things we need to know that can help us to protect  
19 ourselves against foreign interference, then we're happy to  
20 hear that.

21                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** In general, if the  
22 Bloc should respond to a potential incident of foreign  
23 interference targeting you, do you have the necessary  
24 information on what to do, who to contact and what to do?

25                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. So we have  
26 received information about this. We know what to do and we  
27 also -- we were discussing it earlier. We have a national  
28 office that's the Board of Directors of the Party, so

1 everything will go up to there to inform them that we also  
2 have the resources that were given to us to communicate that  
3 information.

4 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Has the Bloc taken  
5 measures internally to inform their employees or MPs of the  
6 threats of foreign interference? Do you have the tools and  
7 resources?

8 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** We received from  
9 Minister Leblanc a toolkit with information about foreign  
10 interference, so it's a toolkit we received. The employees  
11 have been given that toolkit. It will also be given to our  
12 potential candidates.

13 We currently have two official candidates for  
14 the next elections at the Bloc, so that's something that will  
15 be part of their onboarding when they join us.

16 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** I see the time is  
17 flying, but I would also like to tackle to conclude the  
18 question of some solutions on how to face and block foreign  
19 interference when it comes to, more specifically, political  
20 Parties and any vulnerability that can be identified.

21 In general terms, could you express the  
22 position of the Bloc Québécois on the avenues of potential  
23 reform suggested and what would be the regulation of some  
24 political Parties by agencies such as Elections Canada or the  
25 Commissioner to Federal Elections? For example, the  
26 management or regulating nomination and leadership races.

27 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, on this, our  
28 position is pretty clear that we like our independence, our

1       autonomy. We administer our work properly. We obviously  
2       have responsibilities and we're accountable to Elections  
3       Canada. So everything that's financial reports, we fulfil  
4       our full obligations. However, when it comes to have  
5       external organization that would come to administer or manage  
6       our nomination, our leadership races, this will increase the  
7       burden.

8               As I said, we are already administering  
9       everything very professionally for our internal elections, so  
10      we wouldn't need any inference beyond in our processes. We  
11      would simply like to have better tools, as I was saying, to  
12      have lists of information to better do our work.

13             **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Would the Bloc be in  
14      favour of a regulation model that would require further  
15      compliance but where the implementation is at the Party  
16      level?

17             **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, it depends on  
18      the requirements and the levels of compliance that is  
19      expected. But case by case, we would have to see what would  
20      be recommended or suggested.

21             **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** And do you think the  
22      Parties have sufficient resources to implement additional  
23      measures such as verifying their members or candidates?

24             **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, as I said,  
25      we'd like to have more information. All we have as tools is  
26      the electoral list, that is, the name, the address -- the  
27      first name of voters, but we don't have permanent residents,  
28      we don't have future voters, so it's difficult for us to do

1       better. We don't have the gender, the date of birth, so that  
2       is information we need to gather ourselves, ask the people to  
3       give it to us. So we're not equipped as we should be, as far  
4       as I'm concerned.

5                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** So you believe some  
6       information is missing that should be communicated to you?

7                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Correct.

8                   **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Were there other  
9       measures that were not discussed in the interview or today in  
10      order to prevent foreign interference?

11                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No. And to go back  
12      to what you just said, and I will repeat, the way we are  
13      funded for a public part and for the ceiling for personal  
14      individual contributions to be lowered, those are easy  
15      solutions, we think, and the impact would be important.

16                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Is there something  
17      else you would like to mention?

18                  **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No.

19                  **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** I don't have any more  
20      questions.

21                  **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you very much, Mr.  
22      Ferguson.

23                  And now we have questions from the counsels  
24      for various participants. First, Mr. Sirois, who's  
25      representing the Canadian-Russian Democratic Alliance.

26                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** [No interpretaton]

27                  **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Well, I was mixed up.

28                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** I do the same.

1       **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:**

2                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:**   Good morning.

3                   Well, RCD11 first.

4       **--- EXHIBIT No. RCD0000011:**

5                   L'ingérence de la Russie dans les  
6                   élections et les référendums des pays  
7                   de l'alliance

8                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:**   This is a NATO report  
9                   about interference of Russian initiatives in elections,  
10                  referendums in the countries of the Alliance. It was  
11                  prepared by Suzanne Davis from the United States on -- it was  
12                  published on November 18th, 2018.

13                  Page 4, paragraph 9.

14                  The goals of such Russian initiatives and  
15                  other examples from other countries are mentioned, so:

16                  "The goals of Russian interference  
17                  are of different natures and do not  
18                  mutually exclude each other. They  
19                  take advantage of any opportunity in  
20                  order to accentuate social tensions  
21                  that already exist within a society."

22                  (As read)

23                  At the end of the same paragraph, they say  
24                  that:

25                  "A nationalist feeling in Catalogna  
26                  was exacerbated by Russian  
27                  interference. This shows how Russia  
28                  uses technology to weaken a



1 government to discredit liberal  
2 democracy and to make the opposition  
3 more fragile." (As read)

4 So is there a risk for some political Parties  
5 to benefit accidentally or not voluntarily from such  
6 initiatives?

7 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** What do you want to  
8 know, exactly?

9 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Well, by promoting  
10 that independence, would it be possible for some political  
11 Parties to contribute to such situations?

12 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** I think that it's  
13 possible. Whatever the ideology or your political  
14 affiliation it's a possibility.

15 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Is it possible to  
16 limit such risks for a political Party?

17 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, we have no  
18 control over the internet. As you said, there are Russian  
19 bots and we have no power over this, no possibility to  
20 interfere.

21 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Are there tools for a  
22 government ---

23 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, ask the  
24 question to the authorities.

25 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** you don't have any  
26 recommendation about how to control the media space or to  
27 prevent such initiatives?

28 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** No. We have control

1 over what we can control, our membership, our mechanism, and  
2 we don't use such tactics.

3 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay.

4 So we can go down on the same -- in the same  
5 document.

6 You say that the BQ is not interested -- I  
7 don't want to challenge your statement, but are there other  
8 political Parties that might be more extremist looking for  
9 more votes, they might be trying to take advantage of such  
10 interference by giving interviews to Soviet -- to Russian  
11 media in order to promote more extreme interests in order to  
12 gather more votes? Do you think that it might be possible  
13 for certain political Parties to try to surf on that wave?

14 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** I cannot speak on  
15 behalf of any other Party. I don't know.

16 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** I would like to refer  
17 to another document, CAN4245. CAN4245, a report from  
18 September 5th, 2019 from the SITE rep -- the SITE Task Force.

19 And we can scroll down.

20 Do you know this group?

21 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

22 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** So here, we see RRM  
23 Canada, the Rapid Response Mechanism in Canada, monitoring  
24 networks. And "Sputnik", a Russian media, was surveyed.

25 The first article is an interview with the BQ  
26 candidate in French who was running against the Prime  
27 Minister in the Papineau riding of the Montreal area.

28 I would like to know if you were informed of

1       that. I know that you were not in your present position at  
2       the time, but do you know if the Party was informed?

3               **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes. It's the fact  
4       that he was not an official candidate. He wanted to run for  
5       the BQ in Papineau, but during the assembly, he was not  
6       selected for all kinds of reasons. He was rejected.

7               **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** What is the  
8       distinction between an official and non-official candidate?

9               **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, tomorrow you  
10      can see I will be the BQ candidate in this or that riding.  
11      It means that you are interested, maybe you've been  
12      approached, but there's nothing official. You become an  
13      official candidate after a general assembly and nomination  
14      assembly or the designation by the Party. And unfortunately,  
15      it's a quite frequent problem and, here, it was the president  
16      of the BQ riding who wanted to be the candidate.

17              **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Is it possible for the  
18      BQ or for any other political Party to control such  
19      candidates?

20              **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes, if it's  
21      embarrassing for the Party, we try to have a conversation for  
22      that kind of behaviour to stop, but here, he was not our  
23      candidate so he was simply a person who wanted to be a  
24      candidate. But he was not our candidate for the Bloc.

25              **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** You can erase that  
26      document.

27              So in addition to giving interviews to  
28      foreign media, are there guidelines in order to inform

1 candidates about what might be dangerous in terms of  
2 interaction or interviews with foreign media?

3 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** What we ask of  
4 people is to contact us and then we offer our assistance.  
5 And if we see that it is a foreign media, non-credible or  
6 potentially dangerous, we say, "Don't give any interview".

7 But as I said, some people just take personal  
8 initiative. I've seen that in the past. Some press releases  
9 were sent to say that they were a candidate, but they were  
10 not. And it's very difficult to control such behaviour, but  
11 our guidelines is don't give an interview in such  
12 circumstances.

13 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And if you recommend  
14 not to grant an interview, are these recommendations firm;  
15 they are to be followed?

16 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Yes.

17 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** But if a candidate  
18 decides to go ahead, are there consequences?

19 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, I would advise  
20 them not to do that, but it didn't happen.

21 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** No more questions.

22 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So it's not Mr.  
23 Choudhry, it's the colleague for Ms. Jenny Kwan.

24 So Ms. Kakkar.

25 **(SHORT PAUSE)**

26 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Good morning, Commissioner.  
27 Good morning. I am counsel for MP Kwan, and -- sorry; I'm  
28 hearing my own voice in this, and that is disturbing, but all

1 of you already know that because you're listening to me as  
2 well.

3 **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MS. MANI KAKKAR:**

4 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** But I was just going to  
5 say, I apologize I can't ask you these questions in French.  
6 Unfortunately, my training as an employee at Simons only got  
7 me qualified enough to sell you a blouse or sweater, but not  
8 to talk about foreign interference. So I appreciate you  
9 answering my questions in French or English, although I'll be  
10 asking in English.

11 I wanted to start by asking you the Bloc  
12 Québécois has taken the position that it doesn't want to have  
13 regulations in place, perhaps, or oversight, it prefers its  
14 independence. But is your position that if the -- whether it  
15 was Elections Canada or another government agency that  
16 required a minimum level of identity verification from each  
17 political party, is it your position that the Bloc Québécois  
18 would be opposed to such a measure?

19 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** We are not against  
20 any regulation. We are, however, against, how could I say,  
21 any interference by external organization in terms of how we  
22 manage our Party -- how we control our Party.

23 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Okay. So you wouldn't be  
24 opposed necessarily to having to verify multiple pieces of ID  
25 or check that someone is actually a Canadian citizen or a  
26 permanent resident, if those were the rules?

27 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** As I said before, we  
28 are not against such a regulation, but we would like to be in

1 charge of these decisions. We want to have the resources to  
2 make those vetting -- those verifications ourselves.

3 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Okay. And do you agree  
4 that if it were left to each party to do so, that differences  
5 between political parties' procedures and rules might be  
6 taken advantage of or exploited by FI actors?

7 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Do you have an  
8 example in order to better understand your question?

9 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Absolutely. So, for  
10 example, if one political party did not require multi-step  
11 verification, let's say, and another did, would it make it  
12 more likely, do you agree, that the one political party that  
13 doesn't require that kind of verification may be an easier  
14 target for FI, and so FI actors could exploit those  
15 differences in the rules between political parties?

16 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, I think that  
17 each Party could very well check its own thing. Of course,  
18 criteria could vary according to each Party, but I cannot  
19 speak on behalf of any other Party with respect to, for  
20 instance, if we want to have the same conditions. For  
21 instance, our criteria might be membership of the Party.

22 It's up to each Party to determine that but,  
23 on the other hand, if there's a rule -- and here I'll speak  
24 about political funding -- if only people over 18 years of  
25 age and Canadian residents can make a contribution, it could  
26 be the same for every Party, but there are no tools to make  
27 such a verification. So it's the very fundamental  
28 requirement and we don't have that possibility. So before

1 adding any more regulatory obstacle, we should receive more  
2 resources.

3 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** I certainly appreciate your  
4 point, and it's a very fair one. And actually, in that  
5 regard, you had mentioned in your testimony that you had  
6 approached Elections Canada about providing lists that they  
7 currently have that would help you in this task.

8 What I didn't see -- and I apologize if it  
9 was there -- is what Elections Canada said to you or the  
10 reasons they gave you for not giving you that information.

11 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, in fact, the  
12 elections provided by Elections Canada are quite minimal. We  
13 think that it is a question of confidentiality, privacy  
14 requirements. They don't want to provide us with a date of  
15 birth and genders for Quebec electors, Quebec voters, but we  
16 made the suggestion -- each time we were consulted by  
17 Elections Canada on a yearly basis, we made the demand, for  
18 instance, for permanent residency as opposed to citizenship.

19 We want to have such answers and we were  
20 told, "Oh, we will make further verifications".

21 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** I appreciate the answer and  
22 the clarification.

23 I'm actually going to shift focus a little  
24 bit. In your interview summary, you made an interesting  
25 point in paragraph 18. I'm happy to bring that up if that  
26 would help.

27 But you talked about a specific candidate's  
28 race where there was a large cultural community that rallied

1 in support of them. And you said that it would be mistaken  
2 to assume that simply because there was an influx of  
3 volunteers from a particular cultural community that somehow  
4 foreign interference was involved.

5 And I think that's a very helpful statement  
6 because there's a balance here to be struck between  
7 participation of diaspora communities and their protection,  
8 on the other hand, as they are more vulnerable to FI actors.

9 And here I wanted to ask you specifically,  
10 did you find that the tools you were given, whether it was by  
11 the OCCE, the SITE Task Force to the extent that you had any  
12 interactions with them, or the -- or CSIS in the briefings  
13 that you have gotten -- did you get the tools to be able to  
14 identify the difference between foreign interference and  
15 participation?

16 **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** That's a quite good  
17 question, but I don't think so. What I was referring to in  
18 that case was in order to be clear, we don't have to mix up.  
19 It's not because there's a diaspora in our Party that they  
20 are trying through their original country to interfere.  
21 That's what I meant in that paragraph during the interview.

22 But with respect to any investigation about  
23 people, what we are checking is behaviours and what we can do  
24 internally. If the RCMP or CSIS are investigating, we cannot  
25 replace the authorities in that respect. They do their  
26 investigation, and that's it.

27 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** No, and I appreciate that.  
28 And I didn't mean to suggest that, you know, the Bloc



1       Quebecois had done anything wrong in this instance. What I  
2       more wanted to understand is after those briefings, do you  
3       feel like you have information as a political Party to be  
4       able to identify foreign interference as opposed to  
5       participation in -- by a diaspora community? Do you have  
6       indicators of what you are looking for that will help you  
7       make the distinction so you don't over or under-react in any  
8       situation?

9                   **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Well, as I said, in  
10       terms of briefings, what we have with the various groups was  
11       quite relevant. We were -- on our side, we did appreciate  
12       receiving such information. And as I said, we were not  
13       targeted by foreign interventions, but these advice were  
14       quite helpful to take preventive actions, but for us, it was  
15       enough.

16                   **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** I appreciate that.  
17               Just turning to my very last set of  
18       questions, and this is related specifically to TikTok -- and  
19       perhaps I can ask for CAN4358\_0001 to be put up.

20                   I don't intend to take you through the  
21       details of this, but if we can just scroll down, this is an  
22       analytical briefing.

23                   If you can stop there. Sorry. If you can  
24       scroll back up. Thank you.

25                   We can stop there, but this is an analytical  
26       brief from CSIS that specifically talks about TikTok and says  
27       that it's the first western-centric social media application,  
28       has the potential to be exploited by the PRC. It's highly

1       addictive, short video application, allows access to  
2       sensitive user data, and despite assurances to the contrary,  
3       personal data on TikTok users is accessible to China.

4                       Does the Bloc Quebecois have any specific  
5       policies with respect to TikTok?

6                       **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** We don't have any  
7       policies for our members or for any activists, but for our  
8       employees and for our MPs, we do not use TikTok to promote  
9       any kind of messaging.

10                      **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** And is it something that  
11       someone who's running in a nomination or leadership race  
12       would be allowed to use or they wouldn't be as well?

13                      **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** That's a good  
14       question. We'd have to check. But as I was saying, it's  
15       just for our MPs. They are not allowed to have the TikTok  
16       application on their phone, and for all of the reasons that  
17       you know.

18                      **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** That's fair.

19                      The other question I have is, are there any  
20       rules around their personal use of TikTok?

21                      **MR. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Not to my knowledge.  
22       But I don't want to speak for all of the Parliamentarians,  
23       but I think it does include their personal devices. They're  
24       not to have any use of TikTok.

25                      **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Thank you so much. Those  
26       are all my questions.

27                      **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** The next participant  
28       Human Right Coalition.

1 Do we have someone? Yes?

2 No questions?

3 We have [no interpretation] Attorney General.

4 Do you have any questions?

5 **MS. HELEN ROBERTSON:** No. Mr. Ferguson went  
6 through all of the questions, so I have good news for you.  
7 No questions.

8 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

9 Mr. Ferguson, do you want to re-direct?

10 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** No, thank you.

11 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So thank you. Thank you  
12 very much, Mr. Desquilbet, and so you are now free to go.

13 So thank you very much.

14 We will now suspend for lunch and we will  
15 keep the same schedule because we have witnesses who are  
16 expected at a given time, so even if we're ending early, we  
17 will come back at 1:45.

18 So, 1:45.

19 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please.

20 This sitting of the Commission is now in  
21 recess until 1:45 p.m.

22 --- Upon recessing at 12:13 p.m.

23 --- Upon resuming at 1:47 p.m.

24 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please.

25 This sitting of the Foreign Interference  
26 Commission is now back in session.

27 The time is 1:47 p.m.

28 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Good afternoon. Perhaps

1 before starting, just a little reminder for the benefit not  
2 of those who are present in the room, but those who are  
3 listening to us or watching us.

4 For the cross-examination, you may have  
5 noticed that participants are not asking any questions. You  
6 need to know that each participant is free to ask questions  
7 or not, so it is not the decision of the Commission to leave  
8 some aside. They have the choice to ask for time to ask  
9 questions.

10 So maybe I should repeat what I said in  
11 French. For those that are maybe wondering, and I'm sure  
12 it's nobody in the room are wondering why we are doing it,  
13 but when there's some participants that do not ask any  
14 questions to a witness, it's their choice because what we do  
15 is daily we ask who are the participants that would like to  
16 cross-examine a given witness, and sometimes, you know, there  
17 is some participants for whatever reason that decide that  
18 they don't have any questions to ask. So it's not the  
19 Commission's decision. Thank you.

20 So it's for you, Me Krongold.

21 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Thank you. For the  
22 record, it's Howard Krongold.

23 The Commission's next witness is Lucy Watson.  
24 If the witness could please be affirmed?

25 **THE REGISTRAR:** Ms. Watson, first of all,  
26 could you please state your full name and spell your last  
27 name for the record?

28 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. Lucy Watson. W-A-T-

1 S-O-N.

2 THE REGISTRAR: Thank you. Now for the  
3 affirmation.

4 --- LUCY WATSON, Affirmed:

5 THE REGISTRAR: Thank you.  
6 Counsel, you may proceed.

7 --- EXAMINATION IN-CHIEF BY MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:

8 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Thank you very much.  
9 Good afternoon, Ms. Watson.

10 MS. LUCY WATSON:

11 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Do you recall being  
12 interviewed by Commission Counsel, along with your colleague,  
13 Jesse Calvert on August 27<sup>th</sup> of this year?

14 MS. LUCY WATSON: I do.

15 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Could we pull up WIT87,  
16 please? So this is the interview summary that was generated  
17 following your interview with Commission counsel. Have you  
18 had a chance to review this document?

19 MS. LUCY WATSON: I have.

20 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And I understand  
21 there's one correction you wanted to make at page 15. It's  
22 paragraph 85.

23 MS. LUCY WATSON: That's correct.

24 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: And I understand the  
25 correction is that you have since learned that the NDP is on  
26 TikTok as of -- was it spring of this year?

27 MS. LUCY WATSON: Spring of 2024, yes.

28 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: And so, with that

1 amendment, are there any other corrections, additions, or  
2 deletions that you would want to make to your summary?

3 MS. LUCY WATSON: No, there are not.

4 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And do you adopt  
5 the contents of this interview summary as part of your  
6 evidence before the Commission?

7 MS. LUCY WATSON: I do.

8 --- EXHIBIT No. WIT0000087.EN:

9 Interview Summary: New Democratic

10 Party (Lucy Watson and Jesse Calvert)

11 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: The NDP also prepared  
12 an institutional report at the request of Commission counsel.  
13 Is that correct?

14 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes, that's right.

15 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: And that's NDP1.EN.  
16 And I understand you've had an opportunity to review this  
17 document as well?

18 MS. LUCY WATSON: I have.

19 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: It's just coming up on  
20 the screen. And have you had a chance to confirm that it is  
21 accurate?

22 MS. LUCY WATSON: There is change that we  
23 need to make with regard to the leadership rules.

24 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Yes.

25 MS. LUCY WATSON: I think we state -- I don't  
26 have the exact paragraph, but we do state ---

27 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: I believe it's page 6.  
28 And we can turn it up, it's around the middle of the page

1 point. If we can keep going down, I believe, it's 3.41(a).  
2 There we are.

3 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

4 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: So it begins "A member  
5 in good standing" -- and sorry, this is in relation to the  
6 eligibility to vote in an NDP leadership contest. And point  
7 (a) indicates "A member in good standing is defined as an  
8 individual of at least 14 years of age" etcetera, etcetera.  
9 Is there a comment you wanted to make about that?

10 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes, I do want to make a  
11 correction to this. It should just read a member in good  
12 standing who has paid their annual dues and can produce proof  
13 of membership etcetera. Remove the age, because as is  
14 delineated elsewhere in the documents, the age -- the minimum  
15 age required for membership is set out in the provincial  
16 constitutions and there is some variation.

17 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And that  
18 qualification is in your interview summary, and we may speak  
19 about that later as well.

20 MS. LUCY WATSON: That's right.

21 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Subject to that  
22 comment, will you adopt the institutional report as part of  
23 your evidence today?

24 MS. LUCY WATSON: I do, yes.

25 --- EXHIBIT No. NDP0000001.EN:

26 Institutional Report of the New  
27 Democratic Party of Canada.pdf

28 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: And I would also just

1 note, we don't have to call it up, but WIT87.FR is the French  
2 translation of the interview summary, and NDP1.FR is the  
3 French translation of the institutional report

4 **--- EXHIBIT No. WIT0000087.FR:**

5 Résumé de l'entrevue: Nouveau Parti  
6 démocratique (Lucy Watson et Jesse  
7 Calvert)

8 **--- EXHIBIT No. NDP0000001.FR:**

9 NDP: Institutional report, French  
10 translation

11 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** So just very briefly on  
12 your background, Ms. Watson, you're currently the NDP's  
13 National Director; is that right?

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

15 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And I understand  
16 you served as the National Campaign Coordinator in the 2015  
17 Federal Election?

18 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That's correct.

19 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** You were then a Deputy  
20 Chief of Staff from 2016 to 2018?

21 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

22 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** You then spent around  
23 five years as the provincial director of the Ontario NDP, so  
24 the provincial party?

25 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I did.

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And you returned to  
27 federal politics in January of this year when you assumed  
28 your current role?



1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I returned earlier than  
2                   that. I served as Senior Advisor for a few months before I  
3                   became the National Director.

4                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I'm sorry. Thank you  
5                   for that clarification.

6                   I wanted to just begin by asking you  
7                   generally about the party's views about the foreign  
8                   interference threat, and in particular, I want to ask you  
9                   what impact have the foreign interference allegations that  
10                  were made in the last two elections, an in particular Jenny  
11                  Kwan's allegations had on the party's approach and views  
12                  about foreign interference.

13                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Sure. Well, first I'll  
14                  start by stating that we do acknowledge that there is a  
15                  potential for foreign interference in the work of political  
16                  parties, just given the nature, you know, the fact that we  
17                  are political parties, that we are active on the political  
18                  scene. I think that is further compounded by the fact that  
19                  the NDP, in particular, is a membership driven and volunteer-  
20                  based organization. That is one of any number of concerns  
21                  and considerations that we have as a party.

22                  I do want to also note that I have no reason  
23                  to believe that there has been foreign interference within  
24                  the NDP's internal affairs. That's setting aside, or course,  
25                  the very serious concerns that MP Kenny Kwan has brought  
26                  forward. But in terms of the nomination procedures and such  
27                  that are internal to the NDP, I have no concerns with regard  
28                  to foreign interference at this juncture.

1                   I think it would be fair to say that we now  
2   approach our work with an additional lens with regard to  
3   foreign interference. Or that lens is one of the potential  
4   for foreign interference. So ensuring that, you know, the  
5   senior staff in the party are aware that this is an issue  
6   they should be alive to. Ensuring that as we're moving  
7   through some of our internal processes, we're applying this  
8   lens. So for example, when we are engaged in the vetting  
9   process of prospective nomination contestants.

10               **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** What does the party  
11   consider to be the most important vulnerabilities that it  
12   faces?

13               **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I think that there is a  
14   vulnerability in terms of the financing of political parties.  
15   So we are entirely reliant on donations. And I think there  
16   is a vulnerability there in that there could be foreign  
17   actors who are able to navigate the system in order to make  
18   donations, in order to finance the work of political parties.  
19   Again, I have no reason to believe that is an issue for the  
20   NDP, but I think there is a potential vulnerability there.

21               And there is, to some extent, a vulnerability  
22   in terms of, you know, the nomination process. I am  
23   confident though that the procedures that we have in place as  
24   a party guard against foreign interference and we can go into  
25   detail about what those criteria are. But those would be the  
26   two areas that I would identify off the top of my head.

27               **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Yeah. Well, let's talk  
28   about the nomination contests. There have been concerns

1       expressed by Canada's security and intelligence community  
2       about potential vulnerabilities in political party nomination  
3       processes. In terms of eligibility to vote in an NDP  
4       nomination contest, one requirement I understand that exists  
5       is that the person must of course, be a party member. Is  
6       that right?

7                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That's right.

8                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And you alluded  
9       to this earlier, but one of the unusual features of the NDP  
10      is that membership is usually administered at the provincial  
11      or territorial level. Is that correct?

12                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, that's correct.

13                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Can you -- yeah, please  
14      explain.

15                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** The party's constitution or  
16      federal constitution sets out some basic criteria. But it's  
17      the provincial constitutions that govern membership in a much  
18      more detailed fashion.

19                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Let's talk about  
20      some of those criteria that exist nationally and some of the  
21      variations that exist as well. First of all, does a person  
22      have to be a citizen or permanent resident to become a member  
23      of the NDP?

24                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

25                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. In the  
26      documentation that the party provided as an appendix to its  
27      institutional report, it doesn't appear that all of the  
28      provincial parties have a requirement that a person be a

1 permanent resident or a citizen. In fact, most of the  
2 constitutions just refer to a person being a resident. And  
3 I'm wondering if you can explain that disparity?

4 MS. LUCY WATSON: I cannot. That predates  
5 me.

6 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay.

7 MS. LUCY WATSON: But it is understood across  
8 the -- throughout the party that citizenship or permanent  
9 residency is required. On our website for example, on the  
10 federal party's website, we require that an individual who is  
11 applying for membership acknowledge that they are either a  
12 citizen or permanent resident. And I believe -- I haven't  
13 canvassed all the provincial websites -- but I believe that's  
14 the case on a number of the other provincial websites.

15 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. So it's not an  
16 explicit requirement, but it seems to be sort of, defacto a  
17 requirement?

18 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes. That's right.

19 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: You mentioned an  
20 acknowledgement, what is the form of acknowledgement that a  
21 person has to make to being a PR or a citizen?

22 MS. LUCY WATSON: It's a check box.

23 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: A check box on ---

24 MS. LUCY WATSON: We ask -- we ask somebody  
25 to make that acknowledgement.

26 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Oaky. Is there any  
27 verification of whether a person is in fact a citizen or a  
28 PR?

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No. We don't seek  
2                   identification upon registering or applying as a member. We  
3                   approach nomination meetings differently. There is an  
4                   additional level of scrutiny that is applied for nomination  
5                   meetings. So if an individual is eligible to vote in a  
6                   nomination meeting, they are a member in good standing, they  
7                   live in the riding, they are asked at a registration desk at  
8                   a nomination meeting to provide proof of identity.

9                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. So let's turn to  
10                  that. So when there are in person nomination contests and a  
11                  person shows up who would otherwise be qualified, what kind  
12                  of proof do they have to show that they are who they say they  
13                  are, proof of identification?

14                 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** A piece of government ID.

15                 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. I understand as  
16                  well that to become a Party member, you have to provide a  
17                  Canadian address. Is that right?

18                 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

19                 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And I gather  
20                  that's how you determine if a person is eligible to vote in a  
21                  particular riding's nomination contest.

22                 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Correct.

23                 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. How is the  
24                  address verified?

25                 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Well, we do have -- we  
26                  obviously have the electors list, and so we're able to  
27                  identify folks who are applying to be a member. We're able  
28                  to cross-check that against the voters list.

1                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I'm sorry. The voters  
2 list is a list produced by the Party?

3                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No, that's produced by  
4 Elections Canada.

5                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I see. Okay.  
6 And that list would indicate what, exactly?

7                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That has name, address.

8                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay.

9                   **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** And what about those  
10 that are not appearing on the list?

11                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There's no additional  
12 check, no other source that we can -- we can check against.

13                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** So if someone shows up  
14 and they have, say, a driver's licence -- well, let me take a  
15 step back.

16                   Someone has registered as a member of the  
17 NDP, has said, "My address is AB -- you know, 123 First  
18 Street". That's in the riding. They show up at a nomination  
19 contest. They're not on the electors list. What do they  
20 have to show?

21                   Do they have to show any proof of their  
22 identity?

23                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** What we would have at the  
24 nomination meeting registration desk would be a membership  
25 list, so a volunteer will welcome the member, take their  
26 name, confirm that they appear on the membership list for  
27 that particular riding and is therefore eligible to vote in  
28 the nomination meeting, and will request a piece of

1 identification.

2 If, for some reason, their identification  
3 does not show them as living at the address noted in our  
4 records, they'll then be asked for an additional piece of ID,  
5 so it might be a hydro bill, something that shows them as  
6 living at the address that then makes them eligible to vote  
7 in that particular nomination meeting.

8 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I just want to ask for  
9 clarification of something.

10 If we could turn up WIT87 again at page -- I  
11 believe it's page 8. And this is paragraph 42.

12 You'll see the second line there indicates  
13 some EDAs -- that's Electoral District Associations -- also  
14 ask for proof of residency such as a utility bill if the  
15 address on a person's identification does not match their  
16 Party registration.

17 So can we take that to mean that there may be  
18 a lack of consistency in terms of actually checking if a --  
19 in the event that a person's, say, driver's licence address  
20 doesn't match what the Party believes their address is,  
21 sometimes it'll be checked with a second piece of ID,  
22 sometimes not?

23 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** You know, I qualified this  
24 because there are 338 ridings.

25 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay.

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I couldn't say with  
27 absolute certainty that this is approached with consistency,  
28 but I think I would feel comfortable saying the vast

1 majority.

2 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. There's no  
3 uniform rule that applies throughout the Party, though?

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** EDAs are given guidance on  
5 how to process, if you will, members who are attending a  
6 nomination meeting, so there is guidance that is provided  
7 that is consistent.

8 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And does it mandate  
9 that a second piece of identification be required if the  
10 address doesn't match?

11 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I would have to go back and  
12 confirm that against the instructions that are provided, but  
13 it is -- I will also say that Party staff are involved for  
14 the most part in nomination meetings, helping with the  
15 facilitation of the meeting, and so Party staff understand  
16 and know that this is a requirement. So that also -- that's  
17 an additional balance in terms of this -- in terms of this  
18 process.

19 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. I just want to  
20 go back briefly to this requirement that a person be a  
21 citizen or permanent resident.

22 Is there any point where that is verified by  
23 the Party?

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Citizenship or permanent  
25 residence, no, not explicitly.

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay.

27 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** And do you have to be a  
28 member since a minimum number of days ---



1 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: --- before being able to  
3 vote?

4 How many days?

5 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes, it's 45 days.

6 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: Forty-five (45) days.

7 MS. LUCY WATSON: So you have to have applied  
8 for membership 45 days prior to the nomination meeting.

9 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: Thank you.

10 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Right. I understand as  
11 well that throughout the country, there is a fee that is  
12 required to become a Party member?

13 MS. LUCY WATSON: There is, yes.

14 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: And does the amount  
15 vary by region?

16 MS. LUCY WATSON: It does. By province, yes.

17 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Fair enough.

18 We don't need to get into all the details of  
19 it. I understand federally it's \$10. Is that right?

20 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes. Yeah.

21 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: What forms of payment  
22 are accepted?

23 MS. LUCY WATSON: We accept payment by credit  
24 card, and that is limited to Visa, MasterCard, Amex. We  
25 accept cash payment, payment by cheque. I think that's the  
26 extent of it.

27 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Does the name  
28 and address on the credit card that someone uses to pay for

1       their membership have to match the name and address that the  
2       person is giving as their -- as their address and identity?

3               **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Currently, our system  
4       doesn't allow for us to compare those two pieces of  
5       information, so it would only be identified through a manual  
6       check.

7               **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Are bulk  
8       purchases or bulk memberships allowed?

9               **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There's no such thing as  
10       bulk memberships. There may be an instance where an  
11       individual nomination contestant or leadership contestant  
12       goes out and undertakes a membership drive using paper forms,  
13       and so might go door to door, might go to an event with a  
14       bunch of paper forms and encourages people to sign up for a  
15       membership. Those might be submitted by one individual, but  
16       I wouldn't consider it -- you know, it's bulk in that there  
17       are -- there could potentially be a few membership  
18       applications that are being delivered to the Party for  
19       processing at one time, but there's -- the only -- the only  
20       membership that would possibly fall into the category of bulk  
21       membership would actually be a family or a household  
22       membership where multiple people who are living in the same  
23       house, household, or in the same family can apply for  
24       membership as a group. And so that, you know, might be four  
25       or five people who are living in one household.

26               **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Does the Party have any  
27       ways of detecting suspicious activity around new Party  
28       memberships or confirming the legitimacy of Party

1 memberships?

2 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We do.

3 In the instance -- maybe just going back to  
4 your question around bulk memberships, in the event we  
5 received a volume of paper memberships, which doesn't happen  
6 frequently at all, but if we received a high volume of paper  
7 memberships, we do have the ability and we have undertaken  
8 spot checks of those memberships to confirm that the  
9 individual application was, in fact, submitted by the  
10 individual who's named on the form, that they did intend to  
11 sign up for membership in the Party, and that it is -- that  
12 they did make payment for the membership.

13 So we will undertake a review of those  
14 memberships.

15 And then in terms of memberships that may  
16 come in online, we do have the ability to flag repeated use  
17 of one credit card, for example. So if one card is being  
18 used to pay for multiple memberships, that will be noted in  
19 the system.

20 We also receive daily reports on our  
21 membership signups and our membership numbers, so if there  
22 were a spike in memberships, it would be immediately evident  
23 to us that there was some activity happening in a particular  
24 riding and would prompt a conversation, an internal  
25 conversation about what the nature of that activity was.

26 So it could well be somebody who's preparing  
27 for a nomination race, in which case we would -- it would be  
28 easily explainable. But if we weren't, you know, able to

1 understand what that activity was, we would look into it  
2 further.

3 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And by "look into it  
4 further", what kind of checks or inquiries might you do in  
5 this instance?

6 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** It could involve  
7 conversation with the organizer or the staff person who's on  
8 the ground who might have greater familiarity with activity  
9 in the region, but it might also include reaching out to the  
10 folks who had signed up to ask them whether or not they did,  
11 in fact, sign up for membership in the Party and confirming  
12 that they had made payment from their personal funds.

13 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Are there any ways of  
14 detecting suspicious activity around cash memberships?

15 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That would be the spot  
16 check that I just referenced in terms of the larger volume of  
17 membership applications, and that is simply a matter of  
18 contacting the folks who have submitted an application form  
19 with a cash payment and asking for them to confirm that they  
20 did indeed make that payment and that they are in fact the  
21 person who had submitted the application form.

22 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And who does these  
23 checks? Is it the federal party or is it the provincial or  
24 regional party that typically is accepting the actual  
25 memberships?

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** It varies. It varies. So  
27 in some instances, it might be easier to deliver membership  
28 forms to a provincial office. In others, it might be simpler

1 just to deliver them to the federal office. So it depends in  
2 part on who has the resources to undertake the spot check.  
3 It depends on whether or not it's a federal nomination or a  
4 provincial nomination in terms of who is primarily  
5 responsible for undertaking that work. And it will be staff  
6 of the party.

7 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And when you  
8 talk about transactions or memberships being flagged and  
9 these discussions occurring and maybe some investigations  
10 taking place, are there protocols or rules about it, or is it  
11 a discretionary decision?

12 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I don't know -- I have not  
13 undertaken this process since I became the national director.  
14 When I was the provincial director in Ontario, we did have a  
15 set protocol that we followed when we were undertaking this  
16 type of check.

17 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And are you  
18 aware of -- is there -- is there a federal -- at the federal  
19 level, is there a protocol?

20 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I don't know that there's  
21 anything that is -- I haven't come across anything, but  
22 again, it hasn't been an issue in the number of months that  
23 I've been the national director.

24 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay.

25 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** But I think, you know,  
26 there are staff who have undertaken this work in the past,  
27 and so, you know, they would lead the process to ensure that  
28 it was consistent and that we were, you know, approaching it

1 with the degree of, frankly, sensitivity that it needs to be  
2 approached with.

3 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. I'm just  
4 wondering, if there's no sort of nationwide set of protocols  
5 for all branches of the party, can you -- is it possible that  
6 there are different levels of scrutiny, different triggers,  
7 different knowledge level in the folks who are doing this  
8 kind of investigation or looking at these sorts of issues  
9 from region to region?

10 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** You know, yes, because  
11 people are just human, but it's -- to be really clear, there  
12 would be a significant number of conversations. There would  
13 be a lot of communication happening about this if it were the  
14 case that a volume of membership applications were submitted  
15 and needed to be -- and obviously warranted a check. There  
16 would be conversations that were happening amongst folks in  
17 the federal party office and in a provincial office.

18 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** All right. And just to  
19 turn to a slightly different area, which is donations to the  
20 party, are there any differences in the way that the party  
21 receives and processes donations, as opposed to membership  
22 fees?

23 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Any difference in terms of  
24 just the straight up processing?

25 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Yeah.

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No. The only difference is  
27 that a membership fee would be coded differently at the  
28 backend for the accounting staff so that we can appropriately

1 track membership fees versus donations. But I think that  
2 would be the only distinction.

3 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And in terms of  
4 whether the party has any ways of detecting suspicious  
5 contributions to the party, are there any differences in that  
6 respect? Does the party have ways of detecting suspicious  
7 donations?

8 MS. LUCY WATSON: Again, if one credit card  
9 was being used to make multiple donations in different  
10 people's names, that would be flagged. We only accept Visa,  
11 Mastercard, Amex, and obviously all of those credit card  
12 companies have their own internal checks against fraud.

13 We receive a daily report about donations,  
14 similar to the membership report. We receive a daily  
15 donation report. And so if there were spikes in donations,  
16 if there was a spike in the number of max donations that the  
17 party was receiving, that would be identified within 24  
18 hours.

19 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And if there  
20 were any sort of flags or checks on donations, again, they  
21 may be dealt with at the federal level, they may be dealt  
22 with at the provincial/regional level? Is that right?

23 MS. LUCY WATSON: Any donations to the  
24 federal party flow through the federal party's  
25 infrastructure.

26 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Right. Okay.

27 MS. LUCY WATSON: So the provincial parties  
28 have their own infrastructure and process donations

1 provincially.

2 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: All right. Okay.

3 MS. LUCY WATSON: So it would only be those  
4 that were flowing to the federal party.

5 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Just to briefly  
6 -- we'll get back. We've spoken about membership now and  
7 then we can come back -- or sorry, there's one other aspect  
8 of membership to speak about, which was alluded to earlier,  
9 which is the age requirement. And without getting into all  
10 the detail, the upshot of it is that the minimum age to vote  
11 in an NDP nomination contest is either 12, 13, or 14,  
12 depending on the region you're in.

13 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

14 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Is that essentially  
15 correct?

16 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

17 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And there's more  
18 detail in the interview summary, but I won't trouble everyone  
19 with those fine points.

20 We've already spoken a little about the  
21 voting process for in-person nomination contests.

22 MS. LUCY WATSON: M'hm.

23 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: I understand the NDP  
24 also allows virtual nomination meetings. Is that right?

25 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes. That was obviously  
26 more prevalent during covid. During this cycle, I can't say  
27 with absolute certainty whether or not there's been a virtual  
28 -- I think there has been one virtual nomination meeting that



1 I can think of, but the vast majority are in person.

2 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Let me see if I  
3 can summarize this accurately. When there's a virtual  
4 nomination meeting, there's no check of a person's  
5 identification? Is that correct?

6 MS. LUCY WATSON: Like, form of ID?

7 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Yeah.

8 MS. LUCY WATSON: Correct.

9 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay.

10 MS. LUCY WATSON: That is my understanding.

11 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: And the way that you --  
12 the measure that you take to get the electronic ballot to the  
13 right person is you send it to the email address that's on  
14 file with the party for that person? Is that correct?

15 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yeah, and we use a third-  
16 party voting system. So it's removed from the party staff.  
17 We use an external vendor to support that work.

18 Maybe just to back up a second. So in order  
19 to be eligible to vote in a nomination meeting, one has to  
20 meet all of the membership criteria. One has to have  
21 registered or applied to be a member 45 days in advance of  
22 the nomination meeting. The nomination contestants then have  
23 the ability to review all of the memberships that have --  
24 that are active within the riding and are folks who are  
25 eligible to vote in the nomination meeting. So there's a  
26 level of scrutiny that is applied by all of the nomination  
27 contestants. I think I go into detail in my submissions, but  
28 there is a process through which they can appeal names that

1 appear, members that appear on that list, and then there's a  
2 process by which I have to consider those appeals and make a  
3 decision as to whether or not the membership is valid.

4 The -- we then provide that list and the  
5 contact information to the external vendor, who is then  
6 responsible for ensuring that the folks on the membership  
7 list receive -- I think they get a code. They have to use  
8 the code in order to log in in order to cast their ballot.

9 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Let me just give  
10 you a scenario though. In a virtual nomination contest,  
11 someone goes on the website, they sign up, they give a name,  
12 they give an address and the riding, they give an email  
13 address. Would it not be the case that they might well be  
14 able to cast a ballot without ever having to show proof of  
15 their identity or their residency, obviously beyond their own  
16 say so?

17 MS. LUCY WATSON: There is a possibility,  
18 yes.

19 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Do you think that that  
20 is something of a vulnerability in the NDP's nomination  
21 processes?

22 MS. LUCY WATSON: I do think it is a  
23 vulnerability. But again, we -- the vast majority of our  
24 nomination meetings are held in person. The membership lists  
25 are scrutinized by the nomination contestants. The  
26 nomination contestants, for the most part, reach out to  
27 people who appear on that membership list in order to solicit  
28 their support for their candidacy. Party staff interact with

1 the members who appear on the membership list. So while we  
2 may not currently require a form of government ID to support  
3 that application, there are a number of other touch points  
4 that I think guard against the possibility of there being  
5 foreign interference in that regard.

6 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. I want to turn  
7 to the vetting of nomination contestants. I understand that  
8 the NDP does vet nomination contestants; is that right?

9 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We do.

10 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And whose  
11 responsibility is that ultimately?

12 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Well, it's the  
13 responsibility of the federal party. We have a staff team  
14 who are dedicated to undertaking this work. The applicant,  
15 the nomination -- the potential nomination contestant will  
16 submit paper -- we have a form that they are required to  
17 complete. They submit that information to the team of  
18 vetters, and the vetters review the information they've been  
19 provided. They also look at a number of other sources, and  
20 they then make a recommendation as to whether or not the  
21 individual should be approved to seek the nomination or not  
22 approved.

23 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Does the party do  
24 anything to scrutinize potential nomination candidates --  
25 I've got that right -- for foreign interference  
26 vulnerability? And whether that means concerns that the  
27 person is a witting or unwitting proxy or that they might be  
28 vulnerable to foreign interference.

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, we do.

2                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And how does the  
3 party do that?

4                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There are a number of  
5 questions on the questionnaire that provide some insight,  
6 including questions around political activity, involvement in  
7 clubs, associations, and if it's the case that we think that  
8 there has -- that there is a potential, we follow up with an  
9 interview. So we'll have one of our staff spend time  
10 speaking with the person and exploring some of those issues  
11 and concerns with them directly.

12                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I understand that over  
13 the last several years the party has had various interactions  
14 with government security and intelligence agencies, SITE  
15 being the most obvious one. I'm wondering if the party's  
16 been provided any training or training resources by  
17 government to help the party in that vetting process?

18                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There was a memo, a manual  
19 that was provided through Minister Leblanc's office, and I'm  
20 just trying to think if it included guidance in this regard.  
21 I don't recall, but, no, not in any of the interactions that  
22 I've had with the SITE Task Force have we been provided with  
23 guidance or best practices in terms of the vetting process.

24                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Would more resources or  
25 training in that area assist the party in vetting candidates?

26                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, that would be helpful.

27                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Just one final  
28 point, so I understand that the end result of the vetting

1 process is a potential nomination candidate gets a sort of  
2 thumbs up or thumbs down. If the person gets a thumbs up,  
3 until what point can the party withdraw its approval for the  
4 nomination candidate?

5 MS. LUCY WATSON: At any point in the  
6 process.

7 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: I want to turn briefly  
8 to leadership contests in the NDP, if I could. I understand  
9 that there are no sort of standing leadership contest rules;  
10 is that right? They're drafted *ad hoc*?

11 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yeah, that's correct. For  
12 every -- in advance of a leadership contest, rules are  
13 drafted and are taken to the Federal Council for review and  
14 adoption.

15 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And I understand  
16 -- is it right that in the -- well, the last NDP leadership  
17 contest was 2017?

18 MS. LUCY WATSON: M'hm.

19 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And what form of  
20 voting occurred in that contest?

21 MS. LUCY WATSON: I believe it was all  
22 online.

23 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Do you know what  
24 kind of identity verification occurred in that leadership  
25 contest?

26 MS. LUCY WATSON: Could not speak to that.

27 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Has the party  
28 given any thought to how concerns about foreign interference

1 might impact the rules in the next leadership context,  
2 whenever that should occur?

3 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, that will be a factor.  
4 We have not -- we do not anticipate a leadership race anytime  
5 soon, but when it is time, in the very distant future, we  
6 will add that as one of the considerations.

7 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Fair enough. One  
8 question around that, has the party historically done vetting  
9 of leadership candidates?

10 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I can't speak to previous  
11 leadership contests. I believe there was a vetting process  
12 of sorts for the 2017 leadership contest, but I couldn't say  
13 with absolute certainty.

14 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Is that  
15 something the party will consider implementing or  
16 strengthening in the future?

17 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, absolutely.

18 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** All right. Are there  
19 any resources that would assist the party, again, when the  
20 time comes in the future to ensure that its leadership  
21 processes are secure?

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I think, you know, we've --  
23 we heard a bit this morning about resources. The reality is  
24 that all of these exercises are resource intensive, so the  
25 reality is that finances are an issue. I think it would also  
26 be instructive and helpful to have guidance, guidelines, best  
27 practices, especially from those who are experts in the  
28 field, who understand the ways in which foreign interference

1       could come into play within the context of a leadership race.  
2       Recommendations as to how to guard against that would also be  
3       very welcome.

4               **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I want to turn to cyber  
5       security. I understand that the party has taken steps to  
6       strengthen its IT infrastructure, and I'm hesitant to go into  
7       too much detail because I'm not a ---

8               **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I'm hesitant to answer.

9               **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** --- technical expert.  
10      You know, fair enough. We're in the same boat. I appreciate  
11      that.

12              **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Someone said yesterday  
13      that you should call your kids.

14              **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Maybe too much eye  
15      rolling if I do that, but as I understand from the interview  
16      summary, and this information may have come from Mr. Calvert  
17      who's a little more informed and maybe a little younger than  
18      I am as well, that some of the changes to the NDP IT  
19      infrastructure have included a robust firewall, a whitelist  
20      system, which is described in the interview summary, and  
21      constant monitoring of the network; is that right?

22              **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That's right. We also work  
23      with an external consultant who works very closely with a  
24      team to ensure that we are applying best practices. We have  
25      somebody who's on staff full time who is responsible for this  
26      work. And then, obviously, there are other members on staff  
27      who know a lot more than I do about these matters, but the  
28      consultant that we work with is quite reputable, reliable,

1 and has been -- has provided some helpful guidance in this  
2 regard.

3 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Has the party  
4 had contact with the Cyber Centre?

5 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

6 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And has the  
7 Cyber Centre been helpful in its dealings with the party?

8 MS. LUCY WATSON: I haven't had direct  
9 contact with the Centre. Jesse Calvert, National Deputy  
10 Director, has been in contact with them. I think in some  
11 ways it has been helpful around very specific issues, but  
12 more generally, I think it has not been a great source of  
13 support or advice.

14 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Are there  
15 further measures that the Cyber Centre has recommended or  
16 suggested might be things that the party could explore that  
17 the party has not explored?

18 MS. LUCY WATSON: Not to my knowledge.

19 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Is -- in your  
20 view, does the party have the resources to sufficiently  
21 safeguard its electronic infrastructure?

22 MS. LUCY WATSON: While I'm confident in the  
23 safeguards that we have in place currently, I think I am also  
24 keenly aware that this is a fast-moving issue, if you will,  
25 and, no, I don't have confidence, frankly, that the party or  
26 parties have sufficient resources to meet the challenges that  
27 are in the future. And I think, you know, that's something  
28 that I speak to in -- we speak to in the interview, that



1       there should be some consideration to supporting the  
2       political parties and enhancing and bolstering their security  
3       when it comes to our online activities.

4                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And does that mean more  
5       advice, more manuals, or money, or what are we talking about?

6                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** All of the above.

7                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I want to turn to a  
8       slightly different topic still in this domain. Candidates  
9       and campaign staff, where do they get their devices, like,  
10      their cell phones, their computers, their laptops that  
11      they're using to engage in campaigning and fundraising during  
12      an election campaign?

13                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** So individual candidates  
14      and their campaign team specifically?

15                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Yeah.

16                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** They are primarily  
17      responsible for sourcing their equipment. In some instances,  
18      they rent the equipment. In other, I'm sure, that people are  
19      using their personal equipment.

20                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Do candidates  
21      and campaign staff receive the same level of protection from  
22      cyber intrusion that the NDP's internal systems have?

23                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No. There are -- you know,  
24      candidates are provided with a Party email, and so that Party  
25      email would be protected in the same way that, say, my Party  
26      email is protected, so it's sort of, you know, in some  
27      respects no, but in others where they have an email address  
28      that is owned and administered by the Party, they would

1 benefit from those same protections.

2 But I would say that it is uneven.

3 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Like features  
4 like -- and again, we may not -- I don't -- maybe you don't  
5 know exactly what these mean, but things like a robust  
6 firewall, a whitelist system, the constant monitoring that  
7 the Party has are not offered by the Party to candidates and  
8 campaign staff. Is that fair?

9 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That is fair.

10 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. We've heard some  
11 evidence this week that MPs will sometimes maintain a  
12 personal device that they will only use for their campaign  
13 work or fundraising, right, so work outside their duties as  
14 MPs. And it's really the same question. Does the Party  
15 offer to MPs for their personal devices that are used for  
16 campaigning the same protections that the NDP's internal  
17 systems have, or are they in the same boat as every other  
18 candidate?

19 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Not to my knowledge, no.

20 Now, those MPs or incumbents would be using a  
21 Party email address and, you know, we host web pages on the  
22 Party site, so those channels would be protected in a way  
23 that the Party's central channels, if you will, are  
24 protected.

25 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** But the devices  
26 themselves are essentially up to the MP to procure and  
27 protect and ---

28 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah. We don't provide

1       those.

2                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:**   Okay.   Does the Party  
3       offer advice or IT support for MPs' or candidates' personal  
4       devices?

5                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:**   We do provide guidance to  
6       candidates and their campaign managers or campaign teams  
7       about best practices, yes.   And of course, if we had a  
8       candidate contact us and say that they'd encountered an  
9       issue, we would work with them to resolve it.

10                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:**   We imagine a scenario  
11       where we have a foreign actor who accesses a candidate's, you  
12       know, personal device that's being used for campaigning and  
13       fundraising that may contain very personal, maybe  
14       embarrassing, private information about that person.   Do you  
15       agree that that is a potential vulnerability in the system?

16                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:**   I do.

17                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:**   I want to turn to  
18       disinformation.

19                         Do you think there's a risk of foreign  
20       interference occurring through disinformation campaigns?

21                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:**   I do, very much so.   And in  
22       fact, just thinking back to your -- one of your earlier  
23       questions about those areas in which -- those areas I would  
24       identify as being most vulnerable, this is one.   And I  
25       neglected to mention that, but this is most certainly one.

26                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:**   Okay.   And has the  
27       Party experienced disinformation that it believes may be from  
28       a foreign source?

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

2                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Do you want to  
3 elaborate on that at all?

4                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** My only -- my only  
5 hesitation there is I am not equipped to investigate, so I  
6 can only -- I can only draw certain conclusions based on the  
7 information that we have. But yeah, we've seen, you know,  
8 bots, we've seen fake accounts. We've -- you know, all of  
9 the things that are delineated in various documents that have  
10 been put before this Commission, we've experienced all of  
11 those on our Party accounts and on our leader's account.

12                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And in terms of the  
13 Party's own beliefs or suspicions, do you believe they're  
14 coming from domestic sources, other political Parties, that  
15 sort of thing?

16                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No, I suspect it's external  
17 and it's foreign actors.

18                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** What mechanisms exist -  
19 - well, let's start with within the Party to say track and  
20 respond to disinformation?

21                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** It's all done on a case-by-  
22 case basis. We don't have the resources to be tracking this  
23 in any systematic way, so you know, our -- members of our  
24 staff will identify posts that they have come across or that  
25 have been forwarded to them or they'll notice that there is  
26 really unusual activity that's happening on a -- on one of  
27 our posts. They'll identify it. We will report it out to  
28 the SITE Task Force and we will also connect -- contact, if

1 we have a contact, whichever social media channel has been --  
2 is involved, so for example, Meta.

3 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And how effective are  
4 the complaints to, for example, Meta?

5 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Mixed results, I would say.  
6 The response has -- the response time has been very -- has  
7 really lagged, has been really slow.

8 I will say that I think it's picked up over  
9 the last couple of months in terms of how quickly we're  
10 hearing back from them, but it can take anywhere from five to  
11 10 days to receive a response and to know that action has  
12 been taken in response to a complaint that we have submitted  
13 to them.

14 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. In addition to -  
15 - I guess I should say, so Meta, as I understand it, is the  
16 parent company for Facebook and Instagram.

17 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah.

18 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Are there other social  
19 media platforms where the Party has identified  
20 disinformation?

21 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Certainly X, or Twitter.

22 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And how  
23 responsive has X been to complaints?

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** They could only be  
25 responsive if we could contact them. We don't have a contact  
26 name, so not responsive.

27 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Very lawyerly point,  
28 but a fair one.

1                   Have you gotten any help from government? I  
2                   know you said you reported your concerns to SITE. Maybe you  
3                   can expand on that and let us know kind of what kind of  
4                   response you were able to get.

5                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Sure. We've reported it  
6                   out to SITE and, again, I would say that the response varies  
7                   in terms of how much information is provided back to us about  
8                   what action has been taken and what the outcome is.

9                   We also sought a meeting with the SITE Task  
10                  Force about this issue. I don't remember when it was. I'm  
11                  sure I say that -- I must mention it somewhere in my  
12                  documents, but fairly recently we sought out a meeting with  
13                  the SITE Task Force to address this issue very specifically.  
14                  And I will say it was helpful in that it was an opportunity  
15                  to connect with a number of folks who were involved in the  
16                  task force, but the feedback or the advice that we received  
17                  was really, really basic and didn't speak to the specific  
18                  issues that we were seeing and experiencing with regard to  
19                  bots, et cetera.

20                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Do you have any  
21                  opinions or recommendations on the role of government in  
22                  countering mis and disinformation?

23                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do make some -- we do  
24                  make some recommendations in my submission.

25                  I think that we would -- we would certainly  
26                  recommend that government regulate -- and I think this is a  
27                  proposal that has been put forward, but that government  
28                  should regulate social media companies. Specifically, we

1 have called for the creation of an independent social media  
2 watchdog for legislation to bring greater transparency to  
3 social media companies' algorithms.

4 We also, you know, make recommendations in  
5 terms of just greater support for cyber security, which I  
6 know isn't necessarily the same thing, but it is connected.

7 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I want to ask you  
8 briefly about what resources the Party provides to various  
9 folks involved in the Party processes. So for example, what  
10 kind of resources or training is provided in relation to  
11 foreign interference, of course, to candidates?

12 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** None to date that I could -  
13 - that I could identify, but we are in the process of  
14 developing a manual that will be provided to campaign staff,  
15 both central campaign staff and the local campaign staff.  
16 There will be -- as part of that manual will include how to  
17 identify and respond to foreign interference.

18 It's my hope that the recommendations that  
19 come out of this Commission's work, recommendations that  
20 maybe flow from Elections Canada will inform the content of  
21 that section of the manual. And we've had discussions about  
22 providing training to candidates.

23 Again, we are certainly -- we are not experts  
24 on this matter, so I would be looking to the Commission, to  
25 Elections Canada, maybe the SITE Task Force for guidance, in  
26 terms of what we should be bringing to our candidates and how  
27 we should be training them on this.

28 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And just to square the

1 circle on that, so at present when we talk about campaign  
2 staff, they're also not receiving any resources about foreign  
3 interference at this time.

4 MS. LUCY WATSON: Correct.

5 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: The plan is to get ---

6 MS. LUCY WATSON: But we really don't have a  
7 lot of campaign staff right now because we're, you know, not  
8 into the -- not fully into the cycle. So -- but that's  
9 correct.

10 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: I want to talk briefly  
11 about the mechanisms available to the party to respond to  
12 foreign interference if an allegation arose. So essentially,  
13 how would the party respond if it received information that  
14 -- let's start with a candidate may be involved in foreign  
15 interference activities?

16 MS. LUCY WATSON: That would be escalated to  
17 me.

18 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And what --  
19 again, I'm sure it's fact-specific, but what kinds of steps  
20 might you take? What tools do you have available to you to  
21 address an allegation of foreign interference? Again, I  
22 guess it could be from or against a candidate.

23 MS. LUCY WATSON: Right. It's not something  
24 that I have had to undertake; at this point this is all a bit  
25 theoretical. But I would certainly speak with the individual  
26 in question, and I would more than likely seek the support of  
27 the SITE Task Force, in terms of determining how best to  
28 approach the situation.



1                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Right. Sitting here  
2 today, do you feel like you have the expertise or training to  
3 know how to address ---

4                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

5                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** --- a problem like  
6 that?

7                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

8                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And similar questions  
9 if I were to ask you about, you know, campaign staff or party  
10 staff. Again, we know you have access to the SITE Task  
11 Force, do you feel that you have the training and expertise  
12 to address problems if they came up with those folks,  
13 campaign workers, party staff?

14                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

15                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay.

16                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No. That's something that  
17 I hope comes out of the work of this Commission.

18                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Just very briefly, to  
19 turn to SITE and the briefings that have been provided.  
20 First of all, in fairness to you, I understand you don't have  
21 security clearance quite yet, and you have never attended any  
22 classified briefings, but you're aware of Mr. Calvert's view,  
23 if I can -- tell me if this is correct -- that the SITE  
24 briefings, generally speaking, have been useful for building  
25 a relationship with the S&I community, but the briefings  
26 themselves have not provided a lot of useful information?

27                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That's my understanding,  
28 yes.

1                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I understand as well  
2                   that there was a SITE briefing offered in 2024 in relation to  
3                   the Durham byelection, and the NDP was the only party that  
4                   attended that briefing. Do you have any information about  
5                   that?

6                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I couldn't speak to whether  
7                   or not other parties attended. I do know that we had a  
8                   representative that attended that briefing.

9                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Just very  
10                  briefly, EDAs, Electoral District Associations; we call them  
11                  riding association?

12                 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, yeah.

13                 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. So there have  
14                  been some allegations that there might be vulnerabilities in  
15                  riding associations, specifically the foreign entities could  
16                  attempt to influence or gain control of an EDA's board, okay?

17                 I want to ask you first of all about the role  
18                  that EDAs play in the NDP. Do they play an important role in  
19                  the NDP's internal processes?

20                 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** They do. They drive a lot  
21                  of the work of the party. So riding associations are -- have  
22                  a number of roles. They can -- they select folks to attend  
23                  our conventions; they are, in many instances, responsible for  
24                  overseeing candidates' search work; for helping to facilitate  
25                  nomination meetings; for recruiting members; for engaging  
26                  folks in the riding on issues, campaigns that the NDP is  
27                  undertaking; feeding back information and reflections on what  
28                  they're hearing locally to the governing bodies of the party.

1                   Probably there are a number of other  
2       responsibilities that fall to them, but those are some ---

3                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Do they also propose  
4       policy resolutions ---

5                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah.

6                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** --- that then get voted  
7       on ---

8                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** They do.

9                   **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** --- in national  
10      convention?

11                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. Or they can.

12                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And that's important  
13      because that obviously affects the image of the party, but  
14      also can actually affect the platform of the party.

15                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That's right.

16                  **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. If concerns  
17      arose about either a member of a EDA or a whole EDA board, in  
18      terms of there being foreign influence or foreign  
19      interference with respect to it, is there anything the party  
20      can do to address that?

21                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. If that was a concern  
22      -- and I will say again that that is not something that has  
23      been a concern to date, or an issue that has been raised with  
24      us to date -- the National Director or the table officers,  
25      the executive, would have a responsibility to take action to  
26      address the concerns.

27                        You know, really the issues that come to me  
28      as the National Director are more about interpersonal

1 relationships and politics and dynamics, but you know, we --  
2 I certainly have the authority, as do the table officers and  
3 executive to take action if there were serious concerns of  
4 this nature.

5 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. That's all my  
6 time. Thank you very much.

7 MS. LUCY WATSON: Thank you.

8 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you. So the first  
9 one will be counsel for the Concern Group.

10 (SHORT PAUSE)

11 --- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. NEIL CHANTLER:

12 MR. NEIL CHANTLER: Good afternoon.

13 MS. LUCY WATSON: Good afternoon.

14 MR. NEIL CHANTLER: My name's Neil Chantler;  
15 I'm counsel for the Chinese Canadian Concern Group.

16 We've heard lots of evidence at this Inquiry  
17 that foreign interference comes in many different forms, but  
18 one of the most insidious of those forms is perhaps efforts  
19 or the manipulation of our contests for riding nominees and  
20 perhaps leaders in a party by a foreign state. Do you accept  
21 that the political parties and their executives have a  
22 gatekeeper role to play with that type of interference.

23 MS. LUCY WATSON: How would you define  
24 "Gatekeeper" in that context?

25 MR. NEIL CHANTLER: Ensuring that your  
26 membership base are, in fact, meeting the criteria that have  
27 been established for membership in the party, the rules are  
28 being followed, and so on.

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, we have a  
2 responsibility.

3                   **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** And we've been over today  
4 some of the rules that the NDP requires for membership,  
5 including an individual provide their address; attest to  
6 their citizenship or PR status; provide contact information,  
7 and attest that the membership fees that they're paying come  
8 from their own source of funds.

9                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

10                  **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Correct? And people are  
11 expected to be honest when they provide this information.

12                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

13                  **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Essentially we're working  
14 with an honour system; correct?

15                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** To a large extent, yes.

16                  **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** And what are the  
17 consequences of not being honest? Is it simply removal from  
18 the party?

19                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, at this point, yes.

20                  **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** And do you agree with the  
21 general proposition that bad actors, agents from foreign  
22 states, for example, who might be trying to join the party  
23 for malign purposes, are not going to be dissuaded from  
24 providing false information on an application form by those  
25 kinds of consequences?

26                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I don't disagree with that.

27                  **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** And a malign actor might  
28 join a party for a variety of different reasons, but one

1 point at which foreign interference might occur is, of  
2 course, voting; voting at a riding nomination contest or at a  
3 party leadership convention.

4 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

5 MR. NEIL CHANTLER: And I'll paint a bit of a  
6 hypothetical example for you and reflect it upon the NDP's  
7 current rules. And it's a hypothetical but it's very much,  
8 as they say in the movies, based on a true story, okay?

9 And the story, we can imagine a riding  
10 nomination contest in which a foreign state takes an  
11 interest, perhaps because a candidate for the nomination is  
12 friendly to that state, or in some way coöpted by that state.  
13 And let's just say there are a number of students who are in  
14 a neighbouring riding who might be under the manipulation or  
15 control of that foreign state and may be under some pressure  
16 to obey commands or orders or threats from the consulate of  
17 their home country, to participate in this behaviour, or  
18 risk, perhaps, their stay in Canada. And because of that,  
19 the state's malintent, these students have been encouraged to  
20 sign up on your online membership form 45 days in advance.  
21 And they've provided their required information, although the  
22 acquired information is inaccurate. There's no real  
23 consequences to providing a false address, for example.

24 And it doesn't really matter how they pay for  
25 their membership, because the party's system doesn't allow  
26 cross-checking between the address and the payment, you've  
27 given evidence today.

28 There's no red flags here. They've applied

1 online. There hasn't been a stack of papers. You testified  
2 that might be a red flag. And it's a riding nomination  
3 contest, so there's going to be a spike in applications for  
4 party membership; right? That's not going to be a red flag.

5 So so far, the party has no ability to detect  
6 this behaviour at all. And then when the individuals arrive  
7 on voting day, and they've ben provided with, let's say, a  
8 piece of mail, perhaps a fraudulent piece of mail that has an  
9 address on it, within the riding that matches the address  
10 that they falsely attested was their address when they signed  
11 up online.

12 In those circumstances, they would freely be  
13 permitted to vote in that riding contest; correct?

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There's also an additional  
15 layer of scrutiny that's supplied by the nomination  
16 contestants. So once that 45-day window has closed, the  
17 party then generates the membership list, the updated  
18 membership list, generates that, provides it to all of the  
19 nomination contestants who scrutinize it.

20 So what I would say is that -- and this is  
21 not at all to say that there isn't, you know, the possibility  
22 for someone to, you know, thwart the system, if you were, in  
23 the way that you have described. But the very fact that  
24 nomination contestants have the ability to scrutinize the  
25 membership list means that there are folks who are within the  
26 riding, within the community, who have contacts, who know the  
27 membership, it gives them the ability to identify any issues  
28 or red flags. And that does happen. There are nomination

1 contestants who challenge members on the list and it triggers  
2 an investigation into that individual's membership and  
3 whether or not they are in fact a member, or eligible to be a  
4 member, or eligible to be voting in the nomination meeting.

5 So I would add that piece of information in  
6 terms of the process that we follow.

7 And then there's the -- there's also the  
8 riding association itself. The reality is, is that we are a  
9 pretty close-knit party and our riding association executive  
10 members and members generally have a very good understanding  
11 of who is engaged with the party, whether new or, you know,  
12 longstanding members.

13 And so -- and again, that's not say that  
14 there isn't the possibility, but I would say that given the  
15 nature of the NDP, the close sort of connections and  
16 relationships that folks have within a particular riding,  
17 there would be red flags in this instance. If there were  
18 folks who showed up out of nowhere, there was a mass sign up  
19 of members, there would be folks within the riding  
20 association and/or folks who were nomination contestants  
21 would more than likely raise a flag about that.

22 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Would you agree that it  
23 would be relatively easy to add some basic layers of  
24 protection to this system to further enhance the reliability  
25 of the information that you're getting from applicants for  
26 membership? Some degree of verifying an address, requiring a  
27 government ID in order to vote, for example, and not relying  
28 on a piece of mail, requiring source of funds or member



1 addresses to be verified in other ways? Would you agree  
2 there are other layers of protection that could be added into  
3 this system?

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do. We do ask for  
5 government ID though at nomination -- at in-person nomination  
6 meetings. It's only in the event the address doesn't match  
7 the one that we have on file that we seek additional  
8 confirmation like a utility bill.

9 I would say that -- so yes, I think there are  
10 other measures that one could certainly identify would be  
11 helpful.

12 I think my caution around that is that many  
13 of those would come at great expense. You know, there might  
14 be -- if we are looking for confirmation of identity by way  
15 of a piece of government ID when an individual applies for  
16 membership online, that's -- a completely different platform  
17 would be required in order to allow for that check at that  
18 point of membership application.

19 I think there's any number of best practices  
20 or guidance that could be provided to parties to support them  
21 in instituting best practices where appropriate and as  
22 feasible.

23 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Is some of the reluctance  
24 to add additional layers of protection since that your party  
25 might be disadvantaged, as compared to other parties? And if  
26 so, would it be easier if all parties were provided with  
27 appropriate regulations in this area that levelled the  
28 playing field?

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I think we would be  
2                   disadvantaged in terms of our resources. Yes. I think if  
3                   there were to be recommendations for political parties, those  
4                   recommendations would have to take into account I think the  
5                   unevenness or the, you know, the disparities between the  
6                   political parties in terms of the resources that we can  
7                   commit to this.

8                   **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Thank you.

9                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Thank you.

10                  **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.  
11                  Human Rights Coalition. Do you have any  
12                  questions? No questions?  
13                  The RCDA?

14                  **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:**

15                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Good afternoon.

16                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Hello.

17                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Guillaume Sirois for  
18                  the Russian-Canadian Democratic Alliance.

19                  I would like to ask the Court Reporter to  
20                  pull your witness summary. It's WIT87. Thank you.

21                  I will zero in on the disinformation issue,  
22                  which is obviously of great concern for the Russian diaspora.

23                  I'll go at paragraph 79, please.

24                  Yes, at paragraph 79, you talk about two  
25                  categories of misinformation or disinformation. The first  
26                  one is fraudsters that use Jagmeet Singh's name because he is  
27                  a well-known public figure, and mis or disinformation about  
28                  Mr. Singh. An example of the latter are fake news stories

1 about Mr. Singh.

2 "The NDP has seen "articles" that  
3 look like they are by the Toronto  
4 Star, with false and inflammatory  
5 headlines. These "articles" are  
6 placed as advertisements on social  
7 media."

8 I'm wondering if you've ever reported these articles to the  
9 Commissioner of Canada Elections?

10 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We have reported them to --  
11 we've provided these articles to the SITE Task Force and we  
12 have reported them to Meta.

13 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. But not to the  
14 Commissioner of Canada Elections?

15 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

16 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. And what was  
17 the SITE's response to these articles?

18 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** They acknowledged receipt  
19 and that was essentially the communication.

20 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Do you find this  
21 satisfactory?

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

23 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Earlier this week, Mr.  
24 Singh was heckled by demonstrators a few blocks away. One of  
25 them apparently called him a corrupted bastard. Do you  
26 believe that online rhetoric such as the one that's mentioned  
27 in your summary could lead to real life violence or threats  
28 against MPs or leaders of political parties?

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. Without question.

2                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Do you believe that  
3 this may have an impact on their work as MPs or political  
4 leaders?

5                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Without question.

6                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And you believe that  
7 those articles or advertisements are foreign interference.  
8 That's paragraph 81 that we see on the screen as well. Can  
9 you please explain why it's not domestic in nature and why  
10 you believe it's foreign interference?

11                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, again, we obviously  
12 don't have the ability to investigate in any way, but I -- we  
13 have no reason to believe that this is -- these are other  
14 political parties in Canada who are engaging in this  
15 activity. And we have not received any information from the  
16 SITE Task Force that would lead us to believe these are other  
17 domestic political parties who are engaging in this activity.

18                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** M'hm. And you also  
19 mention at paragraph 80 that:

20                               "The party has also seen activity on  
21 party social media accounts where  
22 thousands of fake accounts "follow"  
23 us, but due to the fact that they are  
24 fake, they don't actually engage with  
25 our content, which has the effect of  
26 suppressing the party's reach and  
27 engagement globally"

28                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** M'hm.

1                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** I'm not sure I really  
2 understand that sentence or that paragraph. What does it  
3 mean that when fake accounts follow the NDP?

4                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** So it might be follows, or  
5 it might be comments after social media posts. So the  
6 follows, as I understand it, and I am not an expert on social  
7 media or social media account management, but it has the  
8 effect of artificially ballooning the number of followers of  
9 our accounts, and then when those followers disappear, our  
10 account -- you know, the algorithm or whatever is out there  
11 that determines what appears in front of you is -- it's  
12 supressed. So we may look like, you know, in one day there  
13 might be a huge number of followers, and so -- but because  
14 it's artificially inflated and those followers then  
15 disappear, the account is minimized, is suppressed.

16                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** So you believe that --  
17 -

18                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Does that make sense?

19                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Yes. I believe it  
20 does. So you believe that, in other words, that the  
21 amplification of the NDP's messaging is being influenced by  
22 those fake accounts?

23                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

24                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. And this is  
25 also foreign interference in your view?

26                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

27                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Regarding social media  
28 companies, during your testimony, you talked about -- you

1 mentioned that Meta Canadian representatives takes five to 10  
2 days to respond, which is an improvement, as you've stated.  
3 But I'm wondering why is it problematic? Is it problematic  
4 that Meta's representatives only respond five to 10 days  
5 after highlighting the problem to them?

6 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, it's highly  
7 problematic. The -- sort of our general experience over the  
8 last number of months has been between five to 10 days in  
9 terms of response time. And by response time, I mean, you  
10 know, reporting back what action has been taken on our  
11 complaint. So it's the removal of the account that we've  
12 seen. It's the removal of the post, for example.

13 But we're very keenly aware that that could  
14 be some weeks or months after the first -- after the post was  
15 first circulated. We're only, you know, reporting it when we  
16 become aware of it, not when it first appears on social  
17 media. So the response time is very concerning. And I  
18 appreciate that social media platforms have their own  
19 internal processes that they follow, some of which is public  
20 and has been provided to us, but there's no real consistency  
21 in terms of how these posts are being dealt with, to my  
22 knowledge, and you know, the damage has been done ---

23 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** M'hm.

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** --- because the post has  
25 been in circulation, has not been, you know, has not been  
26 removed, has not been flagged for however long.

27 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** So for months -- weeks  
28 or months, that post has been circulating online, ---

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Could be.

2                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** --- possibly  
3 influencing Canadian views.

4                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Exactly. Exactly.

5                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay.

6                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We have no way of knowing  
7 that. And there's no transparency, I would add. There's no  
8 transparency around this -- these posts. We have no idea how  
9 long they've been in circulation. We have no idea how many  
10 views they have received. We have no idea how many times  
11 they have been copied and forwarded. And so even if it's  
12 removed, frankly, even if it's removed by Meta, the damage  
13 has been done in that it's been in circulation for however  
14 long. But also it -- you know, the probability that it has  
15 been replicated and then recirculated is high.

16                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** M'hm. It's like  
17 playing wack-a-mole.

18                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, exactly.

19                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And how often would  
20 you say that you make those sorts of complaints to Meta? Is  
21 it once a month? Once a week? What's the frequency?

22                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** It varies. There was a  
23 period about a month or six weeks ago where we were  
24 submitting something almost every other day.

25                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. During the  
26 byelection, or?

27                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

28                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay.

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No, it was actually prior  
2                   to that.

3                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay.

4                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah. Yeah. And again,  
5                   I'll just note that we don't have the internal resources to  
6                   be monitoring this kind of activity in the way that frankly  
7                   it needs to be monitored, given the really profound impact  
8                   that it has on the political landscape.

9                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And you mentioned also  
10                  that you've seen this kind of activity on other platforms,  
11                  such as Twitter, Google, YouTube. Do you have contacts with  
12                  any -- I know you've said no with Twitter, but do you have  
13                  contacts with the other platforms?

14                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I believe we do have a  
15                  contact with YouTube.

16                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay.

17                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah.

18                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And their response is  
19                  better than Facebook?

20                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I couldn't speak to it.  
21                  That's not one of the channels -- I've been very much engaged  
22                  on -- with Meta, because that's where we seem to be seeing a  
23                  lot of these posts. So I couldn't speak with any real  
24                  authority to the question of YouTube.

25                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. And so I  
26                  understand that -- do I understand correctly that the social  
27                  media platforms are not that helpful in helping to resolve  
28                  that problem at its root and the SITE Task Force at least, or



1 the Federal Government, is not either very helpful for the  
2 NDP? Do I understand correctly that you're essentially on  
3 your own to deal with these issues?

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** For the most part, yes. We  
5 appeal to Meta to remove the posts and then they undertake  
6 their own internal review as to whether or not the post  
7 violates their internal procedures, and then they make a  
8 decision as to whether to leave the post up or to remove it.  
9 But the onus is on us to identify those posts, to make the  
10 argument as to why it should be removed, and then to follow  
11 up on the status of Meta's decision making.

12 And I really can't speak at all to the  
13 process that the SITE Task Force takes when we submit these  
14 complaints. That is not known to me.

15 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And we don't need to  
16 pull it back up, but in your witness summary, you also say  
17 that you noticed an update already in misinformation or  
18 disinformation posts recently?

19 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. Yes.

20 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. Do you believe  
21 that -- I'll just take a step back. Maybe more from a policy  
22 perspective, but do you believe that voters have an interest  
23 in having access to a safe and healthy media ecosystem free  
24 from disinformation and foreign interference?

25 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do.

26 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** This can help make the  
27 votes more informed?

28 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Certainly can make the

1        dialogue, the discussion more informed. Yes.

2                    **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And do you believe  
3        that the government has a responsibility to protect that  
4        media ecosystem?

5                    **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do. What sorts of  
6        policies would you recommend to -- for the Federal Government  
7        to implement?

8                    **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** What sorts of policies  
9        would you recommend to -- for the Federal Government to  
10       implement?

11                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I would -- I think I would  
12       go back to one of the recommendations that I made in the  
13       interview that I did, in which I -- we -- the NDP has called  
14       for the creation of an independent social media watchdog, and  
15       for legislation to bring greater transparency around social  
16       media companies' algorithms.

17                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** I know I'm almost at  
18       the end of my questions, but I want to take a step back to  
19       the 2015 campaign. I understand you were the national  
20       campaign coordinator during that time?

21                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, I was.

22                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** We've heard through  
23       media reports that an individual named Mikhail Mikushin, also  
24       known as José Assis Giammaria, a Russian spy, volunteered for  
25       NDP candidate Sean Devine. Are you familiar with this event?

26                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Only very peripherally.

27                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Is it something you  
28       heard -- like, how did you get to learn about this event?

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No direct knowledge. Only  
2 through media reports.

3                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Do you believe that  
4 volunteering in a political party is a gateway for foreign  
5 interference?

6                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Volunteering for a  
7 political party? I think it depends entirely on what role  
8 you are playing as a volunteer. You know, the volunteer  
9 doesn't have any influence over policy or, you know, yeah, a  
10 volunteer doesn't have any influence over policy, doesn't  
11 have influence solely over who a candidate is, or the type of  
12 campaign that's being conducted. So I'd have to probably put  
13 more thought into it, but, you know, an individual volunteer  
14 who's putting up posters and lawns signs is not -- I don't  
15 think that there's a huge risk.

16                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. Perhaps my last  
17 question, this is something I -- I'm wondering if you've  
18 heard about Russia playing a role actively and trolling  
19 during the 2015 election. Is that something you heard about?

20                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

21                  **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. Maybe if it can  
22 help, Tom Mulcair did say during an interview on April 10<sup>th</sup>  
23 of this year that there -- I'm going to quote part of his  
24 statement, as early as the election of -- in 2015, he had  
25 received indication not from inside the government but from  
26 outside that Russia had been playing a role actively and  
27 trolling in that election. Is that something you heard about  
28 before?

1                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I couldn't speak to that,  
2       no.

3                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. Those are all  
4       my questions. Thank you.

5                   **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Thank you.

6                   **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Merci.

7                   **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.  
8       Counsel for Jenny Kwan?

9       **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:**

10                  **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Ms. Watson.

11                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Hello.

12                  **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Hello. So for the  
13       record, my name is Sujit Choudhry. I'm counsel for Jenny  
14       Kwan. So, Ms. Watson, there's a few themes that I was hoping  
15       we could discuss in the brief time we have. The first is  
16       TikTok. And I take it that you were present at some of the  
17       earlier testimony this morning, so I won't take you to the  
18       exhibits that were put into the record, but as I think it's  
19       now established that the -- that CSIS has taken a view that  
20       TikTok poses a threat to Canada's democratic processes  
21       because of its ownership structure and access to its data.  
22       So if we sort of take that as a given, I'm wondering how,  
23       one, you react to that? And in particular, do you think that  
24       political parties should remain active on that platform? And  
25       should their candidates be active, or how should they  
26       approach the fact of that intelligence?

27                  **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Right. I have not turned  
28       my mind to it. It's something I would have to put greater

1       thought into. What I can share with you is that before the  
2       party reestablished its TikTok account, and the very fact  
3       that I didn't know that we had reactivated our TikTok account  
4       is reflective of my non-use of TikTok, but I understand that  
5       staff members met with cyber security experts to talk about  
6       what best practices could be employed. And so, as a result,  
7       the party's TikTok account resides on a cell phone that is  
8       not used for any other purpose and is stationary with all of  
9       the location features disabled. So as I understand it, the  
10      practices that have been employed are those that were  
11      recommended by cyber security experts, and we've been assured  
12      that that will guard against the possibility of foreign  
13      interference.

14                   But to the bigger issues, the bigger  
15      questions, I cannot reflect on that right now. I'd have to  
16      put more thought into it.

17                   **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Okay. Thank you. So  
18      I'd like to shift to a different theme, which has to do with  
19      party memberships, eligibility to join a party, eligibility  
20      to vote in nominations, and I think that Mr. Krongold had  
21      covered -- has covered a lot of the ground that I had wanted  
22      to, but I wanted to kind of build on his questions to you and  
23      your evidence to ask you some questions about legal  
24      regulation, because I think that the questions and answers  
25      concern the steps that the NDP has taken on its own. But the  
26      question before the Commissioner, a question before the  
27      Commission is to what extent there should be legal  
28      requirements regarding, for example, who can join a political

1 party, who can vote in a nomination for a candidate or for a  
2 leader, and whether those should be somehow rooted, let's  
3 say, in amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* or some other  
4 statute. And I'm wondering have you -- could you offer us  
5 your thoughts on that issue?

6 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, that's -- it's not a  
7 conversation that we have had amongst the elected officials  
8 of the party, so I will say that what I offer up are more my  
9 personal opinions about it. I do have concerns about the way  
10 in which that, you know, legislation would interact with the  
11 internal decision-making of the party. We are very proud of  
12 the fact that our members play such a significant role in  
13 shaping the internal policies and procedures and  
14 infrastructure of the party and I would not want to see that  
15 lost. I would also share that we're also very, very deeply  
16 committed to creating a party that is accessible and open to  
17 Canadian citizens, permanent residents, folks who want to  
18 engage in the political process through the NDP. And so I  
19 wouldn't want to see that diluted in any way. So I think,  
20 you know, there are guidelines, there are best practices that  
21 we would welcome, but if we were to talk about legal  
22 requirements and legislation, that's something I would have  
23 to take away and put further thought into and have  
24 discussions with folks who are integral to the party's  
25 governance.

26 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** So just to pick up on  
27 that point, so, you know, political parties occupy a very  
28 kind of a liminal space in Canadian politics; right? They

1 sit adjacent to parliament and legislatures. They aren't  
2 formal state institutions, but those bodies couldn't really  
3 operate without parties.

4 MS. LUCY WATSON: Right.

5 MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY: Right. And so the  
6 question then is, is there some scope for minimal baselines  
7 or basic -- you know, that basically a minimum standard that  
8 parties should be expected to comply with as a legal matter  
9 but they can build upon, elaborate, vary as long as they  
10 comply with those basic requirements?

11 MS. LUCY WATSON: I think so, yes.

12 MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY: Okay.

13 MS. LUCY WATSON: And we do; right? The  
14 *Elections Act* does set out some of those criteria in terms of  
15 how we function and how candidate's campaigns function.

16 MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY: So just to kind of  
17 pursue that, one more point on that them, so the NSICOP  
18 report, which I think you must be familiar with, discussed  
19 the issue of foreign interference in nominations and also in  
20 leadership races. And it actually suggested that foreign  
21 interference in those particular forms of political party  
22 activity should be criminalized. Do you have a view about  
23 that?

24 MS. LUCY WATSON: I do agree it's something  
25 that should be taken very seriously, but I don't have a view  
26 as to whether or not it should be criminalized. I would have  
27 to put more thought into that.

28 MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY: Okay. And then I think

1 the last issue is one that I think has come up in some of the  
2 other questions, but I want to come back to it because I  
3 think you might -- I want to see if you have more to say.  
4 It's about funding and infrastructure and support. And so  
5 what I heard you say and particularly in response to Mr.  
6 Sirois' kind of questions about social media monitoring and  
7 how it seems to consume a lot of staff time, is that the  
8 expectations, kind of human resource and financial or  
9 otherwise, that are being thrust upon political parties by  
10 circumstance, by expectation and possibly by law at some  
11 point would be burdensome. And so I'm wondering what that  
12 specifically means do you think in terms of public financing  
13 and public support for certain functions? And what functions  
14 should sit within parties and perhaps what functions ought to  
15 be centralized perhaps in Elections Canada?

16 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, in my interview we  
17 did make a recommendation that there be some financial  
18 support or assistance with regard to bolstering our cyber  
19 security. I think that would be a hugely onerous  
20 responsibility to put onto political parties. And as we  
21 heard this morning, there are -- you know, we range in size  
22 and resources, and, you know, if there is -- if there are  
23 recommendations that parties meet certain standards, there  
24 will -- there -- I would strongly urge the Commission to  
25 consider support for those enhancements. And then in terms  
26 of the piece around just resources in general, there -- it is  
27 a very uneven playing field in terms of the resources that  
28 political parties have access to and are able to generate.



1 And, you know, our reliance on donations, I think is, quite  
2 frankly, an area of vulnerability and our -- you know, our  
3 limited resources limit or dictate the extent to which we can  
4 respond to some of these threats.

5 So, for example, social media; we don't have  
6 the staff capacity to be monitoring or the software to be  
7 monitoring social media to the extent that we currently need  
8 to because of the content that we are seeing out there in  
9 circulation that then has a negative impact on discourse.

10 So I do think that there is a compelling  
11 argument to be made for funding for cybersecurity  
12 enhancements for political parties. I think there is a case  
13 to be made for the return of the per-vote subsidy to  
14 alleviate political parties' reliance on donations.

15 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Okay. And then just a  
16 last question before I wrap up. So you've referred in your  
17 answers to some of the questions posed to you that it's your  
18 belief, or your party's position, that the Canadian  
19 government has responsibilities to protect certain  
20 institutions or practices that are integrally related to  
21 Canadian democracy. And so I want to kind of suggest a term  
22 to you, and to ask you if this helps maybe delineate the  
23 scope of what their responsibilities are.

24 So the term that we've -- that I'd suggest to  
25 you is something called Canada's democratic infrastructure,  
26 that exists of its formal institutions, so Parliament, the  
27 government, Elections Canada, but also other activities,  
28 institutions, rules, norms that are immediately adjacent to

1 it. So we had Mr. Genius and Mr. McKay here talking about  
2 private devices and email addresses and partisan and  
3 parliamentary activity, and it really kind has all been a bit  
4 of a mix. And political parties are another piece of that  
5 puzzle, right? They are central to how Parliament works, but  
6 they're not of Parliament, they're not of the government.

7 And so is that kind of concept useful for  
8 thinking about the scope of the government's duty to protect?  
9 And if so, what else might fall within the category of  
10 Canada's democratic infrastructure?

11 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, it's all part of the  
12 ecosystem; there is no question in my mind that it is all of  
13 the same ecosystem. What else? I don't know. I would have  
14 to think about that. But it is -- it's a very good question.

15 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Okay. Thank you.  
16 Those conclude my questions, thank you, Ms.  
17 Watson.

18 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thank you.  
19 Attorney General, do you have any questions?

20 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** Ryann Atkins for the  
21 Attorney General of Canada.

22 We don't have any questions for this witness.  
23 Thank you.

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Thank you.

25 **THE CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. And Mr.  
26 Krongold, yes, you have one question in the re-examination?

27 **--- RE-EXAMINATION BY MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:**

28 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Ms. Watson, you were

1 asked a little bit about inauthentic social media activity  
2 that was targeting the NDP, and you discussed that you didn't  
3 think it was coming from domestic political parties.

4 I'm just wondering if you think this activity  
5 could be domestic, inauthentic activity, not from parties but  
6 from other Canadians or groups who oppose the NDP's policies?

7 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, it could. And, again,  
8 I have no real insight into this. You know, there are  
9 members of the team who are monitoring our social media  
10 channels and who are monitoring this activity, and as I  
11 understand it, there are certain tells that they've been able  
12 to identify; I couldn't tell you what those are right now.  
13 But what would be hugely helpful is to have a better  
14 understanding of where this content is being generated and a  
15 better understanding of how to be responding to it and a  
16 better understanding of what systems or procedures are in  
17 place that are consistent, transparent, to address these  
18 issues.

19 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Thank you very much.

20 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thank you.

21 Thank you very much.

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Thank you.

23 **THE COMMISSIONER:** So we have completed what  
24 we had to do today, so we'll come back tomorrow at 9:30.

25 Thank you for your time.

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Thank you.

27 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. À l'ordre,  
28 s'il vous plaît.

1                   The sitting of the Foreign Interference  
2       Commission is adjourned until tomorrow, the 20<sup>th</sup> of September  
3       2024 at 9:30 a.m.

4                   Cette séance de la Commission sur l'ingérence  
5       étrangère est suspendue jusqu'à demain, le 20 septembre 2024  
6       à 9 h 30.

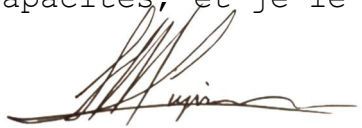
7       --- Upon adjourning at 3:25 p.m.

8       --- L'audience est suspendue à 15 h 25

9  
10                   **C E R T I F I C A T I O N**

11  
12       I, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, a certified court reporter,  
13       hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate  
14       transcription of my notes/records to the best of my skill and  
15       ability, and I so swear.

16  
17       Je, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, une sténographe officielle,  
18       certifie que les pages ci-hautes sont une transcription  
19       conforme de mes notes/enregistrements au meilleur de mes  
20       capacités, et je le jure.

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22       \_\_\_\_\_

23       Sandrine Marineau-Lupien  
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