



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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Ottawa, Ontario

--- L'audience débute le mercredi 2 octobre 2024 à 9 h 32

--- The hearing begins Wednesday, October 2, 2024 at 9:32 a.m.

THE REGISTRAR: Order, please. À l'ordre, s'il vous plaît.

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

Cette séance de la Commission sur l'ingérence étrangère est en cours. La Commissaire Hogue préside.

The time is 9:32 a.m. Il est 9 h 32.

COMMISSIONER HOGUE: Bonjour tout le monde.

You're ready?

--- INTRODUCTION OF THE PANEL ON CIVIL LIBERTIES, RACISM, AND FOREIGN INTERFERENCE NARRATIVES/INTRODUCTION DU PANEL SUR LES LIBERTÉES CIVILES, RACISME ET NARRATIFS SUR L'INTERFÉRENCE ÉTRANGÈRE:

--- FACILITATION OF THE PANEL BY/ANIMATION DU PANEL PAR MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD AND MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:

MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Yes.

So Commissioner, for the record, it's Howard Krongold, and I'll be facilitating this first panel with my colleague, Gabriel Poliquin.

We will be hearing from four consultation panels today. These panelists are here to share information based on their experiences.

Unlike the fact witnesses appearing before

1 the Commission, these panelists are appearing without oath or
2 affirmation. They have been advised against making
3 allegations against individuals or organizations in Canada.

4 The first consultation panel is entitled
5 "Civil Liberties, Racism, and Foreign Interference
6 Narratives". This panel will speak to the negative impacts
7 that they and their communities have experienced as a result
8 of the responses to foreign interference.

9 I will now introduce our panelists.

10 Paul Robinson is a Professor of Public and
11 International Affairs at the University of Ottawa. Dr.
12 Robinson holds an MA in Russian and Eastern European Studies
13 from the University of Toronto and a DPhil in Modern History
14 from the University of Oxford.

15 Prior to his graduate studies, he served as a
16 regular officer in the British Army Intelligence Corps from
17 1989 to 1994 and as a reserve officer in the Canadian Forces
18 from 1994 to 1996.

19 Next we have Teresa Woo-Paw. She has been
20 the Chair of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation since
21 2018 and is the Chair of the Action Chinese Canadians
22 Together Foundation. She holds a BA in Social Work from the
23 University of Calgary. She was a member of the Legislative
24 Assembly of Alberta from 2018 to 2015 (sic), serving on its
25 executive council from 2013.

26 Wawa Li is a first-generation Chinese
27 Canadian originally from Quebec City. Now living and
28 studying in Montreal, she is involved with the Chinese

1 Canadian community there. Ms. Li is familiar with the work
2 of the Chinese Canadian community centres in Montreal that
3 were recently accused of being Chinese police stations.

4 And finally, we have an anonymous
5 participant. The final panellist is appearing by Zoom. The
6 Commissioner has agreed to permit this panellist to
7 participate without publicly revealing their identity, and
8 will release reasons explaining that decision shortly.

9 The anonymous panellist is a Professor at a
10 Canadian research university. This panellist was born in the
11 People's Republic of China and came to Canada to further
12 their studies. They are currently a Canadian citizen.

13 This panellist is an active member of their
14 local Chinese Canadian community as well as the Society of
15 Chinese Descent University Professors. This panellist has
16 engaged in collaborative research with other academics,
17 including academics based in the PRC.

18 So with that, I'll turn things to Professor
19 Robinson. Good morning.

20 **DR. PAUL ROBINSON:** Good morning.

21 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** First of all, perhaps
22 I'll ask you to tell us a little bit more about your
23 background.

24 **DR. PAUL ROBINSON:** Sure. Do I need to press
25 a button here or anything?

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** No, I think you're
27 good.

28 **DR. PAUL ROBINSON:** Okay. Yes, thank you for

1 the invitation to come here.

2 As you mentioned, before becoming an academic
3 I was a military officer and I have given talks to many
4 military institutions, such as West Point, U.S. Airforce
5 Academy, Canadian Forces College, British Staff College, and
6 so on.

7 But my primary academic interest is Russia.
8 When I was an undergraduate I travelled to the Soviet Union
9 to study the Russian language there. In the nineties, I
10 worked in Moscow for a short while for a media research
11 company, and I have been backwards and forwards to Russia
12 since then. The last time is 2019, when there was the
13 pandemic, and of course, the war.

14 As well as my academic work, I have also
15 written probably hundreds of articles for the national and
16 international media for, for instance, outlets such as the
17 *Spectator* magazine, *The American Conservative* magazine, *The*
18 *Globe and Mail*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Canadian Dimension*, and
19 others.

20 From 2014 to 2022, I ran a blog which looked
21 at Russian affairs, and from 2020 to 2022, I used to write a
22 weekly for RT, and I stopped doing that in February of 2022
23 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

24 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** All right.
25 Professor Robinson, could you tell us about some of the
26 responses to foreign interference that you have observed and
27 the negative impact that they're having in your view?

28 **DR. PAUL ROBINSON:** Yes, I would. So I first

1 began to observe, I'll say, concerns about foreign
2 interference following the Russian annexation of Crimea in
3 2014, and a growing discourse about what's called "hybrid
4 warfare", which is a concept that ready states are able to
5 wage war against each other using non-violent means,
6 including information, but not just information, in hybrid
7 warfare theory, pretty much anything can be weaponised. That
8 then accelerated following Donald Trump's election in 2016
9 and the Russiagate scandal.

10 And this all led to growing accusations that
11 the Russian Federation was using information and other means
12 to undermine Western societies from within, and in that
13 context, I observed over the last decade a growing suspicion
14 of anyone associated with Russia or anyone who has deviated
15 in any way from conventional narratives regarding Russia. At
16 the same time, I have observed a tendency to accuse such
17 people, normally with no evidence, of being Kremlin
18 influencers, Russian proxies, agents of influence, and so on.

19 The effect of all this is the creation of a
20 toxic environment in which proper, reasoned conversation on
21 important topics is not possible. Non-conforming views are
22 shouted down and silenced or forced into self-censorship.
23 And I can give you some personal examples if that would be
24 useful.

25 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Certainly.

26 **DR. PAUL ROBINSON:** Yeah. So a few years
27 ago, my blog was mentioned in a report issued by a Canadian
28 thinktank on the subject of Russian influence operations in

1 Canada, and it was listed, among others, as a extremist
2 conspiracy theory website, along with some websites which are
3 really quite notorious.

4 I complained to the thinktank in question,
5 which commissioned an outside expert to look into the matter,
6 who concluded that the allegation was false. The thinktank
7 withdrew the report, republished it without the name of my
8 blog and with a footnote admitting error. But the error
9 should not have been made in the first place.

10 And other people were also mentioned in this
11 report, including some quite distinguished Canadians, with
12 their names being listed in sections of the report with
13 titles like, Proxy -- Russian Proxies and Agents of
14 Influence.

15 Someone told me that ---

16 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Pardon me, Professor.
17 Sorry for the interruption. Sorry. It's just a request from
18 the interpreters to speak a bit slower for -- we have
19 simultaneous translation. Pardon the interruption,
20 Dr. Robinson.

21 **DR. PAUL ROBINSON:** Okay. Yes, understood.

22 A little while after that, an article I had
23 written was mentioned in a report issued by the U.S.
24 Government. This report claimed to be investigating malign
25 influence activities by RT, and my article was mentioned in a
26 section on false -- Russian false narratives. And the report
27 claimed that this article promoted the false narrative that
28 Ukraine was a fascist country, and it provided a link to my

1 article.

2 If you clicked on the link, you would see
3 that what the article actually said, and I quote my exact
4 words, "Ukraine is not remotely fascist." That is what my
5 article said, and yet it was cited as being evidence of RT
6 promoting a false narrative of Ukraine being a fascist
7 country.

8 That peaks my interest, so I checked other
9 parts of this U.S. Government report, and they were also
10 making false claims, which were quite easy to determine were
11 false simply by clicking on the links the report itself
12 provided.

13 And this, I mean, brings to my mind the
14 extremely poor quality of much of the work which is done by
15 individuals and organisations who claim to be fighting
16 foreign interference and mis/disinformation. Their work is
17 often factually incorrect and intellectually sloppy, and
18 sometimes careless in terms of the potential effect on the
19 reputations of people who are named.

20 And it's somewhat disturbing to find one's
21 name issued, or not one's name but one's work, issued in a
22 foreign U.S. Government report, particularly when the
23 allegations are false. And this has a very chilling effect,
24 and puts people off from putting their heads out, from
25 writing things, from saying things, because you don't want to
26 be in further reports and being investigated by the
27 authorities. And the overall effect is to narrow what people
28 call the "Overton Window", which is the framework of

1 acceptable discourse in society, and this has the effect of
2 meaning we cannot properly analyse events, the truth is
3 covered up, public discourse narrows, and so, therefore, also
4 do policy options.

5 And I'll give another personal example. Two
6 years ago, I was asked to give evidence to a Parliamentary
7 select committee. In this meeting, I pointed out to members
8 of the committee reports which had appeared in outlets,
9 including the *New York Times*, the BBC, the *Guardian*, outlets
10 which could not be described as pro-Russian or as non-
11 mainstream. One member of Parliament took severe offence at
12 what was apparently Russian propaganda, and claimed that this
13 was the most disgraceful, appalling, disgusting thing that
14 had ever been said in Parliament, or words to that effect.

15 When I asked if I could have a right to
16 reply, this member of Parliament said that
17 "Professor Robinson must not speak anymore." The committee
18 then voted and voted that I was not to speak anymore.

19 This is what happens to you if you step out
20 of line in certain subjects and step across, you might say,
21 acceptable bounds of discourse, even though in this case all
22 I did was point out to the committee reports which have
23 appeared in the BBC and the *New York Times*, and which,
24 incidentally, have subsequently been confirmed by the United
25 Nations. Does all this have an effect? Yes, it does.

26 And I could bring a more recent example,
27 which is of a scandal two weeks ago with the Toronto
28 International Film Festival which came under heavy pressure

1 to cancel the showing of a film by a Canadian director,
2 called *Russians At War*, which some people said was Russian
3 propaganda.

4 The festival eventually caved in to the
5 pressure, citing threats to the safety of its workers, and
6 they subsequently then unbacked down, but for a while they
7 cancelled the showing, citing safety of the workers. And
8 that of itself is evidence of the intimidating effect of some
9 of this discourse.

10 While this was going on, an editor of a
11 Canadian magazine asked me will I write on this topic. And I
12 thought about this, and I thought well, you know, the film
13 festival is afraid of the safety of its members. You know, I
14 have a family. I don't want to bring anyone I know into
15 danger. And I said no; I didn't do it. And in fact, I have
16 probably turned down 90 percent of media requests in the last
17 two years, simply because if you step out of line, say the
18 wrong things, people accuse you of being a Russian agent, and
19 things like this, and you get abuse pouring on your head.

20 Overall, therefore, the effect of the
21 discourse of hybrid warfare, disinformation, foreign
22 interference, and so on, is to have -- is -- it's a chilling
23 effect that restricts freedom of expression and intimidates
24 and silences those who have unorthodox views, and in general,
25 makes it harder to have intelligent conversations on key
26 issues. This further delegitimises our social and political
27 institutions, as many people see what is happening and become
28 increasingly alienated from those institutions. The struggle

1 against foreign interference, therefore, can backfire,
2 intensifying distrust in our state and our media.

3 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Can I just ask, has
4 there been any impact on your academic work and your ability
5 to engage in the research you were doing previously?

6 **DR. PAUL ROBINSON:** Very definitely. As I
7 mentioned, when I was a student, I went to the Soviet Union.
8 This was the height of the Cold War. Relations with Soviet
9 Union were very bad, yet one could still go to the Soviet
10 Union, one could still study Russian, one could do academic
11 research there. That is now all finished. There are no
12 student exchanges anymore. You will not get funding to go to
13 Russia to do research. You -- federal funding institutions
14 such as the Social Science and Humanities Research Council
15 have prohibited any funding which involves Russian
16 institutions, and that cuts off whole lines of research.

17 So for instance, sociological research,
18 survey research, which relies on using Russians to go and ask
19 people questions, you can't do it anymore, which means a lot
20 of political science has become impossible, a lot of
21 anthropology, sociology, has become impossible. And this
22 matters because, well, as Sun Tzu said, you know, "Know your
23 enemy and know yourself and in 100 battles you will never be
24 defeated."

25 The time we particularly need to study of a
26 country is when we have differences with them. We need to
27 know about them. We need to study them in detail. We need
28 to therefore have people who go there, who engage in research

1 there, who speak to those people. But you can't. Many of
2 the people who you would want to speak to, for instance,
3 foreign policy experts, have been sanctioned by the Canadian
4 Government.

5 I used to do peer reviewing for a very
6 prestigious Russian academic journal. They asked me to do
7 something again in January. One might imagine this is a good
8 thing. One would want Russian academic journals to be
9 publishing things which have gone under critical review and
10 checked for accuracy. However, I pointed out to the deputy
11 editor who contacted me that his boss, the editor, had been
12 sanctioned by the Canadian Government a month beforehand, as
13 had the academic institutions associated with the journal.

14 So even if a journal itself wasn't
15 sanctioned, then therefore I suppose I possibly could have
16 done it. It's not like you want to test the law; right? So
17 I said, "No, I'm not going to do it." And basic academic
18 things like that are now impossible. I had to cancel a
19 research project because it would have involved working in
20 Russian archives. It's very difficult to travel to Russia
21 because of sanctions. You can't get travel insurance. You
22 won't get funding, as I said.

23 And also, people will abuse you. So there
24 was a Canadian professor who, two years ago, attended the
25 Valdai International Discussion Club. This is a prominent
26 meeting once a year which Putin attends. And when she
27 accepted the invitation, it was not on the sanctions list.
28 By the time she went, it was. She could still legally go

1 because you can continue doing things which were agreed
2 before the sanctioning. And she made use of her visit to ask
3 Putin to release a prominent political prisoner, which one
4 might imagine is something one should encourage, but she got
5 an enormous amount of abuse in the media and elsewhere for
6 having dared to go to Russia and having dared to ask Putin a
7 question.

8 And now the rest of us look at this and
9 think, well we don't want that abuse. We don't want to do
10 that. And so we stop doing things.

11 And the result is we are now going back to
12 the old days of Crimeanology, where you work out what's
13 happening in Russia based on who's standing next to who in
14 the Revolution Day Parade, and properly informed
15 understanding is vanishing. And the result of impoverished
16 understanding is that, well, I mean, it's -- I think it's
17 probably self-evident. But that's what -- the situation we
18 have created for ourselves.

19 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Can you share with us
20 some of your views about how we could better respond to
21 foreign interference in terms of ways that we can avoid some
22 of the negative effects that you've identified?

23 **MR. PAUL ROBINSON:** I mean, I would first say
24 avoid threat inflation. I read an article in a major
25 Canadian newspaper the other day which said, and I'll quote,
26 "The tentacles of Russian oligarchs and agents have
27 penetrated deep into Canadian business, politics, and
28 society". This kind of alarmism, to my view, is not helpful.

1 It stokes unnecessary fears and can lead to the targeting of
2 innocent people. It should be avoided.

3 Secondly, we should be confident in the
4 resilience of Canadian society. Much of the discourse of
5 foreign interference seems to me to assume that our society
6 will crumble if we don't take immediate drastic action. I do
7 not believe that this is the case.

8 I think also we should be mindful of the
9 potential negative unintended consequences which can derive
10 from taking action.

11 So therefore my main recommendation would be
12 to act very cautiously.

13 Also, if you are going to suggest specific
14 government actions, then it is necessary to have firm
15 evidence that they will actually achieve the desired
16 objective. There's a tendency to make recommendations just
17 because something must be done. But often what is
18 recommended is ineffective.

19 So for instance, there are many proposals
20 that we should debunk disinformation or flag it so people can
21 be aware of it, but academic studies suggest debunking does
22 not work and is generally counterproductive. People do not
23 trust debunking from sources they already do not trust. And
24 in fact, the more something is debunked, the more they
25 actually believe it. This is what the evidence suggests.

26 So therefore, when you're going to propose
27 these things, you need to look at the actual evidence and not
28 propose things which are likely to be counterproductive,

1 particularly, as I said, because they can have unintended
2 consequences.

3 And in that regard, I think above all, we
4 should avoid anything that smacks of censorship. We should
5 not, for instance, be in the business of banning foreign
6 media or looking in other ways to restrict it. As I have
7 already said, on many issues, the framework of public
8 discourse has significantly narrowed in recent years. We
9 should be seeking to expand the Overton window, not further
10 restrict it.

11 Beyond that, we already have a problem of
12 growing distrust in public institutions. If people see or
13 perceive that the state is interfering with the media and
14 attempting to restrict what Canadians can access, this will
15 only compound that problem.

16 Finally, I would say if you are to do
17 something, it must be done well. As I mentioned, a lot of
18 the work which is carried out in this field is very sloppy,
19 is extremely poor, is full of factual errors, and it is
20 therefore almost certainly counterproductive. It is better
21 to do nothing than to do something badly.

22 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Thank you,
23 Professor Robinson.

24 We'll turn to Ms. Woo-Paw, if we could? Good
25 morning.

26 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** Good morning.

27 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** So I'll ask you as well
28 to begin by telling us a little bit more about your

1 background?

2 **Ms. TERESA WOO-PAW:** Okay. thank you. I
3 think what is relevant for today is first of all, I'm a
4 first-generation Chinese-Canadian for over 50 years. I'm a
5 descendent of families impacted by both the head tax and the
6 *Chinese Exclusion Act*, both of my great grandfathers came to
7 North America. And so my family has experienced decades of
8 separation and the hardships associated with those public
9 policies.

10 For over 45 years I found and built eight
11 non-profit organizations from community service
12 organizations, to multicultural programs for children and
13 youth, to heritage international language schools, Asian
14 Heritage Society, the Ethnocultural Council with about 40
15 immigrant racialized community organizations in Calgary when
16 I started that in the early 1990s, and I founded the Action
17 Chinese Canadians Together Foundation, a national
18 organization with a focus on enhancing ---

19 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** I'm sorry, Ms. Woo-
20 Paw, I suspect I'm going ---

21 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** Oh, I'm sorry.

22 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** It's okay.

23 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** Okay.

24 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** It's very difficult to
25 keep one's pace down. But if I could ask you to please try
26 to slow down for the ---

27 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** Okay.

28 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** --- benefit ---

1 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** I will.

2 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** --- of the
3 interpreters?

4 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** Okay.

5 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Thank you.

6 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** So I also founded the
7 Action Chinese Canadians Foundation with a focus on enhancing
8 civil engagement and anti-Chinese discrimination, building
9 capacity for full participation. And also, during the
10 pandemic, I convened several meetings and founded the Asian
11 Canadians Together Act to End Racism Network in response to
12 the resurgence of the anti-Asian racism.

13 So I have been exposed to and participated in
14 many public and civil society organizational change
15 initiatives since the early 1990s and was an
16 antidiscrimination trainer. I was in public office for a
17 total of 12 years, in both the education field and in school
18 board and provincial office, currently the Chair of the
19 Canadian Race Relations Foundation. So I've had years of
20 lived experience as the minority in the room, in the system,
21 in the organization, and acutely aware of the impacts of
22 persistent systemic underrepresentation.

23 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Thank you. Could you
24 tell us a little bit about some of the responses to foreign
25 interference that you've observed and the negative impact
26 that they're having, in your view?

27 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** Okay. So first of all,
28 I want to say -- I want to start by saying that every

1 Canadian should be concerned about foreign interference in
2 our electoral processes and democratic institution. So
3 myself, like many Canadians, am concerned about foreign
4 interference and integrity of our democratic institutions and
5 processes. I have participated in several consultations,
6 whether it's in relation to, say, the modernization of the
7 *CSIS Act* and foreign interference. And I find that -- and I
8 had the opportunity to also convey my support to the
9 modernization of our public policy.

10 While the public is -- when -- now focus on
11 the foreign interference discourse. So while the public is
12 periodically provided with information and reports about the
13 facts and content on foreign interference, China was
14 constantly in the news. So between the start of the
15 pandemic, around 2019 when we saw the resurgence of anti-
16 Asian, anti-Chinese racism combined with the intense focus on
17 China with foreign interference between 2022 to 2024, the
18 level of racial discrimination Chinese Canadians experienced
19 escalated correspondingly.

20 So the 2020 Angus Reid Institute survey had
21 the finding that 40 per cent of the 550 respondents reported
22 being treated with less respect than other people, one-third
23 personally threatened and intimidated, only 1 in 10 Chinese
24 Canadians say they think others in this country view them as
25 Canadians all the time, 13 per cent, and versus 50 per cent
26 of non-visible minorities. Twenty-five (25) per cent feel
27 like an outsider in their own country. And this is
28 consistent with Statistic Canada surveys, which found in 2019

1 23 per cent and -- of the Chinese Canadian reported perceived
2 racial discrimination, increased to 40 per cent a year later
3 in 2020. And then 2024, quarter 2 of 2024, 54 per cent of
4 Chinese Canadians surveyed experienced discrimination or
5 unfair treatment in Canada, higher than the overall visible
6 minority population, so half of people of Chinese descent
7 this country are reporting they experience discrimination.

8 So while our public institutions and broad-
9 based organizations did not set out to cause harm to
10 Canadians of Chinese descent, the statistics are showing very
11 concerning unintended consequences of the type of discourse
12 and reporting on foreign interference is having on Chinese
13 Canadian citizens. These alarming numbers serve to remind us
14 of the deeply embedded biases and stereotypes on Asian and
15 Chinese Canadians, such as the perpetual foreigner. "Yellow
16 Peril", someone took the time to write me a letter after I
17 won my first election in 1995 and called me a "Yellow Peril".
18 And also, the concept of "Modern minority" are real and alive
19 in our country.

20 So these days, including myself, we feel we
21 are targeted, alienated, and disillusioned, guarded,
22 isolated, and losing faith in our public system. If I may
23 use an example ---

24 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Please.

25 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** --- to illustrate some
26 of the impacts. So much of the foreign interference
27 reporting and discourse took place between 2022 to 2023. And
28 that period was also of particular importance to Chinese

1 Canadians who, while awakening or reckoning to anti-Asian
2 racism were also beginning to learn about and busy organizing
3 the recognition of the 100th anniversary of the *Chinese*
4 *Exclusion Act*, which barred all immigration of Chinese
5 through legislation.

6 So as the Chair of the Canadian -- of the
7 Action Chinese Canadian Foundation, which led the nomination
8 to have the policy be recognized by the Government of Canada
9 as an event of historic significance and the national
10 remembrance event that took place on June 23rd here in
11 Ottawa, I personally felt the reactions and treatments from
12 multiple sources. The event took place in Ottawa in June
13 with 500 people in Ottawa and hundreds of watch parties
14 through commissioned spoken words and arts performances
15 received no public entity support, and only 5 per cent of the
16 funds raised came from mainstream private sponsorship. All
17 the people we talked to, previous sponsors, said, oh, this is
18 very important. This is significant. This is a great idea.
19 And then at the end, none of them gave us a penny because no
20 one wanted to be associated to anything Chinese Canadian, or
21 to a Chinese Canadian event, or Chinese Canadian
22 organization. So all our friends, allies, supporters all
23 disappeared and stay far away from us. So -- and so the
24 distancing was from everyone and everywhere. The sense of
25 alienation and isolation was striking.

26 So with the ACCT Foundation, I was given the
27 opportunity to have a public launch on the remembrance events
28 at the National Gallery, and I thought that would be a great

1 opportunity to let people know about this piece of history.
2 And because I have three grown children, I have three
3 grandchildren, and I know, and I was a school board trustee,
4 that 95 per cent or more of Canadians, including Chinese
5 Canadians, know nothing about this history. So I quietly
6 took the opportunity, thinking that that would be a great way
7 to raise public awareness. And so what was waiting for us
8 was something I never anticipated. The chill I felt in that
9 room went straight to my core as a Canadian of over 50 years.
10 It was chilled with sharpened knives. I never felt so
11 unloved in this country, never. I felt so -- I've never felt
12 so unloved in this country in my 50 years as Canadian. You
13 can feel the hate in the room. And so it was difficult, it
14 was disappointing, and then as a -- someone who have been
15 involved in systemic change, in building community capacity
16 to participate in change efforts. So the rationalization is
17 the persisted -- the persistent underrepresentation, the lack
18 of meaningful systemic change, I was the product. I was a
19 believer of our *Multiculturalism Act*. That was my driver for
20 my work 45 years. And this is my third diversity inclusion
21 equity round. My third one.

22 And so what I'm seeing and observing is the
23 lack of meaningful systemic change, the lack of cultural
24 competency. In having day in, day out public discourse on a
25 subject that is sensitive and divisive, and there's no
26 consideration, no compassion, no competency to distinguish
27 Canadian citizens of Chinese descent from foreign nationals.
28 I asked that question in one of the hearings, public

1 consultation, "How do you distinguish Chinese nationals from
2 Canadian citizens?", and the answer was, "It's interesting.
3 We don't know".

4 So this is systemic, this is structural
5 because we are targeted in all areas of life. It's okay to
6 target Chinese in the education sector. It's okay to target
7 by the media. It's okay to target -- to be targeted by a lot
8 of different elements in society today.

9 So I think the lack of sensitivity and
10 competency is disappointing, and many civically engaged
11 Canadians of Chinese descent are questioning. So many people
12 around me over the past 45 years are deeply engaged Canadians
13 who love this country and want to participate in the change
14 process to improve our country, so we share that belief in
15 cross-cultural understanding. That's why we have Asian
16 Heritage Month and we do different things through sharing and
17 learning of diverse cultures, which will enhance our social
18 bond, the sense of belonging, innovation and co-creation, all
19 those good things.

20 But these people are also feeling they cannot
21 embrace and share their culture because they're Chinese.
22 They have become guarded. They feel that maybe we should not
23 do too much of those things even though they believe it's
24 important for the building of this country, so including
25 sharing that heritage with their own family, their
26 grandchildren.

27 So people are questioning why is it that it's
28 acceptable to exclude Asian Canadians in DEI initiatives in

1 law schools, in social work faculties, in education. So it
2 is okay to exclude Chinese and Asian Canadians when they talk
3 about DEI.

4 People are questioning why our institutions
5 would rather pay the wrongs and the damages rather than doing
6 the real change. And these are people who have served
7 decades in our militaries, and so public servants of Chinese
8 descent are seeing and questioning their security clearance
9 are taking much longer and definitely longer than other
10 people. So what signals are these sending to Chinese
11 Canadians serving in our public institutions?

12 So -- am I too long?

13 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** No.

14 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** So -- and then the ACCT
15 Foundation focused on the full participation of Canadians in
16 Canadian society, including serving in leadership roles.

17 We counted 250 Federal Crown corporations,
18 Crown corporations in Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta,
19 1,000 Crown corporations. You can see many Chinese names.

20 And so we -- we want to encourage full
21 participation in Canadian society from volunteering to voting
22 to participate in public institutions. And people are
23 raising -- are questioning whether this is the best time to
24 do this and -- because even in organizations like the SOU,
25 people do not want to see Chinese Canadians on their board
26 because they cannot trust them.

27 So instead of seeing that this is an
28 opportunity for all Canadians for a public service that would

1 actually enhance connection and access, people are concerned
2 that they cannot trust Canadians of Chinese descent. So
3 people are cautious to write the word "Chinese" in electronic
4 communications, worrying that -- about government
5 surveillance and potentially bring trouble to their family.

6 So I think people are feeling, you know, why
7 is it okay to make the yo-yo of people's social, emotional
8 well-being day in and day out by the insensitivity of our
9 institutions.

10 So do you want me to talk about political?

11 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** That's what I was about
12 to ask you about, actually. Yeah.

13 I was about to ask you about whether the
14 responses to foreign interference is having an impact on
15 Chinese Canadians' involvement or willingness to get involved
16 in politics.

17 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** Right. So I usually
18 like to -- as a social worker, I always like to talk to the
19 community, so I've had a number of people share with me that
20 it is having an impact. They don't want to donate any more
21 because by making a donation, they, themselves, feel that
22 they would be questioned. So are you trying to influence,
23 right, and interfere.

24 So why would I want to donate when, by the
25 act of donation, would actually cause -- potentially cause
26 personal trouble? And also trouble -- potential trouble for
27 the candidate.

28 So people are diminishing or stopping support

1 to candidates and with fear and frustration being suspected,
2 directly or implicitly, and they don't want to -- people --
3 quite a number of people, actually, are telling me that they
4 have aspiration to serve in public office, but almost all of
5 them are saying, "But this is not the time".

6 So it is having a chilling effect on our
7 citizens because they don't want their loyalty, their
8 integrity questioned and put their family, potentially, you
9 know, under public scrutiny. And it hurts, I think, all the
10 participants and stakeholders in our political process
11 because we have less people run, less people support, less
12 Chinese Canadians elected, and we already have very few. And
13 so erosion of the very small progress that we have made in
14 this country, further erode our social cohesion and the
15 silencing.

16 We already have very little voice and no
17 champion. They feel like they don't have no -- they don't
18 have champion in that systems, and I've -- and we firmly
19 believe that this is going to have generational impacts.

20 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Can I ask you if you
21 have any views about how we could better respond to concerns
22 about foreign interference in order to mitigate some of the
23 negative effects you've been telling us about?

24 **MS. TERESA WOO-PAW:** Well, first of all, I
25 think I'd like to support, I think, many things that Dr.
26 Robinson actually said earlier.

27 And because of my personal background, I
28 focus on our institutions. And I think that -- I think that

1 -- and for the first point, I think I'm speaking in -- from a
2 personal -- a positive perspective, that I think our
3 institutions, our media and -- should be sharing more facts
4 and information and communicate -- relate relevant
5 information to the public because I'm a diversity trainer.
6 I'm a social worker. I think that our -- the Canadian
7 public, including impacted communities relevant to foreign
8 interference, need to know, while we are going through a
9 challenging time, that our public institutions have shown
10 insensitivity, but they also need to know our public
11 institutions have been responding to issues about diversity
12 and equity.

13 And such as our Government have a -- the
14 Canadian Anti-Racism Strategy, right. We have, actually, an
15 Anti-Racism Secretariat which shows awareness and commitment
16 to address some of these issues.

17 Last week, the government just announced the
18 Combatting Hate program with funding support. And the
19 government is undergoing the *Employment Equity Act*, which is
20 a significant Act. And so that our public institution is
21 acknowledging there are issues and challenges in this
22 country, and validate the impact the community's feeling.

23 You have -- I don't know whether you can
24 relate that so many of our racialized young people do not
25 have the vocabulary to actually express what they feel,
26 right?

27 So we acknowledge, we validate, and then we
28 also communicate to the public and the impacted community our

1 institutional commitment to make improvements. And in the
2 process, hopefully, we also engage and build the capacity of
3 the impacted communities so that they can also partake in the
4 change process.

5 But what's also important, for someone who's
6 been doing this since the 1980s, is that we also need to work
7 close -- we need to work together, and institutions must work
8 with impacted communities through ongoing communication,
9 working together to develop the strategies and the action
10 plans to monitor progress and share the learning and the
11 celebration, but also together to hold our public
12 institutions accountable more effectively, and so that this
13 kind of effort doesn't, you know, go through its ups and
14 downs. And we have to find ways to give voice to people who
15 do not have voice in our public institutions. And our public
16 institutions, sadly, is repeating some of the histories, you
17 know, that people had to experience in this country.

18 So I think that we have an opportunity to
19 learn, and I think that -- you know, I still believe even --
20 I still love the *Multiculturalism Act*, even though it still
21 remain to be an inspirational policy, and I still believe
22 that we are in a better place to pick up, you know, where we
23 were and do better.

24 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Thank you very much.
25 I'll pass things over to my colleague, Mr. Poliquin.

26 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** We can start with Ms.
27 Li. Thank you for joining us this morning.

28 And so as we've done with the other

1 panelists, you can start by introducing yourself and talking
2 a little bit about your involvement in the Chinese-Canadian
3 community.

4 MS. WAWA LI: Yes. Thank you so much for
5 having me.

6 So my name is Wawa, I'm a first-generation
7 immigrant from China, and I moved from Quebec City which --
8 around the age of two, which makes me a full-fledged Chinese
9 Quebecois.

10 What I feel is relevant to say about myself
11 is I noticed from a very young age that there was a lack of
12 services in Quebec City to help the diaspora surpass the
13 language barrier. So I served as the family translator my
14 whole life, and if there's any Chinese-Canadians as part of
15 the Commission -- which I hope because we are inquiring about
16 Chinese interference -- you might relate with my childhood.

17 So eventually I moved to Montreal, and I
18 studied, I'm still studying; I'm a fulltime student at
19 Concordia University, and I'm also a freelancer.

20 And, yeah, my connection to the Chinese
21 Community in Montreal started with Chinatown because I have
22 family members living there. But also eventually I started
23 organizing, doing community work, and one thing I've learned
24 from my experience -- I focused my work on the low-income and
25 seniors of the community. One thing I've learned is that the
26 Chinatown ecosystem revolved around key institutions, such
27 like the Chinese hospital; you have the affordable housing
28 units, you also have the Catholic church, and you also have

1 the community centres. But now they're under threat and the
2 current foreign investigation allegations are unfairly
3 targeting my community, and they are -- this is amplified by
4 media, police, and opportunistic politicians and it's
5 throwing suspicion and fears.

6 So this undermines the critical work that we
7 are doing on the community, and they're trying to discredit
8 our efforts, but I'm here to present the truth today to the
9 Commission.

10 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** If you could talk a
11 little bit about what services do the community centres
12 provide; what kinds of services?

13 **MS. WAWA LI:** Yeah. So the services they
14 provide, it started as any essential services for newcomers
15 to integrate well into the Canadian life, but then these
16 services extended to many immigrant communities, so they have
17 -- they have English and French classes that are very
18 convoluted [sic] by other immigration -- immigrant
19 communities.

20 They have employment support; they have legal
21 aid; they have women's committees also that provides a social
22 network for Chinese women to integrate; and domestic violence
23 support; housing support, so on and so forth. It's really --
24 it really started like this.

25 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** Okay. And those are
26 services that are provided by the community centre or by
27 organizations that use the community centre as a forum, so to
28 speak? What kinds of organizations work out of the community

1 centre?

2 MS. WAWA LI: What kind of organizations are
3 convoidant [sic]?

4 MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN: I'm saying, so are
5 those services that are provided by the community centre
6 itself, or is it organizations that use the community centre?

7 MS. WAWA LI: Oh, by the community centres
8 themselves, yes.

9 MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN: Okay.

10 MS. WAWA LI: Yes, yes, yes.

11 MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN: And so are there other
12 organizations that use the community centre as a space?

13 MS. WAWA LI: I mean, the community centre
14 has a building and they're renting to tenants, if this is
15 what you're asking.

16 MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN: Yeah.

17 MS. WAWA LI: The community centre is an
18 independent kind of organization, but they also share with
19 other tenants.

20 MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN: And those
21 organizations are organizations of the community?

22 MS. WAWA LI: Honestly, I wouldn't know.

23 MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN: Okay, that's fine.
24 That's fine.

25 Now, you mentioned that those community
26 centres are under threat. If you could talk about that; what
27 is that threat and how did it come about?

28 MS. WAWA LI: Yes, well, actually if I could

1 just kind of make a statement I have -- like, a statement I
2 have about foreign interference.

3 So today I'm here to highlight the damages of
4 domestic interference that are disguised as a concern for
5 foreign interference. And the narrative and the stories that
6 I'm about to present are not abstract; these directly attack
7 the livelihood of our members from the low income to the
8 witch hunt of our political -- politicians and academics.
9 And these are all Canadian citizens of the class spectrum
10 that are being denied their rights under the *Canadian Quebec*
11 *Charters*.

12 So, yeah, I think it's important to lay the
13 premise of why I'm here. There's also, like, a fixation that
14 I've noticed on foreign interference that is fueled by
15 federal authorities and opportunistic politicians, and this
16 is fueling a mainstream hysteria that oversees the impact it
17 has on the material conditions on the low income of the
18 community. This is mostly the perspective that I'm going to
19 bring today.

20 And I think it's important to say for a
21 disclaimer that I'm not against -- no; I am against foreign
22 interference, and I hope the government takes action if it
23 exists, but not at the expense of the community.

24 So to give a portrait about my experience,
25 maybe, with foreign interference. I've personally never
26 heard of foreign interference before. Last year was the
27 first time that I've been aware of these processes. It was
28 through an article from (indiscernible) where it was talking

1 about the two of our community centres that were referred to
2 as illegal police stations. And a little personal
3 interjection, there was a picture in the article that was a
4 group picture taken of the community at the commemoration of
5 the 100th anniversary of the *Exclusion Act* of Chinese
6 Canadian, on Parliament Hill, and I was there with my family.
7 So ironically the fear mongering that is witnessed today
8 shares a direct pattern with the events of 100 years ago.

9 And you know, the frenzy that I'm talking
10 about is fueled by powerful forces. You have the politically
11 motivated groups that are instrumentalizing the context to
12 spread fear amongst the community. You have the federal
13 authorities of the RCMP that are making unsupported claims --
14 and I will provide more details about this later -- and you
15 have the mainstream media that are disseminating unfounded
16 claims and confusing informations all over the public
17 discourse, and all of this is contributing to an asymmetrical
18 culture of intimidation. And such investigation has to be
19 conducted responsibly by authorities, given the influence you
20 have on mainstream discourse and mainstream ecosystem, where
21 the public opinion is giving the benefit of the doubt for
22 those who claim foreign interference but paying little to no
23 attention to the victims.

24 So going back to the community centres, as
25 you asked, yeah, I'm going to focus mostly on the Chinese
26 Family Service of the Grand-Montréal because I work in
27 Chinatown and they are located at the heart of this
28 neighbourhood.

1 So more about the centre. From last year's
2 report, they served more than 6,000 clients across their
3 services. So they are vital to our community. And as I
4 said, it's not only the Chinese community that are going to
5 these services.

6 And for some context, for those who don't
7 know, in 2023, there was an irresponsible public announcement
8 that stated that services à la famille chinoise du Grand-
9 Montréal et le Centre Sino-Québec de la Rive-Sud were under
10 investigation by the Integrated National Security Enforcement
11 Team, and were allegedly operating as illegal Chinese police
12 stations. All of these without evidence.

13 When the RCMP made those public allegations,
14 they did not provide any definition to what was a police
15 station. And those claims are hurtful, and they constitute
16 defamation under Quebec's law. The consequences were also
17 immediate. There was funding cuts following the accusations.
18 They were unable to renew the funding from the government,
19 affecting 70 percent of the operations. Essential -- the
20 essential programs that I have described earlier were cut,
21 the French classes first, and half of the staff and the care
22 workers had to be laid off as a result of this, despite the
23 community's continuing need.

24 This is very important, it is very damaging
25 to the -- to our -- the ecosystem of the community but also
26 the fear that it's spreading amongst our people because the
27 members that are going to the Chinese Family Service are
28 vulnerable people of the community. They need those help,

1 but you're attacking on people -- we are attacking on people
2 that are already vulnerable.

3 So as a concerned member whose family need
4 those services, it's perplexing that after a year-and-a-half
5 of investigation we still don't know what our community has
6 done to warrant these severe cuts that we're faced. And six
7 months later, the RCMP suddenly announced that they were
8 successful in disrupting the activity of the police stations,
9 yet they never described what they were. The Chinese Family
10 Service to this day, and the community, still don't know.
11 We're left in the unknown.

12 And I want to lend a hand in the process of
13 emptying the buildings, the spaces of the Chinese Family
14 Service, in hope of finding tenants to offset the funding
15 cuts. And everyone, from the employees to the members, were
16 scared, where everyone was freaking out, overwhelmed,
17 reorganising the space, automatically unable to comprehend
18 the abrupt nature of the situation.

19 So -- and also, they were about to rent the
20 second floor to an organisation, but they retracted the deal
21 -- the offer because the tenant didn't want to be associated
22 with the space. This happened multiple times, interested
23 tenants calling back to retract the deal.

24 So because of that, the centre had difficulty
25 to pay the mortgage, and when the mortgage was due, the
26 community mobilised forcefully to save the building. So
27 different streams of solidarity contributions, and there was
28 also current and old board members that mortgaged their own

1 house to the cause.

2 So the community is left alone to defend
3 itself into the condition, damages caused by the fever dream
4 and hysteria, and left in the unknown. So both centres has
5 filed a lawsuit, and the RCMP has not offered a defence about
6 the lawsuit.

7 So this leads to July 10th, 2024, if you're
8 still following. I was in the neighbourhood that day. It
9 was a casual day, where a big RCMP truck was parked at the
10 entrance of the neighbourhood. And I enquired the police
11 officers what this was about, and they told me they were here
12 to warn the merchants of the neighbourhood about the foreign
13 interference. Honestly, it felt intimidating.

14 And the following morning there was
15 widespread coverage on the medias. The media explained that
16 the RCMP was doing door-to-door discussing with the merchants
17 and distribute cards with QR codes and contact points from --
18 about any form of harassment from the Chinese Communist
19 Party.

20 So I was concerned by the non-existing
21 opposing voices, or at least skeptical voices in the media,
22 about the police operation, so I returned to do independent
23 kind of investigations. So I enquired about 12 merchants,
24 which wish to remain anonymous, and there was two important
25 takeaways from my independent investigations.

26 First of all, the fear and intimidation stems
27 from the Canadian security establishment, not the foreign
28 interference. Secondly, the merchants I spoke to were

1 unclear about what the RCMP were seeking. No one knew about
2 foreign interference. In fact, the majority shared that the
3 officers presented the cards and encouraged them to denounce
4 thieves and disturbances from unhoused populations of the
5 neighbourhood. So there is a discrepancy between the RCMP
6 story about foreign interference in the media and the RCMP
7 narrative on the ground with the merchants.

8 When we talk about institutional
9 irresponsibility, this is an example of an irresponsible
10 operation that fuels a suspicion in the neighbourhood. This
11 happened in the midst of the wait for the allegation of the
12 community centres. It wasn't explicit if the investigations
13 were related to the community centres or not, but due to the
14 media coverage, naturally there is artificial connections and
15 associations that are made, and they threaten the belief and
16 the fear in the community.

17 Other instances, anonymous instances from
18 community conversations. Some diaspora groups claiming
19 transnational repression are recklessly accusing fellow
20 Canadians of being Chinese spies simply for holding different
21 views. Many leaders of Chinese Canadian organisations
22 reported -- community organisations reported being victim of
23 bullying tactics at the doorstep of their house. Anonymous
24 groups were circulating pamphlets, that I have with me today
25 if you want to see an example, written in Chinese and
26 English, threatening them to expose to foreign agents.

27 So such stories demonstrate how Chinese
28 Canadians are currently exploiting the fear of foreign

1 interference to target, you know, other -- and stigmatise
2 other Chinese Canadians who disagree with them, and yet now
3 we're Canadian citizens and we are entitled to right of
4 freedom of expression and freedom of association under the
5 *Charter*; and this foreign interference hysteria suppresses
6 both. And these stories also demonstrate the repression that
7 is made on Chinese Canadians, weaponizing the Canadians' fear
8 of foreign interference, normalise the intimidation and
9 threats. So as a young member of the diaspora, I am left
10 concerned for the potential exclusion of Chinese Canadian
11 voices from the political process.

12 So as a conclusion, we're all Canadians,
13 full-fledged citizens, entitled to democratic rights under
14 the Canadian and Quebec *Charters*. I understand that my
15 hearing today is part of a public testimony, which is
16 different from the formal witness process regarding the
17 foreign investigation -- the foreign interference
18 investigation, and while I'm really, really grateful, I --
19 for the opportunity to talk, I know that there is targeted
20 politicians and relevant figures that have submitted
21 testimonies, and I urge that their voices not be marginalised
22 in this investigation. And the story that I have shared
23 today demonstrate the targeting of the community centres, as
24 well as the instances of the witch hunt, demonstrating the
25 real impacts that the domestic interference, entitled under
26 foreign interference, threats has on our community.

27 As Mr. Robinson said earlier, you know, there
28 is like a distrust amongst academic research about the

1 subject, but if we can at least listen and trust the stories
2 on the ground that would be a first step. And yeah, these
3 narratives aren't abstract, and federal authorities and
4 politicians bear responsibilities for fuelling this hysteria
5 and the hyperfocus that oversees the impact on the material
6 conditions of our community. And once again, I am against
7 foreign interference, and I hope that the government takes
8 action, if it exists, but not at the detriment of our
9 communities.

10 And I just want to end saying that as a
11 racialized, educated, Canadian citizen, who lived but also
12 have studied thoroughly our history, the history of the
13 Canadian -- of Canada, I have seen how profiling has
14 historically led to violence, fearmongering and
15 stigmatisation of the targeted communities. This has led us
16 to today's foreign interference dilemma. So I thank you for
17 your listening.

18 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** Thank you very much
19 for your intervention. And just to conclude, do you have any
20 other recommendations for the Commission how foreign
21 interference should be dealt with, all the while mitigating
22 any negative effects that you've highlighted?

23 **MS. WAWA LI:** I really do believe that if we
24 at least consider and act on the, like, demands or
25 suggestions that I've made, there's going to be a
26 ramification of other opportunities to find the best
27 solutions to not harm the communities. As you're going to
28 listen to the testimonies and you're going to -- there's

1 probably going to be reassessment of the narrative.
2 Honestly, only this is a really good start moving forward for
3 the diaspora.

4 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** Okay. Thank you very
5 much.

6 So we'll move on now to our anonymous
7 speaker. Can you hear us all right?

8 **ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT:** Yes. Can you hear my
9 voice?

10 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** We can hear your
11 voice. Yeah. Thank you. So I can't identify you, so I may
12 refer to you as Ms. A., as in the letter A.

13 If you could, in as much as you can, tell us
14 a little bit about your background to start and what your
15 concerns are.

16 **ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT:** Thank you. Thank you
17 for the chance to share my voice. I'm a Chinese Canadian. I
18 think it's time for the silent majority among us to speak up
19 for a balanced perspective. I am a full professor in a top
20 research Canadian university in the STEM, stands for science,
21 technology, engineering, and mathematics. I have extensive
22 publications, received national and international
23 recognitions, but beyond that, I'm a proud Canadian mom. So
24 I believe this Commission's decisions will impact not just
25 me, but also our students, kids, and the future generations.
26 So I'm thankful for this opportunity to be here.

27 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** Very good. Thank you.
28 And if you could speak a little bit about the evolution of,

1 you know, the perception of say collaborations with PRC
2 researchers and PRC institutions in your career, over the
3 course of your career?

4 **ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, I was born in
5 China and immigrated to Canada about the age of twenty-some.
6 And after I finished my PhD degree here in Canada, I launched
7 my career as an assistant professor in a Canadian university.
8 And since then, I began to build up my research program and I
9 tried my best to reach out to the best talent who would like
10 to join my team, as well as the best talent who I can
11 collaborate with. And among them, some of them are from
12 China.

13 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** Okay. So you have
14 collaborators in the People's Republic of China. And have
15 you noticed a change in recent years, how those
16 collaborations are viewed in the academic community, but also
17 by funding agencies?

18 **ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, definitely. So
19 for probably for many people this is a long story, because
20 this can put my answer into context.

21 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** Sure. Go ahead.

22 **ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT:** Yeah. I have
23 participated in Canadian elections, voting based on my
24 judgement of each politician's policies, record learned from
25 their platforms and the media. The fact that many of us are
26 on Chinese language apps does not mean we do not look at
27 other sources of information and cannot think for ourselves.
28 The stereotype that Chinese Canadians are more vulnerable to

1 foreign interference is discriminatory and baseless.

2 History has painful lessons about the Chinese
3 exclusion in Canada. Chinese arrived in Canada since 1788.
4 They were hardworking and endured hardships beyond what
5 others could tolerate. For instance, 12,000 Chinese
6 immigrants worked for the trans-Canada railroad, and many
7 lost their lives due to the harsh conditions.

8 However, by 1870s, the media began spreading
9 anti-Chinese rhetoric leading to widespread violence and the
10 1923 *Chinese Exclusion Act*.

11 Sadly, this cycle seems to be repeating
12 today. Some media and politicians have turned their attacks
13 against the Chinese Government into attacks against Chinese
14 people and anti-Chinese sentiment. One politician has been
15 especially vocal, rating China as an enemy and even calling
16 for a new Cold War.

17 Such rhetoric directly hurts Chinese
18 Canadians, being targets of the resulting hostility.

19 I voted against him because I stand for
20 peace, not because I was influenced by the Chinese
21 Government.

22 I'm deeply concerned that his approach for
23 treating Chinese community voters as incapable of independent
24 thought, implying that if we don't share his view, we must be
25 under foreign interference.

26 Many other politicians, journalists, and
27 activists are -- also push the narrative that Chinese
28 Canadians who don't adopt a harshly critical view of China

1 should be suspect of being foreign agents. This is unfair,
2 dangerous, and it reduces us to second-class citizens in our
3 own country.

4 I fully support making our electoral
5 processes being fair and free of foreign interference, but
6 singling out China as the primary concern is unjustified and
7 uncomfortable, especially when someone's election loss is
8 attributed to unproven claims of Chinese interference.

9 As a professor, I know that labelling people
10 is never right. We judge students by their work, not by
11 labels. The same should apply to foreign nations. We must
12 evaluate them based on facts; did they start wars, harm
13 innocents, or invade others? We should hold every country to
14 the same standards, always putting Canada's national
15 interests first.

16 As a U.S. politician once said, a nation has
17 no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, only permanent
18 interests.

19 It's disheartening that I have to speak
20 anonymously today. The anti-China sentiment in Canada is so
21 intense that I'm afraid of retaliation for sharing my views.
22 The hostility is so pervasive that I was advised to stay
23 anonymous to protect myself, my family, and even my
24 university.

25 This shows how far anti-China hysteria has
26 spread and how real the threat against Chinese Canadians have
27 become.

28 In a recent issue of Canadian Ethnic Studies,

1 a survey in November 2022 to February 2023 revealed that 40
2 percent of Chinese-origin STEM professors felt anxiety about
3 being under surveillance by Canadian Governments, compared to
4 just 11 percent of non-Chinese STEM professors. Given the
5 recent resurgence in anti-China sentiment, these numbers are
6 likely even worse today.

7 The climate of fear and suspicion began with
8 the Trump Administration's China Initiative in the U.S. in
9 2018 targeting perceived Chinese spies in academia and
10 industry. Many innocent Chinese-origin professors were
11 wrongfully persecuted as spies. Even without evidence, they
12 lose their jobs and face catastrophic legal fees and the
13 mental torture.

14 Recently, Jane Wu, a distinguished China-born
15 scientist, lost her research lab due to a security
16 investigation. Being stripped of her right to research, she
17 took her own life and we lost a star researcher forever.

18 The same atmosphere is brewing in Canada. In
19 November 2022 and April 2024, Yuesheng Wang, a former Hydro-
20 Québec employee, was accused of being a Chinese spy, making
21 headlines everywhere before his trial even began, yet we've
22 heard nothing about the trial's outcome. It's shocking to
23 read that accusations against him are based on vague
24 statements like, "He seems to promise to transfer knowledge
25 to China." Shouldn't a criminal charge be based on action
26 with clear, hard evidence? Charging someone based on what
27 they might do is deeply troubling and sets a dangerous
28 precedent.

1 As a professor, I have seen how anti-China
2 rhetoric has led to new policies to restrict research
3 collaborations with Chinese scholars, damage beneficial
4 academic exchanges. These policies not only harm our
5 research, but also cast a shadow over Chinese-origin
6 academics from denied funding to direct harassments, all
7 under the guise of national security while hiring committee
8 member even suggest investigating those candidates solely
9 based on their last names, assuming they might be risky due
10 to the perceived foreign guise. So my grandchildren carry
11 Chinese last names will face the same thing I face today.

12 This profiling is blatant discrimination,
13 contradicting the values of inclusivity and diversity that
14 Canada claims to uphold.

15 This hostile environment is fueled by
16 exaggerated or false claims about Chinese interference spread
17 by reporters, politicians and anti-China groups. This
18 climate has made us the targets of suspicion, so I have had
19 to be self-censorship. I cut off ongoing research
20 collaboration and abandoned my funding application because I
21 cannot prove my research poses no potential risk. This alone
22 could result in funding rejection by CSIS.

23 Meanwhile, these new research security
24 policies rest on two flawed assumptions. The first is that
25 collaborating with China only benefits them. This is not the
26 reality.

27 China has made remarkable strides in the last
28 four decades with a stand workforce 10 times larger than

1 ours. According to Australia's strategic policy, China now
2 leads in 57 out of 64 technologies. Very often, we gain more
3 from these collaborations.

4 One example is the mental health
5 collaboration program in one of Canada's strategic research
6 priorities. Each year, Chinese researchers, funded by their
7 government, come to Canada to share their findings. With a
8 much larger population, their data and their insights are
9 invaluable to us, but this year, 17 out of 20 couldn't get
10 visas to attend the workshop here. That's a total loss for
11 Canada.

12 The second outdated assumption is that China
13 can steal our research for military or industrial gains.
14 Let's be real. Knowledge today grows at a pace never seen
15 before, especially with the internet. Picture our collective
16 knowledge as a giant ball. Its surface marks the boundary
17 between what we know and the unknown. As this ball expands,
18 so does that boundary, and that's where academic research
19 operates, pushing into the unknown.

20 In academia, we value originality. We push
21 boundaries, develop new technologies and focus sharply to
22 advance quickly. We publish openly, aiming for impact.

23 There is a vast gap between academic findings
24 and the practical market-ready solutions. It's industry
25 experts who bridge that gap, so stealing academic research is
26 pointless. It's already out there, accessible to everyone.

27 Hunting for spies in universities is close to
28 modern-day witch hunting. Overly broad and vague research

1 security measures aimed at fighting foreign interference are
2 weakening the very foundation of our research. Our
3 universities are losing top talent, reducing productivity due
4 to compromised academic freedom and cutting services for
5 students due to budget deficit.

6 Built on flawed assumptions, these research
7 security policies cannot protect our national security.
8 Instead, they foster fear and anxiety in the Chinese academic
9 community, discourage international talent and risk a brain
10 drain as top performers feel unwelcome. This not only harms
11 our education in the high-tech sectors, but ultimately
12 weakens Canada's global competitiveness.

13 I should say decoupling from China won't give
14 Canada a competitive edge either. History proves that a
15 closed-door policy only hinders a nation's growth and
16 progress. To be competitive, we must stay open to learning,
17 sharing knowledge and collaborating where it benefits us
18 most.

19 So I urge this Commission to make a wise and
20 informed decision for our future. We must guard against
21 harmful foreign interference. Whether it's foreign agents
22 coming to kill our citizens or police our people, we must do
23 so with a balanced and fact-based approach. Over-reacting to
24 minor threats with extreme measures only hurts ourselves. If
25 we waste our premium resources on non-essential risks, we
26 will miss the real threats that's from climate change, global
27 pandemic to nuclear war.

28 So I, along with many other Chinese

1 Canadians, look to the Commission to put a stop to the witch
2 hunts and defend our rights. A nation that is open, fair and
3 inclusive to all is the one that will survive and prosper in
4 the long run.

5 That concludes my statement.

6 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** Thank you, Ms. A.

7 So we've asked other panelists if they had
8 any recommendations to alleviate the effects of this kind of
9 discourse. I think you've ended with recommendations like
10 that, but I was just going to give you the opportunity to --
11 do you have anything to add?

12 **ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, thank you. I
13 would like to.

14 So yeah, we have know the sentence if there
15 is avalanche, no snowflake is innocent. So we see there are
16 many players in this situation and we want to highlight every
17 sector and every actor need to pay attention and do
18 something.

19 Firstly, the government agents -- from my
20 hearing today of the other stories bring by other panelists
21 as well as my own experience, I believe our Government
22 agents need to be hold account against discrimination and the
23 baseless accusations to minorities like Chinese or Russian,
24 whatever.

25 So it's important for themselves to see
26 whether their actions are based or motivated by some anti-
27 nation or anti certain races, so this is the first thing.

28 Second thing is our media. And I think I'm

1 very disappointed of our current media. In many cases, they
2 just don't try to present a balanced view. They just tell
3 one side of the story.

4 So if our media tell one side of the story,
5 do not present us a balanced perspective, it's easy for our
6 Canadian people to look for other sources and it's easy to
7 let the misinformation from foreign resources come in.

8 So first of all, we need to make sure our
9 media do their job and our media need to also be the one to
10 monitor whether our Government agents do the same.

11 So -- and our politicians. I hope our
12 politicians -- so my point, really, is I hope our politicians
13 always put the Canadian people's health, wealth, prosperity
14 first. If I hear some politicians they keeps on, like,
15 attack others, attack foreign agents -- foreign nations, kind
16 of try to blame others rather than find and establish
17 solutions for internal business, so I found that that's a
18 problem of our politicians with short-sighted decisions.

19 So I hope our politicians in the future, they
20 can bring us more solutions for our -- to improve Canada
21 rather than baseless accusations of other because it's not
22 helpful.

23 And I also hope then can propose their like
24 electoral frameworks based on large-scale consultations, and
25 so every people, including the silent majority, have a chance
26 to contribute our views and our perspectives to improve this
27 whole process.

28 So yeah, that's a few things that come to my

1 mind.

2 **MR. GABRIEL POLIQUIN:** Okay. Thank you very
3 much for that.

4 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Thank you to all the
5 panelists here today. We're very grateful for your
6 participation.

7 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** We'll take the break,
8 come back at 11:20.

9 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. À l'ordre,
10 s'il vous plait.

11 This sitting of the Commission is now in
12 recess until 11:20 a.m. Cette séance de la Commission est
13 maintenant suspendue jusqu'à 11 h 20.

14 --- Upon recessing at 10:51 a.m./

15 --- La séance est suspendue à 10 h 51

16 --- Upon resuming at 11:21 a.m./

17 --- La séance est reprise à 11 h 21

18 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order please. À l'ordre,
19 s'il vous plait.

20 This sitting of the Foreign Interference
21 Commission is now back in session. Cette séance de la
22 Commission sur l'ingérence étrangère est de retour en
23 session.

24 The time is 11:21 a.m. Il est 11 h 21.

25 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So before you start, I
26 just want to make -- and although our panelists are not in
27 the room anymore, I'd like to thank them for the information
28 they gave us this morning. I didn't before because I was

1 under the mistaken impression that they were coming back
2 after the break, so I thought I would have the opportunity to
3 thank them at that point. I really believe that the
4 information they provided us with was very pertinent and
5 useful. I want to avoid and try to avoid any blind spot, and
6 I think it will be very helpful in this respect. So although
7 they are not there, I express my gratitude. Thank you. So
8 it's now your turn.

9 **--- PRESENTATION BY/PRÉSENTATION PAR MS. KATE McGRANN AND MS.**
10 **DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:**

11 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Good morning, everyone.
12 My name is Kate McGrann, and I'm joined by my colleague, Dawn
13 Palin Rokosh. We're members of the Commission counsel team,
14 and today, we are here to provide a presentation and update
15 on the Commission's public consultation process.

16 Today we will be discussing some of the
17 relevant themes and topics arising from the information the
18 Commission has received through its public consultation
19 process. It's important to keep in mind that the information
20 shared today does not constitute findings by the Commissioner
21 or the Commission, but rather, an overview of the public
22 consultation process itself and a non-exhaustive description
23 of information the Commission has received.

24 An important part of the Commission's mandate
25 is to examine and report on the experiences of members of
26 ethnic and cultural communities who may be especially
27 vulnerable to foreign interference. The Commission's public
28 consultation process was designed to allow the Commission to

1 hear directly from members of diaspora communities who may be
2 especially vulnerable to foreign interference, along with
3 members of the general public about the impacts of foreign
4 interference and how to make things better. The Commission's
5 public consultation process involved three components: a
6 call for written submissions from members of the public, a
7 publicly available questionnaire on foreign interference, and
8 consultation meetings. The call for submissions and
9 questionnaire were open to all members of the public. The
10 Commission convened consultation meetings with groups of up
11 to eight people from diaspora communities represented by the
12 diaspora participants in the Commission.

13 **Me DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** La conception du
14 processus de consultation publique de la Commission et de ses
15 trois composantes a été guidée par les considérations
16 suivantes.

17 Sûreté et sécurité. Des mesures ont été
18 prises afin de répondre aux préoccupations de sécurité ayant
19 été exprimées par les participants aux réunions de
20 consultation. Cela visait également à promouvoir un
21 environnement de conversation propice à l'échange libre et
22 franc d'idées et d'expériences.

23 Accessibilité. Assurer que les membres du
24 public ont à leur disposition différentes façons de partager
25 leurs expériences et leurs idées afin qu'ils et elles
26 puissent choisir la ou les manières qui leur conviennent le
27 mieux. Un des éléments clés de la considération
28 d'accessibilité était d'assurer que la Commission pouvait

1 dialoguer avec les membres du public dans la langue de leur
2 choix. Ainsi, la Commission a notamment encouragé les
3 membres du public à présenter leurs observations écrites dans
4 n'importe quelle langue et a fourni de l'interprétation en
5 direct lors des réunions de consultation lorsque demandé par
6 les participants. Ces deux exemples figurent parmi d'autres
7 mesures visant à favoriser l'accessibilité.

8 Transparence. Partager les réflexions
9 obtenues lors du processus de consultation publique tout en
10 respectant le besoin d'assurer la préoccupation relative à la
11 sûreté et la sécurité des participants aux réunions, ainsi
12 que celles du processus en général.

13 Et représentativité. Communiquer avec les
14 différentes communautés de la diaspora afin de dialoguer avec
15 le plus d'individus possible et contribuer à la compréhension
16 de l'impact de l'ingérence étrangère sur les membres du
17 public et sur les communautés de la diaspora qui pourraient
18 être particulièrement vulnérables à l'ingérence étrangère.

19 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Further to safety and
20 security considerations, both for those engaging in the
21 public consultation process and for the public consultation
22 process itself, the Commission incorporated the following
23 approaches. Individuals were able to participate in the
24 public consultation anonymously and confidentially.
25 Individuals making written submissions were provided with
26 several options for how to deliver their submissions to the
27 Commission, including through encrypted messaging. Security
28 protocols were established and employed for virtual and in-

1 person consultation meetings. And to protect the integrity
2 of the questionnaire, the Commission ensured measures were
3 put in place to detect and counter artificial responses.

4 **Me DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Le processus de
5 consultation publique de la Commission, lancé en mai 2024,
6 aura été actif pendant cinq mois au moment de la clôture du
7 questionnaire en mi-octobre.

8 Plusieurs efforts ont été déployés pour
9 informer les individus et les groupes de la possibilité de
10 participer au processus de consultation publique, notamment
11 par le biais des médias sociaux, de communiqués de presse
12 adressés aux organismes des médias, incluant des médias des
13 communautés ethniques et culturelles opérant au Canada ainsi
14 que de campagnes de publicité numérique.

15 Les membres du public ont été dirigés vers
16 une page du site internet de la Commission consacrée au
17 processus de consultation publique. Sur cette page se trouve
18 de l'information à propos des façons de participer, ainsi que
19 des ressources pour soutenir les individus intéressés à
20 participer.

21 Reconnaisant la diversité des communautés de
22 la diaspora touchées par l'ingérence étrangère et
23 l'importance de communiquer avec les membres des communautés
24 de la diaspora dans la langue avec laquelle ils sont le plus
25 à l'aise, la Commission a mis à leur disposition des
26 informations et des ressources clés en français, en anglais
27 et dans 17 autres langues.

28 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** The Commission's call to

1 the public for written submissions was launched, along with
2 supporting guidelines and resources, in May 2024. The
3 Commission committed to read and consider all submissions
4 received by the submission deadline of August 12th, 2024.

5 Through this process, the Commission has
6 received over 145 written submissions from individuals and
7 groups. The Commission accepted anonymous and confidential
8 submissions. Submissions were accepted in all languages, and
9 members of the public were invited to deliver their
10 submissions via email, encrypted messaging, and regular mail.
11 These submissions will inform the Commission's work and a
12 summary of key topics and themes highlighted through these
13 submissions will be shared publicly.

14 The Commission extends its thanks to all of
15 those who took the time to prepare and send a written
16 submission.

17 **Me DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** La Commission a
18 cherché à recueillir directement les opinions et les
19 expériences des membres de communautés de la diaspora ayant
20 été touchés par l'ingérence étrangère. Ainsi, la Commission
21 a organisé des réunions en août et en septembre avec des
22 personnes ayant été identifiées par les organisations
23 détenant le statut de participant dans les travaux de la
24 Commission et représentant des communautés de la diaspora.

25 Ces réunions se sont tenues en personne dans
26 les lieux de rencontre demeurés secrets dans plusieurs
27 régions du pays, ainsi que virtuellement. Lors de ces
28 réunions, les participants n'ont pas prêté serment ou fait

1 d'affirmation solennelle et n'ont pas été contre-interrogés.
2 Ils ont été enjoins d'éviter de formuler des allégations
3 spécifiques visant des personnes ou des entités au Canada, le
4 tout afin de respecter le principe de l'équité, lequel est un
5 principe directeur de la Commission, et au vu du fait que ces
6 personnes ou entités n'auraient pas l'opportunité de répondre
7 à ces allégations.

8 La Commission ne tirera aucune conclusion
9 factuelle sur ou à propos de l'information ayant été partagée
10 lors de ces réunions.

11 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** All in all, the Commission
12 heard directly from 105 members of diaspora communities in
13 Canada in a series of 22 meetings. Meeting attendees were
14 asked to respond to the following two questions:

15 Question 1: How are you, your loved ones,
16 members of your community impacted by foreign interference in
17 Canada's electoral processes and democratic institutions?

18 Question 2: What are your suggestions for how you and others
19 in your community that may be vulnerable to foreign
20 interference could be supported and protected, and for how
21 foreign interference could be detected or combatted?

22 To allow individuals to participate
23 anonymously and confidentially while sharing information
24 received at those meetings with the public, anonymized
25 summaries for the meetings will be published on the
26 Commission website. Attendees will have had the opportunity
27 to review, edit, and approve the summaries prior to their
28 publication.

1 You will hear from some individuals who
2 participated in those consultation meetings during this
3 afternoon's diaspora community panels, where they will
4 discussing some key themes and suggestion they raised during
5 those meetings.

6 The Commission extends its thanks to all
7 those individuals who participated in the consultation
8 meetings.

9 **Me DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** La Commission a lancé
10 un questionnaire en septembre. Le questionnaire prend
11 environ 5 à 10 minutes à remplir et permet aux membres du
12 public de partager leurs expériences et opinions sur
13 l'ingérence étrangère dans les élections et les processus
14 démocratiques fédéraux canadiens. Les réponses reçues au
15 questionnaire informeront les travaux de la Commission,
16 incluant son Rapport final.

17 Plus de 460 réponses ont été reçues à ce
18 jour. Le questionnaire sera disponible jusqu'au 16 octobre.
19 La Commission invite tous les membres du public à contribuer
20 aux travaux de la Commission en répondant au questionnaire.
21 Le lien vers le questionnaire se trouve sur le site internet
22 de la Commission, sur la page étant dédiée au processus de
23 consultation publique.

24 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Through the different
25 aspects of the public consultation process, members of the
26 public have shared with the Commission their diverse and
27 sometimes difficult experiences. Here is a summary of some
28 of the key themes addressed by members of the public: mis-

1 and disinformation and its use to limit, disadvantage,
2 incite, undermine and harm individuals and organisations here
3 in Canada; the leveraging of Canadian civil, community, and
4 academic institutions and organisations or those working
5 within them to further the objectives of foreign actors; and
6 the collateral damage caused by government efforts to combat
7 foreign interference, particularly for members of diaspora
8 communities.

9 Let's move now to discuss some of the
10 suggestions received through the public consultation process.

11 **Me DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Parmi les nombreuses
12 suggestions ayant été reçues par la Commission, figurent les
13 suivantes.

14 Renforcer les réponses gouvernementales à
15 l'ingérence étrangère et à la répression transnationale.

16 Améliorer et accroître l'information que le
17 gouvernement partage avec le public aux propos des risques
18 associés à l'ingérence étrangère, et sur les mesures prises
19 afin d'y faire face.

20 Établir et maintenir des relations de
21 collaboration entre le gouvernement et ses agences, ainsi que
22 les communautés de la diaspora, notamment en améliorant les
23 connaissances culturelles et en s'assurant que les points de
24 contact gouvernementaux pour les communautés de la diaspora
25 demeurent aussi constants que possible.

26 À travers le processus de consultation
27 publique, la Commission a également recueilli des
28 commentaires quant aux ressources et aux moyens disponibles

1 afin d'améliorer la connaissance et la sensibilisation
2 générales du public envers la désinformation et la
3 mésinformation au Canada, ainsi que sur comment minimiser
4 leurs impacts.

5 Les suggestions partagées à cet égard
6 incluent la création de ressources reliées à l'ingérence
7 étrangère et la répression transnationale, l'éducation
8 critique aux médias, et la lutte contre le racisme.

9 De plus, la Commission a entendu de nombreux
10 appels au déploiement d'efforts publics accrus visant à
11 vérifier factuellement - ou, en en bon français, *fact check* -
12 les informations reliées à des sujets courants de
13 désinformation et de mésinformation.

14 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Through the three
15 components of the consultation process, the Commission has
16 heard from people across the country, and we aren't done yet.
17 The Commission continues to learn from the experiences and
18 ideas of members of the public, including from members of
19 diaspora communities vulnerable to the impacts of foreign
20 interference in our democratic processes and institutions.

21 This afternoon, the Commission will hear from
22 certain attendees of consultation meetings who will join
23 panels to discuss suggestions centred around three themes:
24 public awareness and education, dis- and misinformation and
25 how to respond, and supports and resources for diaspora
26 communities. Members of the public can participate in the
27 public consultation process by completing the Commission's
28 questionnaire, which remains open until October 16th, 2024.

1 And the Commission will be publishing more information on
2 what it has heard through the three components of its public
3 consultation process on its website.

4 The Commission thanks all those who have
5 taken the time to participate in the public consultation
6 process.

7 **Me DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Merci.

8 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Merci beaucoup. Alors,
9 nous allons arrêter pour le lunch. Et nous devons tous être
10 de retour à 1 h 30. Nous aurons de nouveau cet après-midi
11 des panels composés de membres issus de diverses diasporas.

12 Merci.

13 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. À l'ordre,
14 s'il vous plait.

15 This sitting of the Commission is now in
16 recess until 1:30 p.m. Cette séance de la Commission est
17 maintenant suspendue jusqu'à 13 h 30

18 --- Upon recessing at 11:39 a.m./

19 --- La séance est suspendue à 11 h 39

20 --- Upon resuming at 1:32 p.m./

21 --- La séance est reprise à 13 h 32

22 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. À l'ordre,
23 s'il vous plaît.

24 This sitting of the Foreign Interference
25 Commission is now back in session. Cette séance de la
26 Commission sur l'ingérence étrangère est de retour en
27 session.

28 The time is 1:32 p.m. Il est 13 h 32.

1 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So good afternoon.

2 **MS. SARAH TEICH:** Madam Commissioner, I'm
3 sorry. Before we get started, I'd like to bring a motion,
4 and this is related to the indirect identification of Mr.
5 Marcus Kolga by the witness this morning. And I'd like to
6 seek a remedy for that indirect identification, either
7 striking the particular sentence from the record or recalling
8 the witness and cross-examining him or striking the entirety
9 of his remarks from the record.

10 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** What are you referring
11 to exactly in terms of the -- what had been said this
12 morning?

13 **MS. SARAH TEICH:** Maybe I'll just come up so
14 I'm not bending over, if that's okay, for a second.

15 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Yes, sure.

16 **MS. SARAH TEICH:** Again, I apologize for the
17 slight delay.

18 This is the quote:

19 "So in response to the question by
20 Commission counsel, can you share
21 with us some of your views about how
22 we could better respond to foreign
23 interference in terms of ways that we
24 could avoid some of the negative
25 effects that you've identified?" (As
26 read)

27 The witness, this is Mr. Robinson, I believe,
28 Paul Robinson, he says:

1 "I mean, I would first say avoid
2 threat inflation. I read an article
3 -- I read an article in a major
4 Canadian newspaper the other day
5 which said, and I'll quote,
6 'Potential tentacles of Russian
7 oligarchs and agents have penetrated
8 deep into Canadian business, politics
9 and society.' This kind of alarmism,
10 to my view, is not helpful. It
11 stokes unnecessary fears and can lead
12 to the targeting of innocent people.
13 It should be avoided." (As read)

14 Madam Commissioner, if you pull that quote
15 and put it into Google, the very first search result
16 identifies that it's a report, a paper by Mr. Kolga, that was
17 published by the MacDonald-Laurier Institute.

18 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Okay. But what is the
19 or what are the allegations, in your view, that is made
20 against ---

21 **MS. SARAH TEICH:** He says it's ---

22 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** --- this individual?

23 **MS. SARAH TEICH:** He says ---

24 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** What is the -- because
25 the idea not to identify anyone is just -- is to avoid
26 accusing someone of misconduct while this person cannot
27 defend himself or herself.

28 **MS. SARAH TEICH:** Yes, that's right.

1 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** What is the -- in your
2 view, what is the misconduct that is alleged against this
3 person in this instance?

4 **MS. SARAH TEICH:** Yes, thank you.

5 I mean, he says right in the quote -- he says
6 it's "threat inflation". He says it's alarmism, it's not
7 helpful, it stokes unnecessary fears. He says it can lead to
8 the targeting of innocent people. So that's an allegation
9 that that kind of reporting leads to harm.

10 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** If that may help,
11 Madam Commissioner -- Guillaume Sirois, from the RCDA -- we
12 support that motion, which is a very reasonable motion, in
13 our opinion.

14 We were not warned in advance of that
15 presence of that panellist, and we think that there should be
16 an opportunity to correct the record regarding his
17 allegations. And it may be difficult to extract his
18 allegations from his whole testimony this morning because he
19 referred to fact checkers or researchers about this
20 information as being intellectually sloppy. He made a bunch
21 of blatant comments about this, and we think that -- for
22 these reasons, we support the application.

23 **MS. NATALIA RODRIGUEZ:** Madam Commissioner,
24 Commission counsel here, Natalia Rodriguez.

25 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Just a moment. I just
26 want to make sure that Maître Sirois ---

27 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Yeah, we're done.

28 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** You're done?

1 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Exactly.

2 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Okay.

3 **MS. NATALIA RODRIGUEZ:** Commission counsel
4 here.

5 We think this is something that should be
6 brought in writing to the Commissioner and this gives an
7 opportunity for the other parties to be able to weigh in as
8 well. So we would ask if you can please bring this motion in
9 writing so that it can be duly considered.

10 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** I agree it should be a
11 written motion, and so I will invite you to make formal
12 application. You know the rules, so the application will be
13 notified to the other parties. And I'm inviting you to
14 indicate in details because I'll be very, very frank; I see
15 it as the expression of an opinion much more than a factual
16 allegation against someone.

17 So I would like to hear from you on this
18 specific aspect because it's not obvious to me, but I'm not
19 making any decision. I'm just telling you to address this
20 point in your application because this is clearly something
21 that I'm interested in.

22 **MS. SARAH TEICH:** Okay. Thank you.

23 We'll make it in writing.

24 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

25 **MS. SARAH TEICH:** Thank you so much.

26 --- INTRODUCTION OF THE PANEL ON PUBLIC AWARENESS AND
27 EDUCATION/INTRODUCTION DU PANEL SUR LA SENSIBILISATION DU
28 PUBLIC ET L'ÉDUCATION:

1 --- FACILITATION OF THE PANEL BY/ANIMATION DU PANEL PAR MS.

2 KATE McGRANN AND MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:

3 MS. KATE McGRANN: Good afternoon. My name
4 is Kate McGrann, and I'm joined by my colleague, Benjamin
5 Herrera. We are members of the Commission counsel team, and
6 we will now be hearing from a panel of people who attended
7 consultation meetings with the Commissioner and members of
8 her team this summer.

9 These panelists are here to share information
10 based on their experiences. Unlike fact witnesses appearing
11 before the Commission, these panelists are appearing without
12 oath or affirmation.

13 As was the case in the consultation meetings
14 held with the Commissioner this summer, these panelists have
15 been advised against making allegations against individuals
16 or organizations here in Canada.

17 These panelists will be discussing
18 suggestions that they and others are their meeting provided
19 for how to improve Canada's approach to foreign interference,
20 including suggestions focused on the theme of public
21 education and awareness.

22 MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA: Thank you.

23 We will begin by introducing each of the
24 panelists.

25 So first we have Katpana Nagendra. She is a
26 Tamil Canadian human rights activist who serves as the
27 general secretary and official spokesperson for the Tamil
28 Rights Group. The Tamil Rights Group is a non-profit

1 organization that advocates for human rights and seeks
2 justice for the crimes committed against Tamils in Sri Lanka.

3 Second we have Mr. Sieru Kebede. He is an
4 information technology professional who serves as a vice-
5 president of Tigray Community Toronto. Mr. Kebede also
6 volunteers as an advocate with the Alliance of Genocide
7 Victim Communities, Security and Justice for Tigrayans
8 Canada, and Ethiopian Canadians for Peace.

9 Third we have Ms. Svetlana Koshkareva. She's
10 a Canadian citizen born in Omsk, USSR. She travelled as a
11 journalist to Ukraine during the period between 2004 and
12 2023. She has been involved in fundraising for the Armed
13 Forces of Ukraine. She's an activist whose work includes
14 serving on the Anti-War Committee of Russia and volunteering
15 with the Russian-Canadian Democratic Alliance.

16 And last but not least, we have Ms. Farzaneh
17 Fard. She holds a PhD in Computer Science at Dalhousie
18 University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She served as a board
19 member of the Iranian Justice Collective and she's an
20 advocate for the End Gender Apartheid campaign.

21 Thank you very much.

22 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Good afternoon.

23 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Ms. Nagendra, we will
24 begin with you. At your consultation meeting, you discussed
25 public awareness and education efforts for and about the
26 Tamil Canadian community. Please explain your suggestions
27 and discuss them.

28 **MS. KATPANA NAGENDRA:** Thank you. Good

1 afternoon, Commissioner. I appreciate the opportunity to
2 speak today.

3 Before addressing the first question, I want
4 to clarify that I am here not only as a human rights
5 advocate, but also as a member of the Tamil diaspora and a
6 victim of the ongoing foreign interference that hampers our
7 pursuit of justice and accountability.

8 To provide meaningful suggestions for
9 enhancing public awareness and education aimed at countering
10 foreign interference, I would first like to give you some
11 context about the challenges the Tamil Canadian community is
12 facing regarding the Sri Lankan Government's actions.

13 Sri Lankan Government's interference in the
14 lives of Tamil Canadians has significant implications. This
15 includes surveillance, threats, harassment, disinformation
16 campaigns aimed at discrediting Tamil activists. The regime
17 has labelled peaceful human rights advocates as terrorists to
18 silence their voices and undermine their legitimate calls for
19 justice and accountability. This tactic not only targets
20 Tamil Canadians, but also seeks to manipulate international
21 perceptions and hinder the global response to the human
22 rights violations committed during the genocidal war against
23 Tamils in Sri Lanka.

24 As a survivor of the violence during the 1983
25 anti-Tamil riots in Colombo, I have experienced the Sri
26 Lankan Government's intimidation tactics first hand, even in
27 Canada.

28 Many in the Tamil community, including

1 myself, sought refuge here for safety and for the freedom to
2 advocate for our people, yet we face ongoing harassment and
3 discrediting efforts from the Sri Lankan Government. Online
4 campaigns target our activism and in-person intimidation
5 disrupts our efforts. Whenever we speak about the atrocities
6 against our families or demand accountability for genocide,
7 we are met with defamation, threats, and malice falsehoods.

8 The Sri Lankan Government's interference in
9 the lives of Tamil Canadians has taken many egregious forms,
10 as documented by Tamil rights groups.

11 For example, the government pressured
12 officials in Brampton to block the construction of a monument
13 for the Tamil genocide.

14 Additionally, Tamil Canadians returning to
15 Sri Lanka have faced detention, torture, and interrogation
16 due to their activism. Family members of these activists
17 still in Sri Lanka have also been harassed and tortured as
18 intimidation tactics.

19 Furthermore, the Sri Lankan Government
20 supported a challenge against the constitutionality of Bill
21 104, the Tamil Genocide Education Week Act, undermining
22 efforts to educate Canadians about the genocide.

23 Sri Lankan agents have also launched
24 disinformation campaigns to mislead the international
25 community and damage the reputations of Tamils seeking refuge
26 in Canada. When Tamil refugees arrived on the Ocean Lady and
27 MV Sun Sea, the Sri Lankan Government spread false
28 information leading Canadian authorities to label them as

1 suspected terrorists and unjustly detaining them, including
2 pregnant women and children.

3 This interference has also affected Canadian
4 Tamil activists travelling abroad, causing travel
5 restrictions and delays.

6 Additionally, Tamil Canadians running for
7 office who call for accountability from the Sri Lankan
8 Government have faced smear campaigns and accusations of
9 links to terrorism.

10 Our first recommendation is to increase
11 public awareness and education about foreign interference,
12 especially within diaspora communities. Canadians need to
13 understand how foreign governments like Sri Lanka's
14 infiltrate our borders using tactics such as disinformation,
15 intimidation, and surveillance to suppress advocates for human
16 rights. Many are unaware of the subtle yet insidious ways
17 these actors extend their influence. Public education
18 initiatives should empower individuals, particularly in
19 vulnerable communities, to recognize signs of interference
20 and know their legal protections.

21 **MS. NATALIA RODRIGUEZ:** I'm sorry,
22 Commissioner. We're just getting an indication from the
23 interpreters that if we can try to make an effort to speak a
24 little bit more slowly? Thank you very much.

25 **MS. KATPANA NAGENDRA:** Thank you. The
26 Canadian ---

27 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Everyone is reminded of
28 the same thing everyday.

MS. KATPANA NAGENDRA: The Canadian Government must ensure that citizens have access to resources and support if targeted, including legal recourse and protective measures.

1 province in Ethiopia with about seven million people. The
2 war arose from a failure to establish a new political
3 arrangement between the Tigray People's Liberation Front and
4 the Prosperity Party led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. This
5 conflict, which lasted from November 2020 to November 2022 --
6 '20 to '22, has been described as a genocide, yet it
7 struggles for recognition.

8 During this period, Tigray was under complete
9 siege, with media blackouts and a government-imposed blockade
10 on internet and telephone services, one of the longest in
11 global history.

12 Essential utilities, commercial trade, food
13 aid, and banking services were also cut off.

14 Families in the diaspora were left in the
15 dark, unable to contact loved ones to check on their safety.
16 Journalists attempting to report on the situation faced
17 harassment, expulsion, imprisonment, or death.

18 Despite these draconian measures, information
19 still leaked. Bodies began washing up in Sudan from the
20 Tekezé River and western Tigray and refugees fled to share
21 their horror stories.

22 A few brave souls risked their lives to
23 smuggle information and report to the media in the
24 neighbouring areas where communication was possible.

25 It was through these limited pieces of
26 information that we came to know the tip of the iceberg, the
27 catastrophe and the genocide in the order of magnitude of the
28 Rwanda genocide, if not more.

1 The Ethiopian and Eritrean Governments
2 launched extensive propaganda campaigns, making it difficult
3 for people to grasp the true extent of the crisis. As a
4 result, the international community remained largely unaware.

5 In response, Tigran diaspora communities
6 across Canada organized mass protests in cities like Toronto
7 and Ottawa. We protested in front of the Parliament, the
8 U.S. Embassy, major media outlets, and provincial municipal
9 buildings seeking to raise awareness and garner support.

10 However, local media largely ignored our
11 efforts. Our protests were met with counternarratives from
12 the Ethiopian Government and its sympathizers, complicating
13 the struggle to convey the realities on the ground. Media
14 outlets found it challenging to discern the truths as they
15 were often unable to access the region themselves.

16 The government of Ethiopia and Eritrea had
17 immense resources and access to lobbyists and the
18 international institutions. Despite our tireless advocacy,
19 we felt helpless and frustrated by the lack of attention from
20 the Canadian public and major news organizations, especially
21 in light of the enormity of the crisis.

22 The Tigray war has resulted in over a million
23 civilian deaths, primarily due to the brutal siege and
24 targeted massacres. The Ethiopian government led the
25 conflict, supported by Eritrean soldiers and the Amhara
26 paramilitary groups, with an estimated million combatants
27 involved. The war has led to the sexual assault of over
28 200,000 women and girls, often tortured in gruesome ways by

1 gangs. It had also led to the destruction of more than 90
2 percent of schools, hospitals, as well as factories, water
3 supplies, civic buildings with essential public records.

4 Currently over 40 percent of Tigray remains
5 under occupation by the same forces responsible for these
6 atrocities, hindering justice and the return of displaced
7 persons. There are over a million internally displaced
8 people in Tigray and more that 70,000 refugees have fled to
9 Sudan where they face further violence. Many have attempted
10 dangerous journeys to South Sudan, Uganda, and Libya, often
11 falling victim to human trafficking and perilous conditions.
12 A small number have arrived in Canada, particularly in
13 Toronto, but they lack adequate support to address the mental
14 trauma and resettle effectively.

15 My youngest brother is among those still in
16 Libya, highlighting the ongoing struggles faced by our
17 community. Compared -- compared to conflicts in Ukraine and
18 Israel, the Tigray war has resulted in far -- excuse me.
19 Thank you.

20 Compared to conflicts in Ukraine or Israel,
21 the Tigray war has resulted in far more casualties and urgent
22 needs. Yet it has received minimum media coverage. This
23 lack of awareness significantly hinders our ability to raise
24 funds for recovery efforts and support refugees in both -- in
25 Tigray and within Canada.

26 As a small community we face overwhelming
27 requests for assistance with nearly every member having lost
28 a loved one or supporting relatives in Tigray. Despite our

1 efforts, the scale of the need far exceeds our capacity.
2 Many Canadians, including charitable organizations, remain
3 unaware of the situation in Tigray, making it challenging to
4 secure the necessary support.

5 This gap in public knowledge has hindered our
6 ability to galvanize broader assistance and apply pressure on
7 the Canadian government for humanitarian aid. Increased aid
8 and recognition could alleviate the mental and financial
9 burdens our community faces daily, stretching our limited
10 resources even thinner. Many individuals have lost jobs,
11 marriages have ended, due to the stress of feeling unheard,
12 while trying to raise awareness. Some community members have
13 taken on multiple jobs and relied on personal credit lines to
14 send assistance, while low-income individuals desperate to
15 save their relatives or childhood friends, struggle to
16 contribute as they once did.

17 Unfortunately, some in our community have
18 turned to unhealthy coping mechanisms in response to the
19 dismissal of our genocide. This collective trauma has added
20 an overwhelming layer of stress affecting our overall
21 wellbeing.

22 Thank you.

23 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Ms. Koshkareva. In your
24 consultation meeting, you discussed the importance of
25 education in addressing the spread of disinformation. Please
26 share and discuss your suggestions.

27 **MS. SVETLANA KOSHKAREVA:** Thank you, Kate.
28 Hello, Commissioner. Bonjour à tout le monde.

1 I think Western governments, including
2 Canada, do not appear to consider themselves in the war with
3 Russian yet. However, I can state that Russia views itself
4 as being in the war with the West, being Russian citizens as
5 well as Canadians.

6 Education on those issues requires time and
7 resources, and we have not invested in much -- as much as we
8 should in this area as Russia has. There is a lot of
9 catching up to do. We can't combat Russian interference or
10 cognitive warfare without naming it and building a production
11 which include moving forward with the essential steps.

12 For example, government actions and policy.
13 Our government must prioritize transparency in public
14 education. It should clearly educate Canadians about who is
15 spreading the disinformation, how it works, and why it's a
16 threat to democracy. This includes outlining the specific
17 tactics used by Russian actors like Russia Today, who are
18 creating the fake news manipulation and social media
19 algorithms and the use of troll farms and amplify harmful
20 content, as well as making it clear when and how this
21 information is being spread.

22 For example, disclosing the origin of
23 Kremlin-based narratives, such as fake images of Canadian
24 military personnel in Ukraine, or false claims about war
25 crimes, can be -- weaken the impact of those stories. As
26 well, I should mention, social media platforms like a
27 Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Telegram, and primary vectors
28 who spread this disinformation.

1 We should push the stronger regulation that
2 requires platforms to remove the false information in real
3 time, ban repeat offenders who spread disinformation or
4 propaganda by Russia, introduce transparency measures to
5 reveal the sources of political advertisement and content,
6 evaluate and address systematic risk associated with their
7 operations.

8 As well, we have to support media literacy,
9 very much, as a robust long-term strategy to educate citizens
10 here in Canada on media literacy is essential. Teaching
11 individuals, especially teenagers -- and speaking as a mother
12 of two teenagers, and as one more coming up -- how to
13 critically evaluate information sources, recognize
14 disinformation, and avoid falling victims to fake news should
15 be our top priority.

16 Schools and the university can integrate
17 media literacy programs to prepare the next generation to
18 navigate the complex information landscape here in Canada.

19 It should be more strong factchecking
20 network, like, DisinfoWatch, and StopFake, and they are
21 playing the vital role now, but more needs to be done to
22 expand their reach. Those organizations should be supported
23 by the government to continue monitoring disinformation and
24 providing reliable, factual alternatives.

25 Also, I would like to emphasize community-
26 based interventions, because disinformation targets
27 vulnerable communities like us here, for exploiting cultural
28 and political divisions. It's critical to empower local

1 leaders to defend themselves.

2 I must stress the education and public
3 awareness, while it's most important and not sufficient on
4 their own, effectively counter Russian propaganda. Only the
5 government can mount the coordinated response needed to
6 protect our democracy here in Canada.

7 Thank you.

8 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Ms. Fard, at the
9 consultation meeting you attended, you spoke about a general
10 knowledge gap within the Canadian government, and Canadian
11 society more generally, when it comes to the activities of
12 agents acting for foreign regimes. Please describe your
13 suggestions on this topic.

14 **MS. FARZANEH FARD:** Thank you.

15 Dear Madam Commissioner, and esteemed members
16 of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to address you
17 today on the critical issues of national security, foreign
18 interference, and the misuse of Canada's immigration system
19 by individuals associated with hostile regimes like Islamic
20 Republic in Iran.

21 These concerns have been raised by our
22 community through articles, interviews, and other forums, and
23 they demand urgent strategic responses. While Canada has a
24 proud tradition of welcoming immigrants and refugees,
25 embracing diversity and equality, it is essential that we
26 address the vulnerabilities in our system to preserve the
27 integrity of our democracy and ensure the protection of
28 Canadian citizens.

1 I urge the government to protect --
2 prioritize specialized training, public awareness, and
3 targeted interventions. Today, I will outline several
4 recommendations for your consideration.

5 One: Education and awareness campaigns for
6 law enforcement and judiciary.

7 There is a critical need to enhance the
8 awareness of key institutions, like the judiciary, RCMP, and
9 CSIS, regarding the activities of foreign agents linked to
10 oppressive regimes, such as Islamic Republic in Iran.
11 Comprehensive education and specialised training are
12 essential to equip these institutions to effectively identify
13 and address threats.

14 A: Judicial awareness and training.

15 Judges, prosecutors, and immigration
16 officials must receive specialised training on the tactics
17 used by individuals associated with hostile regimes, such as
18 the use of false identities or forged documents. This will
19 enable better legal judgements and deportation decisions.

20 B: Specialised RCMP and CSIS units.

21 Establish dedicated teams within these
22 agencies focussed on foreign interference and threats,
23 particularly from regimes like the Islamic Republic in Iran.
24 These units should collaborate with national security experts
25 to counter covert operations and protect activists who face
26 intimidation.

27 C: Public awareness campaigns.

28 A national campaign should be launched to

1 educate the public on the risks of foreign interference,
2 ensuring that communities are informed about the exploitation
3 of Canada's legal and immigration systems by hostile
4 entities. Multilingual materials should be provided to reach
5 diverse audiences.

6 D: Facilitating community communication with
7 security agencies.

8 At the moment, members of our community who
9 are targets of foreign interference, or are aware of the
10 presence of Iranian regime officials in Canada, struggle to
11 convey this information to the appropriate authorities.
12 Establishing a well-publicised method of contacting the
13 authorities with relevant information can protect our
14 community and quickly alert our agency -- our security
15 agencies about risk.

16 Two: Immigration reforms and enhanced
17 background checks.

18 There is clear evidence that individuals
19 associated with oppressive governments have exploited
20 Canada's immigration system. Stricter immigration policies
21 are needed to prevent these individuals from entering the
22 country under false pretenses while prioritising the safety
23 of genuine human rights activists in danger of deportation.
24 This is only possible through specialised training.

25 A: Enhanced background checks.

26 Collaborate with trusted members of the
27 Iranian Canadian community whose background and history does
28 not suggest connection with or sympathy for the Islamic

1 Republic, who can verify the legitimacy of immigration
2 claims, especially for individuals suspected of using false
3 identities or concealing ties to oppressive regimes.

4 B: Transparency in deportation cases.

5 The government must balance public safety
6 with privacy by providing transparency in deportation
7 hearings for individuals linked to human rights abuses.
8 Canadians deserve to know if high-ranking officials from
9 oppressive regimes are residing in Canada.

10 Three: Combatting extremism on university
11 campuses.

12 Universities are increasingly becoming hubs
13 for foreign influence and extremist recruitment. The
14 government should focus on campus awareness and prevention
15 initiatives.

16 A: University partnership.

17 Partner with universities to raise awareness
18 about the presence of extremist groups. Educational
19 campaigns for students and staff should help them recognise
20 and respond to radicalisation efforts. Authorities should
21 also more closely monitor universities to ensure that
22 sanctions are not being violated and the students or
23 professors with close ties to hostile foreign regimes are not
24 admitted.

25 B: Stricter oversight on -- of non-profits.

26 Ensure stricter government oversight of non-
27 profits operating on campuses to prevent their use as
28 platforms for extremist recruitment. Organisations tied to

1 terrorist groups should face immediate legal action and be
2 banned from public institutions.

3 Thank you.

4 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Ms. Nagendra, if we go
5 back to you. At your consultation meeting, you discussed
6 actions the Canadian government could take to address foreign
7 interference affecting the Tamil Canadian community at its
8 very source. Could you expand on that idea?

9 **MS. KATPANA NAGENDRA:** Yes, thank you.

10 It's imperative that Canada takes decisive
11 actions to hold the Sri Lankan government accountable so that
12 Tamil Canadians can live and advocate without fear of
13 reprisal. The Sri Lankan government's ongoing interference
14 in the lives of Tamil Canadians will only cease once they are
15 held fully accountable for their actions. As long as they
16 continue to operate with impunity, feeling shielded from
17 repercussions for their war crimes, human rights violations,
18 they will persist in using intimidation tactics against Tamil
19 activists in Canada. The fact that they believe they are
20 getting away with their crimes emboldens them to target those
21 who oppose their actions and advocate for justice.

22 The Canadian government must adopt a more
23 assertive and principled approach in holding Sri Lankan
24 government officials responsible for their involvement in the
25 genocide and systemic human rights abuses against the Tamil
26 people. Despite overwhelming evidence of their role in
27 crimes, such as extrajudicial killings, enforced
28 disappearances, torture, and sexual violence, the Sri Lankan

1 conflict, many of these individuals continue to occupy
2 positions of influence and authority within the Sri Lankan
3 government.

4 As a country committed to upholding the
5 principles of justice, human rights, and international law,
6 Canada cannot remain passive in the face of such gross
7 violations. This requires not just symbolic gestures, but
8 tangible actions through collaboration with international
9 judicial institutions, such as the International Criminal
10 Court, and International Court of Justice, and the United
11 Nations, as well as by invoking mechanisms under Canadian
12 law, such as the *Magnitsky Act*, which allows for sanctions
13 against foreign officials.

14 Canada should also champion efforts within
15 the international fora, such as the UN Human Rights Council
16 session, to renew and strengthen mandates for independent
17 investigations into the Sri Lankan government's actions
18 during and after the war. The goal must be to secure not
19 just accountability for individual perpetrators, but also to
20 dismantle the systems and the institutions within Sri Lanka
21 that continue to allow human rights abuses to persist.

22 Additionally, Canada should more actively
23 exercise its existing universal jurisdiction laws to
24 prosecute Sri Lankan officials responsible for international
25 crimes, such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against
26 humanity. By utilising universal jurisdiction more
27 effectively, Canada can demonstrate its commitment to
28 upholding international law.

1 It also seems clear that the Sri Lankan
2 government thinks it can interfere in the decisions by the
3 Canadian government when it comes to Sri Lanka's violation of
4 international law. This is clearly demonstrated by Sri
5 Lankan government's outright condemnation and rejection of
6 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's remarks on May 18th, where he
7 marked the day as Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day. This is --
8 the Sri Lankan's government's response reflects a disregard
9 for Canada's sovereign powers and decision-making of its own
10 citizens, and represents a direct challenge to Canadian
11 government's powers.

12 Our recommendation is for a stronger message,
13 and urge the Canadian government to move beyond this House of
14 Commons acknowledgement of the Tamil genocide, and also
15 extend formal recognition to all other instances of Tamil
16 genocide, including at the United Nations, and urge Canadian
17 allies to follow suit in recognising similar historical
18 injustices.

19 At the heart of this issue is the need to
20 provide justice for the Tamil victims and survivors who
21 continue to suffer the consequences of the genocide. Justice
22 in this context means not only holding individuals
23 accountable for their actions, but also ensuring that the
24 Tamil people can safely return to their homeland and seek
25 redress for the harms they have endured.

26 It is heartbreaking to think that activists
27 like myself may never be able to return to the land of our
28 ancestors, as we fear for our lives at the hands of the Sri

1 Lankan government.

2 Canada must lead by example in the
3 international community, demonstrating that war criminals
4 will not find refuge, or impunity, no longer [sic] how long
5 it takes to hold them accountable. By doing so, we uphold
6 the values of justice, deter future atrocities, and send a
7 clear message that Canada will not tolerate foreign
8 interference or the violation of fundamental human rights.

9 Thank you.

10 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you very much.

11 Mr. Kebede, at your consultation meeting you
12 discussed resources and supports that may assist the
13 Tigrayan-Canadian community. Could you please expand on
14 this?

15 **MR. SIERU KEBEDE:** Thank you.

16 Yes, our community receives numerous requests
17 for assistance from refugees and victims, both within Canada
18 and abroad. Locally, we need government support to provide
19 mental health services to our refugees and community members
20 coping with the loss of loved ones. Additionally, our
21 refugees require settlement services, financial aid, housing
22 assistance, and career development and support.

23 Unfortunately, our local communities are
24 under-resourced and lack the capacity to meet these needs,
25 necessitating both technical and financial assistance to
26 effectively support our genocide survivors. For instance,
27 our largest community in Toronto does not have the funds to
28 establish a community centre for these vital services.

1 Internationally, the Canadian government has
2 a history of providing humanitarian aid to Tigray, dating
3 back to the famine in the eighties. However, aid sent so far
4 either lacks verification of receipt to the needy or is not
5 proportionate to the severity of this tragedy. The people of
6 Tigray urgently need support from international donors.
7 Reconstruction aid that was anticipated after the Pretoria
8 Agreement has not materialized, leaving victims reaching out
9 the diaspora communities in despair.

10 In Tigray there are still many internally
11 displaced persons requiring regular support. Schools,
12 hospitals, water wells, and factories need to be rebuilt and
13 or repaired. Refugees scattered across East Africa are
14 suffering due to the lack of support. Many aid organizations
15 in Sudan have fled due to the ongoing conflict there, leaving
16 refugees without assistance.

17 Canada can play a critical role by providing
18 food and medical aid to those refugees in need, as well as
19 offering resettlement assistance for those returning to their
20 homes in Tigray, and providing reconstruction aid for the
21 devastated public infrastructure. Additionally, Canada can
22 use its international influence to advocate for the full
23 implementation of the Pretoria Agreement.

24 To combat foreign interference and repressive
25 governments via social media or through proxy, a report was
26 published and endorsed with several recommendations by Sarah
27 Teich and human rights action group, Security and Justice for
28 Tigrayans, Alliance of Genocide Victim Communities, and

1 several member organizations. Below are nine of the 37
2 recommendations made in the report, which can be found online
3 for full details. I'll just call out the nine.

4 First one is create a designated agency or
5 taskforce designed for online repressions.

6 Second recommendation; create a dedicated
7 hotline for -- or a reporting mechanism so that incidents of
8 such nature are centralized;

9 Criminalize online harassment and digital
10 violence;

11 Raise awareness among diaspora communities
12 about what their legal rights are;

13 Train law enforcement officers about
14 incidents of foreign interference and how they can handle it;

15 Provide psychological support to services --
16 support services to victims;

17 Create a specialized fund for victims of
18 transnational repression;

19 Monitor and track incidents of transnational
20 repression;

21 And, finally, bar perpetrators. The
22 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* could be utilized to
23 bar or remove individuals engaged in transnational repression
24 here within our borders.

25 Thank you.

26 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you very much.

27 Ms. Koshkareva, at your consultation meeting,
28 the impact of disinformation on the Russian-Canadian

1 community was discussed. Could you expand a bit on this?

2 **MS. SVETLANA KOSHKAREVA:** For sure, thank
3 you.

4 As a Canadian citizen, I have observed how
5 many Russian-speaking communities here in Canada,
6 specifically targeted by cognitive warfare. Russian media
7 outlets spread misleading information to the broader Canadian
8 publics in both, not only Russian, but English and French.
9 They are using events, like a victory day parades in Canadian
10 cities which celebrate Second War hero here, but have been
11 coopted to promote support for Canadian military actions in
12 Ukraine, including the ongoing conflicts for sure.

13 Social media groups in the cities like
14 Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, and Calgary also used by -- to
15 push Kremlin narratives. As Canada has shown more resilience
16 in Russian propaganda than our American neighbours,
17 Canadians, especially members of Russian diaspora for sure,
18 are directly exposed by those narratives as evidenced by the
19 Tenet Media operations. So I will talk more about this.

20 Some citizens and influencers in Canada may
21 gain financially by promoting Russian narratives. We must be
22 very careful about propaganda in the movies, specifically
23 documentary movies, which can amplify narratives which can be
24 also seen on social media.

25 I have three key messages on that to share.
26 Russia and other autocratic states are actively engaging in
27 cognitive warfare against Canada. The cognitive warfare is
28 significantly impacting the Russian diaspora in Canada.

1 Russia is gaining the upper hand because we have not taken
2 this threat seriously enough for too long.

3 Russia have been conducting propaganda
4 campaign in Canada aimed in social division, and eroding
5 trust in our institution, including the media and the long
6 time. This is because it's dividing society and easier for
7 Russia to manipulate and control.

8 Beyond division, Russia seeks to influence
9 how Canadians think and what, ultimately shaping Canadian
10 policies to advance its strategic goals. Their goals
11 includes establishing a wrong order aligned with the
12 autocratic values, dismantling NATO and any sanctions lifting
13 against Russia, and ending Canada's support to Ukraine.

14 Our public institution is not ready yet to
15 this threat to Canadians. We learn about some of them from
16 US government, and Canadian authorities do not want to tell
17 us more about what it's already public. Without the US, this
18 propaganda campaign might have never been detected. Yes, the
19 government has issued public statement already about the
20 separation, but Government of Canada has seemingly done
21 nothing yet.

22 So Russian dictator doesn't really care about
23 Canadian statements, and nor he don't care about sanction
24 against him, and he never do. It is critical to understand
25 that Russia, it's leading an expanding coalition with
26 autocratic states like China, Iran, et cetera, and those
27 interested in presently converting towards that shared goal
28 and to terminate the core and western-led global order.

1 To maintain this grip on power, they employ
2 sophisticated methods such as propaganda, alliance
3 surveillance, electoral interference, using financial
4 schemes, and destabilize democracy here.

5 We already starting to witness the effects of
6 cognitive warfare through the decline in support to the war
7 in Ukraine, increasing social division, and eroding trust in
8 our institution.

9 So I have to say it's also some political
10 parties here in Canada who is acting by tempting some more
11 person adopting the last (indiscernible) stance to support
12 Ukraine now.

13 The Canadian video of Tenet Media have been
14 made headlines, but they represent only tip of iceberg of
15 Russian propaganda in Canada. Russia has been waging
16 cognitive warfare in Canada for close to a decade. A foreign
17 nation should not be allowed to shape Canadian thoughts and
18 policies, especially when this is -- have been ongoing issue
19 for 25 years.

20 This Tenet Media complaint about Canada have
21 been watched and viewed in Canada for more than 500,000 --
22 it's like 500,000 pamphlets was spread across Canadian
23 cities; just imagine that. That would have been the
24 reaction. This media allegation -- for Tenet, I mean -- much
25 more worse than that, first because video from Canadian
26 influencers is much more likely to influence the target
27 audience than that. Secondly, because Russia have been
28 employing their strategy in Canada and elsewhere for years in

1 the circumstances affect, if the cognitive warfare is not
2 understood and barely discussed.

3 MS. NATALIA RODRIGUEZ: I'm really sorry to
4 interrupt. Our interpreters are just asking if you would
5 mind just slowing down a little bit for them.

6 MS. SVETLANA KOSHKAREVA: Sure.

7 MS. NATALIA RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

8 MS. SVETLANA KOSHKAREVA: Yeah, I'm just
9 trying to reach the time.

10 Effectively, continue cognitive warfare as
11 preparing for broader conflict cannot be achieved overnight
12 which is why immediate actions is essential. Here is some
13 calls to action for your consideration:

14 We must address the issue as the national
15 threat it pose. This is not just the disinformation
16 campaign, this is cognitive warfare targeting Canadians and
17 the Russian diaspora for sure. We need to respond. If
18 Russia feels it can target Canadian thoughts and beliefs, we
19 should be doing the same. We need to have a one person or
20 institution responsible for this, and it's very important
21 because we can see the threat.

22 In the longer term, that likely means
23 creating the institution whose sole responsibility would be
24 respond to this cognitive of warfare, coordinated with all
25 other actors, which is CSIS, Global Affairs Canada, et
26 cetera, as political parties. I also hope that Commission
27 can investigate the events related to Tenet Media, including
28 the -- requesting the testimony of those media founders and

1 the people who have been working there.

2 In short, we need to act immediately to
3 protect Canada's national security and democratic values.
4 Thank you.

5 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you very much.

6 Last, but not least, Ms. Fard. At your
7 consultation meeting, the topic of foreign asset holdings in
8 Canada was discussed. Could you share your ideas and
9 recommendations on the topic?

10 **MS. FARZANEH FARD:** Sure.

11 Dear Madam Commissioner, and esteemed members
12 of the committee, seizing assets linked to foreign
13 interference can disrupt the financial operations of
14 individuals working to undermine Canada's security. My
15 recommendations are targeted asset seizures and expanding
16 sanctions.

17 The government should expand its asset
18 seizure policies to include individuals connected to foreign
19 regimes, similar to sanctions imposed on Russian officials.
20 This would limit the influence and financial capacity of
21 those connected to Iran's regime, for example. Education and
22 financial intelligence and the tactics used to hide assets is
23 vital for these policies to succeed.

24 Sanctions should be extended to include not
25 only senior regime officials but also mid and lower ranking
26 individuals associated with organisations like the IRGC.
27 This would prevent them from continuing their activities in
28 Canada and intimidating critics.

1 The public too must be educated on how
2 foreign regimes use financial resources within Canada.
3 Awareness campaigns can help citizens understand the
4 importance of sanctions and asset seizures as tools to
5 safeguard democracy.

6 In conclusion, addressing the national
7 security threats posed by foreign interference, especially by
8 individuals connected to oppressive regimes, requires a
9 multi-faceted approach. Specialised training for the
10 judiciary, law enforcement, and the public is vital to raise
11 awareness and ensure that these issues are addressed with the
12 seriousness they deserve.

13 Stricter immigration reforms, asset seizures
14 and legal protections for human right activists are equally
15 important steps in safeguarding Canada's democracy and
16 national security. Through these measures, we can better
17 protect Canada from foreign threats and ensure that those who
18 seek refuge in our country do so genially, not as means to
19 evade accountability for past crimes.

20 I urge the committee to consider these
21 recommendations seriously as we work together to strengthen
22 Canada's resilience against foreign interference. Thank you
23 for your time and attention.

24 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you very much.

25 And this, Madam Commissioner, wraps up our
26 first panel of the day.

27 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So thank you for sharing
28 your ideas.

1 We'll take a 20-minute break, and we'll come
2 back at 3:40, 3:45.

3 **MS. NATALIA RODRIGUEZ:** I think the schedule
4 has us breaking for 15 minutes, and then ---

5 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Fifteen minutes? I'm
6 sorry.

7 **MS. NATALIA RODRIGUEZ:** That's okay.

8 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** You're right, it's
9 15 minutes. So we'll come back at 3:20.

10 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Maybe ---

11 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

12 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** --- 2:40?

13 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** What time is it? Now
14 it's 2:22. So we'll ---

15 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** I think it would be
16 2:40.

17 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** I'm not very good with
18 numbers. If we add 15 minutes, it's 2:38. So 2:40.

19 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. À l'ordre,
20 s'il vous plait.

21 This sitting of the Commission is now in
22 recess until 2:40 p.m. Cette séance de la Commission est
23 maintenant suspendue jusqu'à 14 h 40.

24 --- Upon recessing at 2:23 p.m./

25 --- L'audience est suspendue à 14 h 23

26 --- Upon resuming at 2:43 p.m./

27 --- L'audience est reprise à 14 h 43

28 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order please. À l'ordre,

1 s'il vous plait.

2 This sitting of the Foreign Interference
3 Commission is now back in session. Cette séance de la
4 Commission sur l'ingérence étrangère est de retour en
5 session.

6 The time is 2:43 p.m. Il est 14 h 43.

7 **--- INTRODUCTION OF THE PANEL ON MIS- AND DISINFORMATION AND**
8 **WAYS TO RESPOND/INTRODUCTION DU PANEL SUR LA MÉSINFORMATION**
9 **ET DÉSINFORMATION ET LES FAÇONS D'Y RÉPONDRE:**

10 **--- FACILITATION OF THE PANEL BY/ANIMATION DU PANEL PAR MS.**
11 **KATE McGRANN AND MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:**

12 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you, Madam
13 Commissioner. Good afternoon.

14 We will now be hearing from a second panel of
15 people who attended consultation meetings with the
16 Commissioner and members of her team this summer.

17 These panelists will be discussing
18 suggestions they and others at their meetings provided for
19 how to improve Canada's approach to foreign interference
20 including suggestions focused on the theme of misinformation,
21 disinformation, and how to respond to it.

22 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** We will begin by
23 introducing each of the panelists, beginning with Alexandra
24 Chyczij.

25 Since 2018, Alexandra Chyczij has served as
26 the President of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the
27 umbrella organization uniting and advocating on behalf of
28 Canada's 1.4 million Ukrainian Canadians. Alexandra is a

1 lawyer by profession and for over 25 years has led legal
2 associations like the Advocates' Society and the Canadian
3 Corporate Counsel Association.

4 Since 2018 she has been a prominent Ukrainian
5 Canadian voice in shaping the diaspora's and Canada's
6 response to the war in Ukraine.

7 Sherap Therchin is a human rights activist
8 and community leader. He serves as the Executive Director of
9 the Canada Tibet Committee. He also acts as a consultant, an
10 advisor on issues related to human rights, refugees, and
11 democracy, including serving as an advisor to the Refugee
12 Advisory Network of Canada.

13 Ghezae Hagos Berhe cofounded Hidmonna
14 Eritrean Canadian Human Rights Group of Manitoba, a non-
15 profit organization, in September 2009 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
16 Ghezae was one of the first journalists of the first private
17 papers in Eritrea until they were banned.

18 And finally, last but not least, Pixing Zhang
19 has been advocating on behalf of Falun Gong practitioners'
20 human rights for the last 20 years, including advocating two
21 elected officials.

22 Mr. Zhang was awarded the Queen Elizabeth
23 II's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 for his volunteer work for
24 the Falun Gong group.

25 He has also worked closely with many Chinese
26 Canadians on a number of issues of importance to the Chinese
27 Canadian community, including the 2006 Chinese head tax
28 apology and the regulation of the practice of traditional

1 Chinese medicine.

2 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you all.

3 So Ms. Chyczij, let's begin with you. At
4 your consultation meeting, you discussed the need for
5 education on media literacy and critical thinking. Could you
6 please explain and expand on these suggestions?

7 **MS. ALEXANDRA CHYCIJ:** Thank you, Madam
8 Commissioner, for the invitation to appear before you today.

9 I think a little background would be in order
10 to set the stage for why we make this recommendation. So
11 disinformation is, as we know, one of the principal
12 instruments of Russian hybrid warfare that has been deployed
13 against western democracies to destabilize them.

14 After World War II, the Ukrainian Canadian
15 community was targeted by the Soviet Union and today
16 continues to be targeted by its successor state, Russia.

17 In its most recent annual report, CSIS
18 stated:

19 "Russia also continues to attempt to
20 discredit Canada's Ukrainian
21 community, falsely claiming that it
22 is composed of neo-fascists who
23 control Canada's foreign policy.
24 Such narratives support the Russian
25 government's efforts to delegitimize
26 and mute the views of Canada's
27 Eastern European diaspora [...] and
28 their status as Canadians, in support

1 of Russia's broader hybrid warfare
2 against Ukraine. The Russian Embassy
3 in Canada continues to use its social
4 media accounts to spread
5 disinformation regarding [this]
6 conflict." (as read)

7 This disinformation has very real and
8 dangerous consequences for our community. Our recent
9 community survey showed that the number of respondents
10 experiencing hate-motivated incidents because of their
11 support for Ukraine has risen dramatically from under one in
12 three before Russia's full-scale invasion to almost one in
13 two after the invasion. Successive Ministers of Public
14 Safety have refused to condemn this activity.

15 However, this story of disinformation goes
16 back a long way. One of the worst attacks our community
17 suffered was in the 1980s when we were forced to expend money
18 and resources to defend our good name when the Mulroney
19 Government was duped into establishing the Deschênes
20 Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals.

21 In Chapter I(6) of his report, Justice
22 Deschênes confirms that the inquiry was struck after public
23 hysteria was stoked by deliberately false stories in the
24 media about the presence of the infamous Dr. Mengele hiding
25 in Canada. Justice Deschênes goes on to say that these
26 stories, planted by Sol Littman, a representative of the
27 Simon Wiesenthal Center, had absolutely no basis in fact.
28 Between them, Simon Wiesenthal and Sol Littman falsely

1 accused over 9,000 individuals of being war criminals. They
2 could not prove a single allegation and Littman later
3 admitted that he took the names from the Toronto phone book
4 because they sounded East European.

5 Justice Deschênes concluded that the
6 allegations about the presence of war criminals in Canada
7 were grossly exaggerated, and publicly chastised Littman.

8 As a result, Justice Deschênes ordered that:

9 "In view of the nature of this
10 inquiry, my Report is divided into
11 two Parts: Part I, which is designed
12 for publication; [and] Part II, which
13 is destined to remain confidential."

14 Part II of this report contains the names of
15 these 800 individuals who were investigated and exonerated by
16 Justice Deschênes. He found evidence in only 29 cases that
17 warranted further investigation and these cases were referred
18 to Canada's War Crimes Unit.

19 We now have documentary evidence in a book
20 called *Operation Payback* which confirms that this was a
21 deliberate Soviet disinformation campaign. The KGB archival
22 document describes the precise *modus operandi* that was used
23 to manipulate the Canadian Government into calling a
24 Commission of Inquiry.

25 Unsurprisingly, these same allegations are
26 being resurrected today, at a time when Russia is desperate
27 to discredit a very active and effective Ukrainian Canadian
28 diaspora. What is surprising is that the government is

1 falling for the same tricks and is seriously considering the
2 release of the names of hundreds of Canadians who were
3 falsely accused of being war criminals and who were cleared
4 by Justice Deschênes of any wrongdoing. This demonstrates
5 the susceptibility of our Government and media to Soviet
6 disinformation in the past and today. The only interest that
7 the release of Part II of the Deschênes Report would serve is
8 that of the KGB Officer in the Kremlin.

9 The recent widely publicized scandal about a
10 Russian propaganda film that was funded by Canadian tax
11 dollars provides further illustration of Canadian gullibility
12 and naivete. How does someone with a known public history of
13 working for and producing 11 films for the sanctioned Russian
14 propaganda network Russia Today get \$340,000 of Canadian
15 taxpayers' money to make a movie whitewashing Russia's
16 genocide against Ukraine?

17 How does any credible granting agency believe
18 that someone could film a movie in Russian-occupied Ukrainian
19 territory embedded in Russian troops, invading troops,
20 without Russian military intelligence being aware of this
21 individual's presence and actively condoning the filming and
22 even dictating the direction of this film?

23 How does any funding agency treat such an
24 individual as a legitimate documentary filmmaker when other
25 Westerners are routinely arrested in Russia and used to
26 exchange Russian assets in the West, such as journalist Evan
27 Gershkovich?

28 Less fortunate are the Russians who dare to

1 stand up to Putin: Anna Politkovskaya, Boris Nemtsov,
2 Alexander Litvinenko, and countless others who have been
3 murdered by the Kremlin.

4 So I come to our recommendation, which is
5 that Canada should build the resilience of Canadians to
6 disinformation by developing disinformation and propaganda
7 literacy programs like those in Finland, Denmark, and Norway,
8 where critical thinking and media literacy are taught from
9 kindergarten. Finland tops the European media literacy
10 index, which measures a nation's resilience to
11 disinformation. Unfortunately, the degradation of media
12 standards plays a big role in the spreading of disinformation
13 and a literacy program in schools would improve the ability
14 of journalists to discern fact from fiction.

15 We also recommend the expulsion of the
16 Russian Embassy in Canada. CSIS has identified the Russian
17 Embassy as the vector for the spread of disinformation.
18 Today there are 69 Russian diplomats registered in Canada.
19 Canada has only 17 diplomats in Moscow. What is wrong with
20 this picture?

21 Canada is the only NATO country that has not
22 expelled a single Russian diplomat since the full-scale
23 invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Other NATO and EU countries
24 have expelled over 600 Russian diplomats. Amongst its many
25 favourite themes, the Russian Ambassador in Canada regularly
26 denounces and undermines the credibility of Ukrainian
27 Canadian politicians: Chrystia Freeland; Borys Wrzesnewskyj;
28 and James Bezan.

1 And we should also complete a ban on Russian
2 state media. RT was finally banned from cable television in
3 2022, but we must now ban them not only from cable T.V., but
4 from the internet and social media apps. Thankfully Meta, or
5 Facebook, and even TikTok, recently banned them. It's time
6 that we complete that job.

7 So together with the Russian Embassy, these
8 Russian state media are the primary sources of disinformation
9 and attacks on our community and we ask that they be dealt
10 with.

11 Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

12 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you.

13 Mr. Therchin, at your consultation meeting,
14 you spoke to misinformation and disinformation about the
15 Tibetan community. Would you please expand on that topic and
16 on your suggestions for how to respond?

17 **MR. SHERAP THERCHIN:** Thank you, Madam
18 Commissioner for the opportunity to speak on the important
19 issue of foreign interference.

20 I will start by sharing two cases which we
21 felt were targeted to mislead Canadians about human rights
22 situations in Tibet.

23 In 2018, a delegation representing the Tibet
24 Autonomous Region came to Canada and testified before the
25 Foreign Affairs Committee, repeating the CCP lines on Tibet.

26 In response to a question from a committee
27 member on whereabouts of Tibet's Panchen Lama, the delegates
28 responded that Panchen Lama was alive, in good health, and

1 did not wish to be disturbed.

2 For a quick context on Panchen Lama, Panchen
3 Lama is widely considered as one of the most important
4 figures in Tibetan Buddhism and has historically played an
5 important role in recognizing the reincarnations of the Dalai
6 Lama and vice versa.

7 On May 14th, 1995, the 14th Dalai Lama
8 recognized and announced a six-year-old kid named Gedhun
9 Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama. Three days later,
10 the newly identified six-year-old Panchen Lama got abducted,
11 along with his family. And since then, the world hasn't seen
12 or heard him. We don't know what he looks like, we don't
13 know what he sounds like.

14 And as China has ramped up its claims and
15 preparation to identify and appoint the next Dalai Lama as
16 part of the succession of the tradition of reincarnation of
17 Dalai Lama, we believe there is going to be a massive
18 influence campaign internationally over the next few years
19 and we cannot let Canadian soil be misused and Canadian
20 democracy be taken for granted in assisting People's Republic
21 of China in imposing state interferences in the religious
22 freedom of the Tibetan people.

23 We also saw an incident in recent years where
24 a Chinese proxy organization disseminated a document intended
25 to mislead Canadians about human rights situation in Tibet.
26 The group claimed that Tibet now enjoys freedom of religion,
27 economic development, ecological and environmental
28 preservation, and improvement of Tibetans' livelihood.

1 This claim fit very well with PRC's narrative
2 on Tibet and it whitewashes the actual situations in Tibet,
3 including the situations of Tibetans not being allowed to
4 keep any photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who many
5 Tibetans revere as living God.

6 It also constitutes as active state
7 interferences in the process of identifying the reincarnation
8 of His Holiness the Dalai Lama through legislative
9 impositions. It includes the forced migration of millions of
10 Tibetan nomads and through the forced separation of over one
11 million Tibetan children into residential boarding schools.

12 The proxy organization even forged a
13 signature of a Canadian official to give it an appearance of
14 legitimacy. It is very clear that such actions by state-
15 sponsored or influence proxies are intended to mislead public
16 perception about Tibet.

17 As part of my suggestions on this, taking
18 these two specific cases and many other instances into
19 consideration, I would like to suggest exploring the
20 feasibility of reciprocity in relationship between Canada and
21 China.

22 The fact that PRC delegates could come to
23 Canada and speak what, where, and whom they want to, and the
24 fact that there are heavy restrictions on Canadian delegates
25 to even visit Tibet, and other sensitive regions, and that
26 there are restrictions on who, where, and what they want to
27 speak, it doesn't seem fair, equal or reciprocal.

28 The detention and the treatment of Canadians

1 Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor highlighted the risk of
2 arbitrary arrest and lack of due process for Canadian
3 citizens in China. Canadian journalists and businesses face
4 similar challenges, whereas Chinese media and businesses have
5 literally free access in Canada. So I hope we can integrate
6 some aspect of healthy reciprocity in relations --
7 relationship between Canada and China through this
8 Commission. Thank you.

9 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you very much.

10 Turning to you now, Mr. Hagos Behre, at your
11 consultation meeting, mis- and disinformation affecting the
12 Eritrean Canadian community was discussed. Could you please
13 explain and share your suggestions for how to address this
14 situation?

15 **MR. GHEZAE HAGOS BEHRE:** Thank you,
16 Madam Commissioner, for giving me and other communities the
17 opportunity to share our experiences.

18 Eleven years ago, on this very day,
19 October 2nd, 2013, more than 365 Eritreans, including
20 pregnant women and children, perished attempting to cross the
21 Mediterranean Sea. I would like to start by honouring the
22 victims of the Lampedusa boat tragedy and all other refugees
23 who died in search of freedom and protection.

24 First I would like to provide some context
25 into the Eritrean Canadian diaspora experience.

26 It is quite hard to imagine any other foreign
27 regime that has successfully and for so long managed to
28 control its diaspora than the Eritrean government. The

1 Eritrean regime has for decades considered the diaspora
2 communities as a integral and crucial constituency providing
3 political and financial support. In fact, the regime calls
4 its ardent agents the Fourth Front.

5 Eritreans are some of the largest refugee
6 communities coming to Canada, after Syrians and Afghans.
7 Yes, Canada is recipient of ten of thousands of Eritreans,
8 but the question remains are we giving them the protection,
9 healing, and safety? The answer is unfortunately an emphatic
10 no because there is a systematic and widespread control of
11 the Eritrean Canadian diaspora by the Eritrean government,
12 chiefly through its Consulate office in Toronto, its proxy
13 organisations in different cities, and other media groups.

14 Eritrean newcomer members have been
15 victimised by mis- and disinformation and consequently face
16 re-traumatisation, settlement and integration challenge,
17 deepening polarisation and disintegration of trust in our
18 Canadian institutions, despite the presumed protection
19 granted by the Canadian government. The perception and fear
20 that the tentacles of the mighty Eritrean government can
21 reach anyone wherever they are, circumventing the Canadian
22 government, make them -- make the tens of thousands of
23 Eritreans feel helpless, fearful, and forces them to remain
24 loyal to the regime.

25 Proxy organisations in all major cities
26 claiming to be non-political and neutral, but in reality have
27 close affiliation with the Eritrean Consulate, operate as the
28 political arms of the regime. In short, as a victim aptly

1 told the media, or lamented rather, "It's like you run away
2 from the regime, you thank God, yet the regime is right here
3 in Canada".

4 Hence, our first suggestion is investigating
5 the activities of all regime-affiliated groups and implement
6 appropriate measures to monitor and restrict their operations
7 in our country. In short, what we need is empowerment, and
8 that starts when Canada starts taking the long-awaited
9 actions.

10 The mis- and disinformation are deep and
11 widespread. Through intense social media and community
12 campaigns, those of us who spoke truth to power, who fled
13 from the regime have been labelled non-Eritreans, traitors,
14 Ethiopians, paid agents of the enemy, informing -- and
15 disinforming the diaspora community, the Canadian public, the
16 Canadian media, and the Canadian government. Moreover, and
17 as a major hub of disinformation and misinformation, are
18 military fundraisers organised under the guise of cultural
19 festivals and using them for promoting propaganda and hate
20 language, radicalisation of the youth and children,
21 polarisation of the Eritrean communities, and fundraising for
22 its military efforts.

23 Clashes between pro-democratic and regime
24 supporters were reported in Toronto, Edmonton, and Calgary,
25 where thousands of Eritreans participated resulting in
26 numerous injuries, arrests, and destruction of properties.

27 Our second suggestion for Canada is to
28 investigate and thus ban those controversial Eritrean

1 fundraisers organised under the guise of cultural festivals
2 by the Eritrean Consulate in Toronto and its affiliate
3 groups.

4 We also suggest creating a dedicated and
5 legally mandated agency to tackle all actors offering
6 interference by hostile regimes, such as the Eritrean regime,
7 along with psychological support to victims, raising public
8 awareness on how the foreign government, such as Eritrean
9 regime, engage in mis- and disinformation, and creating
10 dedicated hotline for reporting incidents of transnational
11 repression with robust and diverse language capabilities are
12 also crucial. Moreover, we recommend expanding the scope of
13 foreign registry up to include community based inform of
14 political activities that are done on behalf of the Eritrean
15 government.

16 Our concerns on mis- and disinformation
17 affecting our communities have been corroborated by reports
18 of Amnesty International, the Special Rapporteur on human
19 rights situation on Eritrea and as human rights watchdogs, as
20 well as mentioning that many western countries have been
21 grappling with foreign interference from the Eritrean
22 government. Norway and others have banned and restricted
23 fundraiser festivals.

24 We look forward for Canada to act decisively
25 to protect the Eritrean Canadian communities from foreign
26 interference and misinformation and disinformation coming
27 from Eritrea. Thank you.

28 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you.

1 Mr. Zhang, at your consultation meeting mis-
2 and disinformation about and affecting Falun Gong and Falun
3 Gong partitioners was discussed. Could you please explain
4 and share your suggestions for how to respond?

5 **MR. PIXING ZHANG:** Thank you. Thank you,
6 Madam Commissioner, Your Honour, for hearing our input.
7 Thank you for your kind introduction, and this is a very
8 important question.

9 I definitely would like to share my
10 observations on the impact of the Chinese Communist Party's,
11 CCP's, disinformation based on my experiences, mainly in the
12 political arena.

13 A little bit of background here: Since 1999,
14 the CCP has conducted a large-scale propaganda and a
15 disinformation campaign to portray Falun Gong as a dangerous
16 and political, justifying its persecution and misleading the
17 public, including in Canada. The CCP controls most the
18 Chinese Canadian media and it pressures western outlets to
19 adopt its narratives. As a result, a representation or
20 report of Falun Gong usually falls off of the horizon of
21 media reporting, in particular, Chinese media.

22 In response, Falun Gong practitioners engage
23 in truth-touting efforts, especially to inform Mainland
24 Chinese of the persecution, and also warn the Canadian
25 government and the society about the broader dangers of the
26 CCP, whose malicious tactics could threaten anyone due to its
27 global ambitions.

28 For two decades ---

1 **MS. NATALIA RODRIGUEZ:** I'm really sorry to
2 interrupt. The interpreters are asking if we can slow the
3 speech down a little bit.

4 **MR. PIXING ZHANG:** All right.

5 **MS. NATALIA RODRIGUEZ:** Thank you.

6 **MR. PIXING ZHANG:** Yeah. For two decades, I
7 happen to encounter the barriers forming friendship with the
8 many fellow Mainland Chinese in concerning community issues,
9 except for some who are really close to the Chinese
10 Consulate. Many found me trustworthy, but the Falun Gong
11 practitioners believe in strong moral principles. From my
12 experience, there is a legal hostility toward the Falun Gong
13 among average mainlanders, however, fear of the CCP's
14 ruthless tactics leave the most to remain silent on the
15 persecution of Falun Gong.

16 Now back to the question: From my
17 observation these information attacks have been tried at
18 every election since 2004, but had not much impact until
19 2021. I am going to discuss three common disinformation
20 related to Chinese Canadians, most particularly, Mainland
21 Chinese.

22 Misinformation 1: Mainland Chinese in Canada
23 are pro-Beijing and follow Beijing's directives when it comes
24 to voting. No, most are not, and they are the biggest
25 victims of CCP foreign interference. CCP agents and proxy
26 groups actively spread this narrative to politicians, but in
27 my experience most Mainland Chinese actually dislike and
28 don't trust the CCP regime at all.

1 Most, if not all, Mainland Chinese immigrants
2 came here for safety, freedom, and a better future for their
3 children. However, many Mainland Chinese feel their
4 communities here are heavily influenced by CCP activities, of
5 people like the Communist China. They are not sure of
6 independent or public representation, and in reality, most
7 the Chinese politicians avoid challenging the CCP.

8 I have many stories to tell, but just one
9 example here. In a city with a large Chinese population,
10 most Chinese Canadian city councillors are close to the
11 Chinese Consulate. One time a person, not favour by the
12 Consulate, showed up at an event. Three councillors reported
13 this to the Consulate, which then summoned the event
14 organiser twice to explain why this individual was there.

15 In the 2021 election, CCP proxies'
16 mis/disinformation created a widespread fear and alienations
17 among Mainland Chinese, concerning local lives could be
18 affected. Many though, not following pro-CCP voting
19 suggestions, chose not to vote, thus undermining the
20 democratic process.

21 It's inaccurate to believe Mainland Chinese
22 are pro-CCP by default, most are not. However, with the
23 CCP's immense resources, high motivation, and clandestine
24 actions, agents or proxies can sponsor at a rally the pro-CCP
25 organisations and some Chinese nationals and can influence
26 some election nominations.

27 So my first suggestion is that Canadians need
28 to find a way to better understand and engage with the

1 Mainland Chinese people. They are the victims, not the
2 accomplices. While some individuals act as agents for the
3 CCP due to greed or fear, the silent majority are not CCP
4 followers. Most Mainland Chinese are just -- cannot open,
5 cannot openly express opposition about CCP.

6 So Misinformation 2: Supporting Falun Gong.
7 Supporting Falun Gong's basic rights will damage Chinese
8 support for the trade with China.

9 In 1999, Canada and the Liberal Government
10 was the first one to speak against the persecution of Falun
11 Gong. There have been many politicians from all parties
12 spoke out to support Falun Gong community in their fight for
13 human rights. For 25 years, the CCP and its agents and some
14 uninformed insiders have spread disinformation to Canadian
15 politicians, claiming supporting for Falun Gong would
16 alienate Chinese voters and harm China/Canada business ties.
17 That is a groundless, false claim.

18 In Harper's time, he and some Cabinet
19 Ministers, like Kenney, were very vocal in China's human
20 rights abuses and they support strongly the basic rights of
21 Falun Gong community. Despite targeting Harper as anti-
22 China, anti-Chinese or Falun Gong supporters, these efforts
23 had little negative impact on Chinese voters. It did not
24 hurt our trade with China either. Chinese voted according to
25 their concerns, moreover issues that affected their lives,
26 such as the children education or drug safety, et cetera.
27 While these texts and rumours did not sway Chinese voters,
28 they did influence the extent some politician support for the

1 basic rights of Falun Gong. These politicians fall into the
2 hands of the CCP's manipulation.

3 When politicians and their CCP influence
4 defamed our group within their own party, things got worse.
5 Around 2013, a provincial minister told me that her fellow
6 politician close to the Chinese Consulate distributed
7 defamatory pamphlets against the Falun Gong from the
8 Consulate, and it discouraged his colleagues from supporting
9 the Falun Gong community. Because of his high position and
10 strong fundraising abilities for politicians, many followed
11 his lead. After Prime Minister Trudeau took office, this
12 pro-Beijing figure also pressured the PMO not to support
13 Falun Gong. Another politician from a different party close
14 to the Consulate similarly urged colleagues to withdraw their
15 support of Falun Gong. This has weakened our Government's
16 protection of Falun Gong community, contrasting with a strong
17 public support from U.S., both during the Trump, under the
18 current Biden administrations.

19 My suggestion here is for our politicians and
20 the governments not to be misled by the CCP's
21 mis/disinformation and their manipulations, be alert to the
22 Chinese agents and of those compromised politicians when they
23 spread narratives on behalf of the CCP interest. They need
24 to have the courage and the integrity to stand up for
25 principles and values.

26 Lastly, I want to underscore that many in the
27 mainland Chinese community welcome the C-70 *Countering*
28 *Foreign Interference Act*, which could protect them from the

1 CCP rule of fear, hate and misinformation.

2 The CCP is good at blending its agents with
3 the civilians. It's a guerilla warfare. The Act can empower
4 the Chinese community, especially businesspeople, to resist
5 CCP coercion to work for them. However, many mainlanders
6 still are wondering how serious our Government really is
7 about enforcing the C-70 Act, rather than just putting on a
8 show for the public.

9 So this leads to my third suggestion, that
10 actions speak louder. Regulation is a very important next
11 step. Time to stay in a line with our allies, like the U.S.,
12 German, Australia, who are taking actions. This is my answer
13 to your question. Thank you.

14 **MR. BENJAMIN HERRERA:** Thank you.

15 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Coming back to you, Ms.
16 Chyczij, what other recommendations would you make to improve
17 Canada's resilience to disinformation?

18 **MS. ALEXANDRA CHYCIJ:** Thank you. We would
19 recommend a review of Canada's foreign policy direction in
20 relation to Russia. Ukrainian Canadians and Ukrainians are
21 grateful for the military, humanitarian and economic aid that
22 Canada has provided to Ukraine, but years of downplaying the
23 threat that Russia posed to global security resulted in the
24 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. We looked the other way when
25 they invaded Georgia, Syria, the Crimea and the Donbas.

26 So the Helsinki Commission of the U.S.
27 Congress recently recommended that the United States reframe
28 its thinking about Russia and label Moscow a persistent and

1 ongoing threat to global security. Canada should do the
2 same. We should review and refresh the roster of policy
3 advisors and staff at Global Affairs Canada with specialists
4 who understand contemporary Russia and the threat that it
5 poses to Canadian democratic institutions. This could in
6 future prevent former Canadian ambassadors to Russia taking
7 up paid positions on the boards of Russian companies.

8 We agree with our friends that Bill C-70, the
9 *Foreign Agents Registry Act* is a welcome addition, but we
10 recommend that it be narrowed. It is unmanageable at present
11 because, in theory, it requires the entire planet to
12 register.

13 MS. KATE McGRANN: I apologize for
14 interrupting, but your time has come to an end ---

15 MS. ALEXANDRA CHYCZIJ: Ah ---

16 MS. KATE McGRANN: --- and so we will ---

17 MS. ALEXANDRA CHYCZIJ: --- okay.

18 MS. KATE McGRANN: --- have to move on.

19 MS. ALEXANDRA CHYCZIJ: So we also ask that
20 Canadians -- the Canadian Government be proactive and take
21 action and communicate what it does. Canada has been home to
22 sleeper agents that we only learn about when they are
23 arrested by other governments.

24 MS. KATE McGRANN: Thank you very much for
25 your comments.

26 MS. ALEXANDRA CHYCZIJ: Thank you.

27 MS. KATE McGRANN: Mr. Therchin, in your
28 consultation meeting you discuss the fear that members of the

1 Tibetan Committee and community experience, its impact on
2 their lives, and how that fear may be alleviated. Please
3 explain your comments.

4 **MR. SHERAP THERCHIN:** More than any
5 individual act of foreign interferences, including the two
6 cases of misinformation and disinformation I mentioned
7 earlier, what I find more damaging is the fear that foreign
8 interference creates among public, especially among forced
9 migrant diaspora, who are vulnerable to foreign state
10 threats. The fear that foreign interference creates has
11 lasting impact, has ripple effects, often resulting into self
12 censorship, coercion, psychological stress, doubts, and in
13 some cases not fully exercising or even knowing the
14 democratic rights in our new adopted home country. The fear
15 of being watched, being surveilled, being spied on makes them
16 afraid of participating in public events, in our cases, like
17 annual Tibetan Uprising Day on March 10, afraid of
18 communicating with our families and friends in Tibet, and
19 afraid of speaking out publicly or even privately about
20 actual situations in Tibet in case if they get one of those
21 rare opportunities to visit Tibet.

22 I would like my community members and members
23 from other community in Canada to feel confident about their
24 rights as citizens, as resident of Canada. I would like them
25 to feel that they are protected, that they can live their
26 lives freely, get education they want to, do jobs they are
27 passionate about, and speak freely and generally about what
28 they believe in, without any fear from foreign states. In

1 that regard, I would like to suggest capacity building and
2 awareness raising programs at community level, and I would
3 like to suggest visits from key officials involved in the
4 study of the foreign interferences in Canada to extend the
5 education about foreign interference beyond the advocacy
6 group and media. I believe this would be a crucial part of
7 the successful implementation of this well-researched and
8 consulted study on foreign interferences in Canada.

9 And my final suggestion is that, please,
10 don't let anti-Asian narrative or rhetoric derail this
11 important study on an initiative from moving ahead, because
12 the first line of victim of foreign interferences by PRC is
13 actually Asian, including pro-democracy Chinese, Hongkongers,
14 Taiwanese, Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs and Tibetans.
15 Thank you for your time and attention.

16 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Mr. Hagos Berhe, at your
17 consultation meeting, you talked about the importance of
18 safeguarding and protecting Eritrean Canadian community
19 members and how that might be done. Please share what you
20 discussed.

21 **MR. GHEZAE HAGOS BERHE:** Thank you. The
22 Eritrean Consulate Office in Toronto, its proxy operators and
23 agents have been known to use extortion, threats of violence,
24 intimidation, denial of community and consular services,
25 harassment, origin, surveillance, intelligence gathering,
26 threats of prison against activists and community members.
27 The regime punishes their families in Eritrea by confiscating
28 their property or businesses, jailing them, denying services

1 to them, or even prohibiting their relatives from being sent
2 to their homeland for burial. These are all corroborated
3 evidences.

4 The long arms of the state stretching through
5 Eritrean diplomatic missions and members and supporters of
6 the ruling party, proxy community groups closely the monitor
7 activists and enlist various forms of threats and attacks and
8 harassment on community members. Hence, we recommend taking
9 an appropriate action against the Eritrean Consulate in
10 Toronto for operating in a manner that contravenes its proper
11 diplomatic mission and mandate. In the past, Canada has
12 imposed sanctions on Eritrea, and in July 2017, Canada has
13 actually expelled the Eritrean Consul from Toronto for acting
14 outside his diplomatic mandate. We also recommended to
15 reconsider reimposing sanctions related to Eritrea such as
16 the *Magnitsky Act* or the *Special Economic Measures Act*.

17 We also have very, very serious concerns
18 about the systematic abuse of Canadian immigration system by
19 regime operatives who came here as refugees but may have
20 obtained their status through misrepresentation.

21 The generosity of the Canadian immigration
22 system has been vastly abused. We recommend investigation --
23 investigate those cases and the misuse of public funds by
24 proxy organizations, including registered charities and
25 religious groups that have affiliation with the Eritrean
26 regime. Taking visible and decisive action against regime
27 agents not only sends a clear message but also involves our
28 community members.

1 In short, what we need, again, is empowerment
2 and that happens when Canada takes the long-awaited actions
3 in this regard and protect our community members.

4 The Eritrean regime is one of the most
5 repressive in the world. For more than 33 years under the
6 dictatorship of Isaias Afwerki, Eritreans have been subjected
7 to a complete totalitarian rule. Eritrea is akin to North
8 Korea of Africa. The country has no legislature, no
9 independent judiciary, no independent civil society, no
10 constitution, no private papers, and it has not held any
11 elections since its independence in 1991. Its Cabinet has
12 not even been convened in more than six years. The Human
13 Rights Council has acknowledged that the regime has
14 perpetrated crimes against humanity.

15 The Eritrean leader, internationally, is the
16 only African leader that supported the Russian invasion of
17 Ukraine. He visited Putin and he asked, actually begged him,
18 to lead the world, and called for war against the European
19 Union, against Canada and the NATO allies.

20 Mr. Afwerki also visited China and called for
21 the overhaul of the rules-based international system, in
22 addition Eritrean forces have been implicated in Tigrayan
23 conflict in Northern Ethiopia.

24 This is our conclusion, Madam Commissioner;
25 we believe the interference of the Eritrean government in the
26 lives of Eritrean diaspora community that has remained
27 unaddressed for decades, and the importation of these
28 repressive methods into the diaspora communities are the root

1 cause.

2 As a result, we urge Canada to look into
3 those root causes seriously, and take any measures necessary
4 to stop the Eritrean Consulate, obviously in Toronto, his
5 proxy groups and agents from interfering in the lives of
6 Eritrean-Canadians and their institutions.

7 We understand Canada may not be able to put
8 an end to the tyrannical and totalitarian regime in Eritrea
9 and install the rule of law. That job is for Eritreans, God
10 help us. But Canada, and we believe, should put an end to
11 all acts of foreign interference that has been so pervasive
12 in Eritrean-Canadian communities for so long, so Eritrean-
13 Canadians can finally be free from the long tentacles of the
14 Eritrean regime they fled from and finally enjoy the freedoms
15 of their second home from Sudan.

16 Thank you very much.

17 **MS. KATE MCGRANN:** Mr. Zhang, at your
18 consultation meeting, attendees discussed strengthening the
19 Canadian government's response to foreign interference.
20 Please share your suggestions on this topic.

21 **MR. PIXING ZHANG:** Thank you. I have a few
22 more suggestions here. I'll try to not repeat others.

23 So first, Canadian immigration rules should
24 be more stringent to screen human rights violators from PRC.
25 I'll tell you a story. One day a non-Falun Gong friend
26 called me in shock, sharing that one of his WeChat contacts
27 was bragging about being a military police who arrested the
28 Falun Gong practitioner and forced him to kneel on broken

1 glass. This person later become the president of a
2 provincial Chinese association in Canada, and also often show
3 off his photos with the Chinese officials.

4 We should not welcome individuals who have
5 persecuted Falun Gong or other innocent groups into Canada,
6 such as the 610 Office members, doctors that have
7 participated in forced organ harvesting, police officers,
8 military personnels, or propaganda officials.

9 Once these individuals become residents or
10 citizens of Canada they can easily become a force to work
11 with the CCP in Canada to conduct foreign interference and
12 transnational repression.

13 Second, we should educate our Government
14 officials to counteract foreign interference and the
15 transnational repression. A few points here. We need to
16 stress an effort to raise awareness across all government
17 levels about the foreign interference, focusing on
18 distinguishing CCP disinformation from other sources.

19 We need to educate officials and the public
20 on CCP propaganda targeting Western democratic values and
21 involving those groups. We need to maintain close
22 communication with the diaspora community to stay updated.

23 We need to take concrete actions to limit the
24 spread of disinformation, including investigating and
25 restricting CCP-funded media in Canada.

26 Immediate action is needed to counter CCP
27 attack, particularly against the Falun Gong, through
28 investigation and the deterrence measures.

1 So my final remark is due to the PRC's
2 aggressive foreign interference using proxy organizations and
3 the Chinese nationals to influence Canadian politics and the
4 surprise distinct voices, our Government must be more
5 proactive in protecting the Chinese community, including
6 Falun Gong and other affected diaspora groups.

7 These are my recommendations, Commissioner.
8 Thank you, and thank you for you and your team's great work.
9 We are looking forward to having your final report.

10 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you. Thank you,
11 all. It was very interesting and useful hearing from you.

12 We'll break for 15 minutes, and that means at
13 3:45.

14 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. À l'ordre,
15 s'il vous plaît.

16 This sitting of the Commission is now in
17 recess until 3:45 p.m. Cette séance de la Commission est
18 maintenant suspendue jusqu'à 15 h 45

19 --- Upon recessing at 3:27 p.m./

20 --- La séance est suspendue à 15 h 27

21 --- Upon resuming at 3:46 p.m./

22 --- La séance est reprise à 15 h 46

23 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. À l'ordre,
24 s'il vous plaît.

25 This sitting of the Foreign Interference
26 Commission is now back in session. Cette séance de la
27 Commission sur l'ingérence étrangère est de retour en
28 session.

1 The time is 3:46 p.m. Il est 15 h 46.

2 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: Good afternoon.

3 MS. KATE McGRANN: Our third and final panel
4 this afternoon also features people who attended consultation
5 meetings with the Commissioner and members of her team this
6 summer. These panelists will be discussing suggestions they
7 and other at their meeting provided for how to improve
8 Canada's approach to foreign interference, including
9 suggestions focused on the theme of resources and supports
10 for diaspora communities.

11 --- INTRODUCTION OF THE PANEL ON RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS FOR
12 DIASPORA COMMUNITIES/INTRODUCTION DU PANEL SUR LES RESSOURCES
13 ET SUPPORTS POUR LES COMMUNAUTES DIASPORA:

14 --- FACILITATION OF THE PANEL BY/ANIMATION DU PANEL PAR MS.
15 KATE McGRANN AND MS. DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:

16 MS. DAWN PALIN ROKOSH: We will begin by
17 introducing each of the panelists. Gloria Fung is the co-
18 convener of the Canadian Coalition for a Foreign Influence
19 Transparency Registry consisting of 33 multicultural
20 communities, think tank, and human rights groups across
21 Canada. She is the Immediate Past President of Canada-Hong
22 Kong Link. She is a political analyst and commentator for
23 Canadian and international media on issues related to Canada,
24 China, and Hong Kong.

25 Moninder Singh is a prominent Sikh leader in
26 Canada and around the world advocating for Sikh sovereignty
27 and speaking out against ongoing human rights abuses against
28 Sikhs in India. He is a director of the Sikh Federation

1 Canada, and the spokesperson of the British Columbia
2 Gurdwaras Council. He works closely in partnership with the
3 Ontario Gurdwaras Committee.

4 Kayum Masimov is an active member of the
5 Uyghur Canadian community and working as a project
6 coordinator of Ottawa-based Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project.

7 Katherine Leung is the policy advisor for
8 Canada Hong Kong Watch. She serves as a representative for
9 the Chinese Canadian Concern Group on CCP Human Rights
10 Violations. She has worked on issues related to human rights
11 and foreign affairs in the Canadian Parliament and in the
12 advocacy space.

13 Amir-hassan Ghaseminejad-tafreshi holds a PhD
14 in communication from Simon Fraser University and has been a
15 faculty member at Canadian universities for 24 years. He is
16 secretary of the Iranian Canadian Congress.

17 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Beginning with you, Ms.
18 Fung, at your small group meeting, you made suggestions about
19 the implementation of the Foreign Agents Registry. Would you
20 please explain and expand on those suggestions?

21 **MS. GLORIA FUNG:** Madam Commissioner and
22 legal counsels of the Commission, thank you for inviting me
23 to this important community panel to share my views on the
24 implementation of Bill C-70 and support for diaspora
25 communities.

26 Diaspora communities are direct victims of
27 foreign interference and transnational repression. The
28 passage of Bill C-70 enhance transparency in Canadian

1 democratic processes. It is an important first step to
2 protect our vulnerable diaspora communities from
3 transnational repression on Canadian soil.

4 To ensure integrity of Canadian democratic
5 elections, actions to counter foreign interference should
6 address nomination campaigns of party candidates, which as
7 present beyond the purview of Elections Canada. We recommend
8 that Elections Canada provide policy and protocol guidelines
9 for party candidate nomination campaigns with respect to the
10 verification of voters' Canadian citizenship, if their
11 residences are within the riding, payment of membership fees,
12 and source of donations to candidates.

13 Elections Canada's same policy and protocol
14 guidelines should apply to party leadership campaigns as
15 well.

16 There should be the appointment of a
17 competent and knowledgeable commissioner for foreign
18 interference independent of all governments and political
19 parties to minimize undue influence. The Commission under
20 the Foreign Interference Commissioner will be responsible for
21 the overall coordination, implementation, community
22 consultation, and periodic review of all legislations related
23 to foreign interference in accordance with the rapidly
24 evolving foreign tactics.

25 The registry should cover federal,
26 provincial, municipal, territorial government and district
27 school boards. Legislation should add provisions to allow
28 the Commission to be proactive in implementing the registry,

1 such as the sending of an information notice or transparency
2 notice requesting information with a specific timeline to
3 determine if individuals or entities need to register or not,
4 failing which, the penalty shall apply.

5 The administrated monetary penalty should be
6 scrapped, as it significantly weakens the deterrent effect on
7 foreign interference. All registrants of FITR should be made
8 public on the official website to enable elected members of
9 government and civil servants to fully understand whom they
10 are dealing with when they are approached by lobbyists.

11 The first review of the bill should be
12 conducted within two years from 2025 Federal Election to fill
13 in possible gaps. It would be reasonable to review the
14 legislation every five years.

15 Regulations need to be drafted to address
16 foreign interference with respect to transnational
17 repression, misinformation and disinformation, elite capture,
18 intellectual property theft, United Front organizations'
19 operations, and espionage.

20 Elected members of governments and high-
21 ranking civil servants should be banned from working with
22 foreign states or state corporations after resignation or
23 retirement from their post.

24 Infiltration in the 2019 and 2021 Elections
25 only represents the tip of the iceberg. Time is of essence.
26 We encourage all federal parties to continue to work with our
27 Canadian FITR Coalition to build non-partisan consensus on
28 the implementation of Bill C-70 to ensure that it will be a

1 strong and effective bill and to be up and running before the
2 2025 Federal Election is called.

3 Last but not least, the government should
4 timely allocate sufficient funding for this purpose.

5 Thank you.

6 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Mr. Singh, in your
7 consultation meeting you discussed the need for resources to
8 protect diaspora communities' freedom of expression,
9 including identifying and responding to disinformation.
10 Please explain and discuss your suggestions.

11 **MR. MONINDER SINGH:** [Speaking in other
12 language] which is the Sikh address for the Khalsa belongs to
13 the creator and to truth, and victory will always be to the
14 creator and truth. And I speak to you today with this Sikh
15 address as my foundation.

16 I would like to begin by acknowledging that I
17 live on the traditional and uncaded occupied territories of
18 the Kwantlen, Katzie, and Semiahmoo First Nations in what is
19 now British Columbia. Deeply thankful to them for being able
20 to live and exist on those lands which they have been
21 caretakers for since times immemorial.

22 We stand in solidarity with all peoples of
23 the world who have shared experiences of colonization,
24 genocide, and displacement and continue their quest for
25 sovereignty and freedom.

26 To the Commission, for the Sikh community,
27 the issue of foreign interference is one that extends far
28 beyond manipulation of elections or the undermining of

1 democratic institutions. For us it's now a matter of live
2 and death rooted in the history of violence and repression
3 inflicted upon us by the Indian State.

4 This violence has reached Canadian soil,
5 manifesting in the most brutal and direct forms in the
6 assassination of Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a respected Sikh
7 leader who was gunned down in the parking lot of Guru Nanak
8 Sikh Gurdwara, which is one of the busiest Gurdwaras in North
9 America, in front of men, women, elders, and children on a
10 Sunday that was Father's Day.

11 This heinous act was not an isolated incident
12 but part of a broader strategy of eliminating Sikh leadership
13 in diaspora communities, as was proven by Prime Minister
14 Trudeau's statement in Parliament in Canada and the United
15 States indictment that was opened up on a plot to kill Mr.
16 Gurpatwant Singh Pannun from Sikhs for Justice in the United
17 States.

18 Further, many Sikhs, including myself, live
19 under constant threat. We have received multiple duty to
20 warn notices from Canadian authorities indicating that our
21 lives are at risk due to our political beliefs and activism.

22 This pervasive sense of danger is not just
23 limited to individuals. It exceeds and it goes into our
24 families, our communities, those that we deal with, and from
25 a personal and professional aspect, the impact is very deep
26 and broad, and it is exactly what India wants.

27 This intimidation is something that the Sikh
28 community will not give in to. This fear and this

1 propagation of fear is not something that we are willing to
2 kind of back away from as we pursue our own sovereignty in
3 the form of Khalistan, but the result of exercising our
4 freedom of speech and expression in Canada has resulted in
5 extreme violence against us.

6 It's crucial now that we combat this Indian
7 foreign interference in the form of protective measures,
8 along with fighting disinformation and misinformation at
9 every corner of Canadian existence within the media, within
10 academia, within cultural environments, and also within
11 religious spaces. It is essential then to shift our approach
12 from merely offering written or verbal warnings of threat to
13 a life, to actively deterring these risks at the root cause.

14 The current strategy of warning individuals
15 like myself about threats to our lives, and then advising
16 them to cease in their activism along with taking them out of
17 public life is not something that is an approach that we are
18 okay with. This would inadvertently align with India's
19 strategy in silencing and repressing Sikhs by taking them out
20 of public life and being able to actively participate as
21 community leaders in their sovereignty movements.

22 In the form of protective measures, we have a
23 number of recommendations that we would like to kind of speak
24 to. The first being protective legislation and policy
25 coordination, push for legislation that mandates
26 comprehensive protection measures for individuals under
27 threat, such as mandatory security assessments and the
28 provision of personal security details.

1 On the side of policy coordination, we've
2 seen an extreme failure, I would say, in our perspective of
3 agencies across this country being able to share information
4 quickly, and precisely, and concisely when lives are at risk.
5 So ensuring policies at the local, national, and
6 international levels are aligned and that there's a clear
7 protocol in responding to threats from foreign powers.

8 The second would be cyber surveillance.
9 Strengthening cyber security measures to protect individuals'
10 digital presence. When we are given these warnings to our
11 lives, we are often told that we can be tracked via our phone
12 GPS and other things, yet we have no education, no ability to
13 actually protect ourselves. So education around cyber
14 security for individuals that are facing these types of
15 threats is paramount.

16 A thorough review of security and
17 intelligence agents in this country. Conduct an in-depth
18 review of security and intelligence agents, as well as their
19 proxies, who are actually suspected of working on behalf of
20 the Indian Government. This review should assess their
21 activities, affiliations, and the extent of their
22 involvement, including exploring all legal avenues to
23 prosecute the individuals involved, whether they live here or
24 they are abroad.

25 Finally, on the issue of disinformation and
26 misinformation, we do need what we feel is initiatives to
27 educate the public. Social media campaigns that are jointly
28 done by the Sikh community in conjunction with the Canadian

1 Government along with other agencies. Partnerships with
2 media organizations that are actually pushed through the
3 Canadian Government. These media organizations then are able
4 to accurately disseminate information to the Canadian public,
5 which actually is then put through a filter by the Canadian
6 Government, versus relying on what the Indian Government is
7 actually feeding out here.

8 What we see is that Canada does have a
9 process in being able to detect disinformation and
10 misinformation. Often it is only in the English language,
11 and it is only limited to certain kind of outlets. That
12 should be expanded to include many different languages, as we
13 are speaking to diaspora communities that are being impacted
14 by this violence and this foreign interference in particular.

15 And finally, what I would like to kind of end
16 with on this first question, is that we watched as a
17 community for 40 years after the attack on Darbār Sahib,
18 which is commonly referred to as the Golden Temple in India
19 40 years ago in 1984, and misinformation, disinformation, and
20 foreign interference started with the Sikh community then and
21 nothing was done.

22 We watched for over a decade as Mr. Nijjar
23 was vilified and demonized by not only Indian media, but that
24 Indian media also bled over to Canadian media. His bank
25 accounts were frozen in this country, he was put under
26 surveillance, there was many things that he had to suffer for
27 10 years before he was shot, killed, in a public space, and
28 Indian media, along with Indian public, celebrated his death.

1 And over the last year we've had multiple
2 individuals, like myself and others in the Sikh community,
3 receiving warnings to our lives. And we have to expect that
4 in that time that we don't want to go into another generation
5 of Sikhs then wondering what could have been done and should
6 have been done, and we lose more lives. We feel our lives
7 are at stake.

8 So anything that comes out of this Commission
9 or from government agencies, we would push very hard to take
10 these recommendations seriously. Thank you.

11 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Mr. Masimov, at your
12 consultation meeting you gave suggestions about how to meet
13 the security needs of vulnerable diaspora communities.
14 Please explain and expand on those suggestions.

15 **M. KAYUM MASIMOV:** Oui, bonjour. Bon après-
16 midi, Madame la Commissaire, Madame l'avocate.

17 Hier, le 1^{er} octobre, la soi-disant
18 République populaire de Chine a fêté son 75^e anniversaire de
19 sa fondation. Pour nous, les diasporas exilées ouïghoures,
20 c'est une journée de deuil, 75^e anniversaire de deuil de
21 notre occupation. C'est un jour de deuil. On parle de
22 colonisation brutale, de la destruction unique de notre
23 culture, langue, des sites historiques protégés par l'UNESCO.
24 Il y a une indoctrination communiste forcée. On parle de 46
25 explosions nucléaires à l'aire ouverte. Et présentement, on
26 parle de génocide qui se déroule devant nos propres yeux
27 présentement.

28 Parlons des recommandations. Je vais passer

1 en anglais.

2 The context and background for the Uyghur
3 community, like many diaspora communities in Canada, we have
4 faced significant and ongoing threats due to foreign
5 interference, especially from the Chinese government. These
6 activities often manifest in covert surveillance,
7 intimidation, and harassment, all aimed at silencing our
8 voices and curbing our advocacy for human rights.

9 It is crucial for Canadian Government to
10 proactively support these communities by addressing their
11 unique vulnerabilities, ensuring their safety, and providing
12 resources to help them understand and defend their rights.
13 The Federal Government must take comprehensive measures to
14 provide effective support to the Uyghur Canadian community.
15 This should include translation and community outreach
16 regarding legislative protections, proactive security
17 measures, and enhanced coordination with law enforcement
18 agencies like the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

19 The government should focus on building
20 trust, providing clear communication, and ensuring tangible
21 support in areas such as personal safety, digital security,
22 and mental health resources.

23 One of the key recommendations I would like
24 to highlight now is -- would be number one, a proactive
25 intelligence sharing and security support. Strengthen
26 coordination with CSIS and other security agencies. CSIS and
27 RCMP should establish dedicated channels to share information
28 and provide timely alerts to Uyghur Canadian organizations

1 and leaders about any emerging threats from foreign actors,
2 particularly Chinese government proxies. This would help
3 community members to be more vigilant and take pre-emptive
4 measures to ensure their safety.

5 Implementing a risk alert system for high-
6 risk individuals and organizations. Establish a risk alert
7 system that notifies designated community leaders and
8 activists about possible risks. CSIS and local enforcement
9 should have clear protocols for responding to these alerts,
10 including rapid response measures for situations where
11 community members are directly targeted.

12 Number two, enhancing security measures for
13 community leaders and organizations. Given the targeted
14 nature of the threats, the government should provide specific
15 security support for Uyghur Canadian leaders, activists, and
16 organizations. Provide personal safety training for
17 community leaders to help them recognize, deescalate, and
18 respond to potential security threats. Training should be
19 tailored to address the unique risks faced by Uyghur
20 Canadians and include both physical and digital safety
21 components.

22 Technical and digital security assistance.
23 Provide resources and support to ensure that Uyghur Canadians
24 have access to robust digital security tools to protect their
25 devices and communications. This includes training on best
26 practices and offering encryption software.

27 Safe physical spaces and security
28 communication channels. Establish safe physical spaces for

1 meetings and ensure that Uyghur organizations have access to
2 secure communication channels to reduce the risk of espionage
3 or information leaks.

4 Merci.

5 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Ms. Leung, at your
6 consultation meeting you discussed a legislative response to
7 transnational repression. Please explain your suggestion and
8 discuss it.

9 **MS. KATHERINE LEUNG:** I spoke in support of
10 Bill C-70 when it was being studied in committee, both in the
11 House and in the Senate. C-70 was a great start to a problem
12 that has long been pertinent in Canadian society. With
13 respect to what we are here to discuss today, the experience
14 of diaspora communities as it pertains to foreign
15 interference, it was simply the first step.

16 What I would like to use my time to speak to
17 today is the need for a legislative response to transnational
18 repression. Let me begin first by talking about some of the
19 frameworks we have in place so that I can speak to the gaps.

20 The *Security of Information Act* has
21 provisions on espionage and threats from foreign actors that
22 speak to transnational repression, while the *Foreign*
23 *Influence Transparency and Accountability Act* requires
24 registration when an individual or entity has an arrangement
25 with a foreign principal and engages in activities like
26 communicating with public officials, disseminating
27 information to the public or providing money or services
28 related to political processes in Canada.

1 While it has potential to tackle aspects of
2 transnational repression by imposing registration
3 requirements, we don't know for a fact right now that
4 individuals involved in activities that suppress activism or
5 political engagement are the same ones as those who would be
6 required to register. Therefore, we need a stronger
7 framework than what already exists.

8 We need a legislative response to
9 transnational repression in Canada that achieves a different
10 -- a few different goals.

11 Number one is to define clearly what is
12 transnational repression. My understanding is that there
13 are currently definitions used by government departments
14 internally, but there is not a shared definition in law. We
15 need that if we are to have a coherent response to it. We
16 must define very clearly what the problem is.

17 The second is to impose a deterrence to
18 engaging in transnational repression. We need to make it
19 very costly to threaten, silence, harm or otherwise suppress
20 political engagement. This could take a few different forms,
21 like empowering the Government of Canada to impose property
22 and visa blocking sanctions on certain foreign individuals
23 and entities that directly engage in transnational
24 repression.

25 The third is to develop a clear strategy for
26 how we as a country respond to transnational repression. As
27 rightly noted in the initial report, foreign interference is
28 both persistent and evolving. Global Affairs Canada could

1 develop a strategy to address transnational repression,
2 including by raising the cost of perpetrating repressive
3 activities and by protecting targeted individuals and groups.

4 The most important part is that this strategy
5 should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is updated
6 to meet the needs of the current environment.

7 Last, but not least, we have to train our
8 Government departments. If we are to respond, we need to
9 know how.

10 The Government of Canada should train
11 relevant government employees and law enforcement partners on
12 transnational repression and direct the intelligence
13 community to prioritize the identification of those
14 perpetrating transnational repression against communities in
15 Canada.

16 Transnational repression is a form of foreign
17 interference. Foreign states use transnational repression to
18 discourage dissent from diaspora communities, thereby
19 undermining democratic participation and the ability of
20 elected officials to represent their constituents fully.
21 Foreign interference at the community level has the effect of
22 discouraging Canadians from speaking out on issues that
23 matter to them, which results in elected representatives not
24 hearing about these issues.

25 For elected officials to represent their
26 constituents fully, it is crucial that Canadians, including
27 those who are parts of diaspora communities, can freely
28 express their views without fear of retribution, not to

1 mention to threaten, silence or harm any Canadian to
2 discourage them from democratic participation is an
3 infringement on our *Charter* rights.

4 Whether someone's background is from a
5 community that is seen by a foreign regime to be a threat to
6 their hold on power or not, every Canadian has the right to
7 have and express opinions, to participate in our democracy
8 and to speak our minds, even if those actions encourage
9 Canadian lawmakers to do the right thing and stand up against
10 human rights violators.

11 To conclude, addressing transnational
12 repression closes off opportunities for foreign interference
13 to take hold. When we confront transnational repression, we
14 not only safeguard our sovereignty and national security, but
15 also shield vulnerable communities, a basic right that these
16 communities deserve, as it ensures their freedom to express
17 political views, engage in civic activities and live without
18 fear of intimidation or coercion from foreign governments.

19 Thank you.

20 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Mr. Ghaseminejad-Tafreshi,
21 at your consultation meeting, you discussed the importance of
22 allowing for a diversity of opinions in a democratic society.
23 Please share your recommendations on that topic.

24 **MR. AMIR-HASSAN GHASEMINEJAD-TAFRESHI:** Thank
25 you.

26 Dear Honourable Commissioner Hogue, in 1859
27 English philosopher John Stuart Mill wrote, and I paraphrase,
28 it is possible that any opinion that is compelled to silence

1 may be true. To deny this is to assume our own
2 infallibility. It is only by collision of adverse opinions
3 that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being
4 supplied.

5 I want to start by thanking the Commission
6 and our Government of Canada for allowing diverse reflections
7 on foreign interference in Canada's democratic processes.

8 Dealing with covert foreign interference by
9 foreign governments and corporations is something that needs
10 expertise and a lot of resource allocation. However, I wish
11 to draw your attention to what is overt foreign interference
12 through silencing some voices and amplifying other voices by
13 our friends and foes. This interference can be mobilized
14 directly by foreign governments or indirectly through foreign
15 institutions, foreign corporations, foreign individuals or
16 even indirectly through Canadian institutions, corporations
17 and individuals.

18 Some of media organizations based in Canada
19 are owned by foreign entities, including our allies such as
20 United States. Canadian public sphere must be a place in
21 which various opinions are heard and the result of
22 deliberation of informed Canadians should determine the path
23 of our country.

24 Independent religious non-partisan diaspora
25 organizations such as Iranian Canadian Congress are part of
26 Canadian public sphere and should be protected from
27 information wars organized by media outlets established with
28 foreign investments by authoritarian or democratic states.

1 Foreign actors and governments of other
2 nations democratically elected, authoritarian or autocratic,
3 friend or foe, are not citizens of Canada and do not have the
4 right to intervene in our democratic process but, of course,
5 feel entitled to pursue their own national interests.
6 Foreign countries are not monolithic. Various actors and
7 diverse ideologies may prevail in other countries at
8 different times.

9 It is quite possible that what Canadians
10 decide to do may be inconsistent with the decisions made by
11 other democracies. The prevailing parties in other
12 democracies may wish a different outcome in Canadian
13 elections than what the majority of Canadians want.

14 The history has shown that Canadian people
15 have been able to independently make choices that later were
16 found more prudent than the decisions made by other
17 democracies. In fact, the recent history, for example, in
18 Iraq shows that our allies would have been better off if they
19 had followed the Canadian lead.

20 While we cannot block freedom of press and
21 media, we should ensure that when foreign linked or foreign
22 backed media organizations engage with our public, the public
23 is aware of the linkages and foreign backing. Some
24 suggestions are it should be illegal for institutions funded
25 by foreign governments, foreign corporations and foreign
26 individuals to try to mobilize campaigns to influence
27 democratic process in Canada. It should be illegal for media
28 institutions and individuals with opaque sources of funding

1 to try to influence the Canadian political system.

2 We need to investigate these organizations
3 and their financial sources and ensure that any individual or
4 group engaging in political activities in Canada disclose
5 their foreign financial and organizational ties. This will
6 prevent them from acting through proxies or front
7 organizations.

8 Activities of foreign journalists and
9 contractors for foreign institutions or government within
10 Canada should be regulated. Journalists employed by foreign
11 media institutions should be required to remain impartial.
12 Their biased or hostile statements regarding Canadian
13 political figures, including political candidates, should be
14 illegal. It should be required that such foreign-linked
15 media organizations to be clearly identified and recognized
16 when reporting or asking questions at Canadian political
17 events.

18 Furthermore, those who testify in front of
19 Parliamentary committees must be required to disclose any
20 foreign ties, financial or organizational, as part of
21 Parliamentary records. Canadian agencies who are protecting
22 us from foreign adversaries can also ask our foreign partners
23 to refrain from allowing their public or private entities to
24 conduct disinformation or misinformation operations targeting
25 Canadian entities. It should be clear to any government,
26 adversarial or partner, that there will be a price if they
27 conduct such operations against Canadian citizens or
28 institutions.

1 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Thank you.

2 **MS. DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Ms. Fung, at your
3 consultation meeting, you made suggestions about how best to
4 support and protect vulnerable diaspora communities through
5 the lens of CCP's infiltration and foreign interference
6 strategy in Canada.

7 Would you please explain and expand on those
8 suggestions?

9 **MS. GLORIA FUNG:** The Chinese Communist
10 Party, CCP, is by far the most active foreign state player in
11 foreign interference on Canadian soil. This poses a major
12 threat to our national security, sovereignty and democracy.

13 CCP has a long-term strategy to infiltrate
14 into democracies. Its aim is to infiltrate, divide, and
15 rule, take control, and finally silence individual dissidents
16 and eliminate opposition groups that challenge its
17 legitimacy.

18 Canada is one of the most covertly
19 infiltrated of all liberal democracies. Since 1990 a
20 comprehensive sophisticated network of hundreds of pro-China
21 United Front organizations operate in Canada, directed by
22 China's United Front Work Department. CCP agents capitalize
23 on our openness and political naivete to infiltrate into our
24 multicultural communities to falsely claim community
25 representation to promote the China official narrative.

26 Most importantly, they infiltrate all levels
27 of government in Canada. CCP proxies cover a wide-range of
28 professional and business associations, social service

1 centres, and even some Chinese-Canadian political party
2 associations.

3 Why is Canada targeted? From the
4 geopolitical perspective, Canada is the backdoor to the U.S.,
5 China's major adversary. By infiltrating Canada, China can
6 access sensitive intelligence information of the U.S., the
7 Five Eye Allies, NATO, and military packs among liberal
8 democracies. Canada possesses advanced technology and rich
9 natural resources needed by China for technological
10 advancement and military expansion to realize Xi Jinping's
11 global China Dream.

12 In recent years, CCP's transnational
13 repression increased -- have become increasingly arrogant to
14 include counterprotests and disinformation campaigns through
15 WeChat, Chinese language public forums, community newspapers,
16 and CCP proxies on the ground.

17 How could we protect vulnerable diaspora
18 communities? The passage of Bill C-70 is an important first
19 step to protect the vulnerable diaspora community members
20 from transnational repression. We must redouble our efforts
21 to ensure the safety and security of individual Canadians and
22 community organizations. A multilingual national hotline and
23 the use of friendly and secure online reporting systems
24 should be set up so that victims can report to the Foreign
25 Interference Commissioner incidents of infiltration or
26 foreign interference.

27 WeChat and TikTok should be banned in Canada.
28 We need regulations to represent -- to prevent social media

1 platforms, Chinese language forums, CCP proxies, and future
2 AI bots from spreading fake news and disinformation.

3 A global engagement centre similar to that in
4 the U.S. should be set up to pre-empt this information.

5 Public education should enhance Canadian's
6 awareness of foreign interference. Experts from CSIS, RCMP,
7 and civil society should be involved. Government funding
8 should be made available for vulnerable diaspora communities
9 to educate and engage, and empower the community members.
10 Reps of vulnerable communities should be engaged in periodic
11 review of the legislation. CSIS and RCMP should reach out to
12 diaspora communities to regularly educate community members
13 about the most updated tactics of foreign interference and
14 how they can protect themselves. And Canada must increase
15 its collaboration with democratic allies in the exchange of
16 intelligence information to combat the rapidly evolving
17 tactics of malicious regime.

18 Thank you.

19 **MS. DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Thank you.

20 Mr. Singh, in your consultation meeting, you
21 discussed measures to increase government transparency about
22 foreign interference threats. Please share your views on
23 this topic?

24 **MR. MONINDER SINGH:** Sikh communities --
25 sorry, the Sikh community's struggle is not really about
26 securing political expression and democratic rights within
27 Canada. It's about defending our very existence against a
28 foreign state, India, that employs violence and intimidation

1 to achieve its objectives.

2 The Indian Government's actions are designed
3 to stifle Sikh advocacy and activism, using tactics that
4 range from disinformation and electoral interference, and now
5 all the way up to assassination.

6 In particular, the Sikh community is
7 concerned with the transparency and accountability shown
8 within information in regards to India within Canada. This
9 information is heavily redacted, more so than any other
10 potential states that are engaging in foreign interference in
11 various public reports.

12 While other nations are termed as hostile
13 actors, India is often treated with padded gloves, with
14 passing acknowledgement at most of their interference, yet
15 they're the only known foreign state that has killed a Sikh
16 leader Canadian citizen on Canadian soil.

17 In regards to recommendations on how we could
18 actually counter this, I will quickly move through this
19 portion.

20 Public acknowledgement is first and foremost.
21 Clearly and openly identifying and condemning India's
22 activities that undermine the safety and democratic rights of
23 our communities.

24 Educational investment. Allocating public
25 resources to educate potential threats, this includes the
26 media, professionals, academic institutions, security
27 agencies, and politicians, and other relevant stakeholders
28 about the nature and extent of India's interference. This

1 education should encompass tactics used, the impact on
2 targeted communities, and the broader implications for
3 Canadian society.

4 Transparency and reporting, ensuring that
5 reports fully disclose the involvement of foreign states like
6 India in activities that threaten Canadian citizens. This
7 includes addressing any previous omissions in previous
8 reports that have been influenced by economic or diplomatic
9 interests, thereby restoring trust and transparency in
10 governmental reporting.

11 More specifically, a transparent inquiry into
12 the Indian Government involvement and Canadian Government
13 failures in the assassination of Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
14 This should be a transparent and comprehensive inquiry into
15 the involvement of the Indian Government. And until such is
16 done so, the freezing of all security and intelligence
17 sharing agreements with India so as to protect the interests
18 of Canadian citizens, along with the Sikh community, along
19 with their families back in India, who are often harassed due
20 to the information provided by Canada back to India due to
21 these agreements that have been signed.

22 And finally, in conclusion, the pursuit of
23 Sikh sovereignty for Khalistan is not a matter of if, it's a
24 matter of when for the Sikh community. It will continue in
25 the Sikh diaspora. India has shown it will retaliate
26 violently. Canada has seen this violence and has to act.
27 The assassination of Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijjar on Canadian
28 soil has only strengthened our resolve and that of our next

1 generation to commit to the struggle for sovereignty.

2 I conclude as I began, recognizing these
3 unceded lands and historical wrongs of residential schools
4 and genocide utilized against First Nations people, standing
5 in solidarity with all people around the world breaking free
6 from the impacts of colonialization and seeking their
7 sovereignty and freedom, and as Sikhs for Khalistan as well,
8 and recognizing that the Khalista belongs to the creator and
9 truth and victory shall always be to the creator and truth.
10 [Speaking in other language].

11 **MS. DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Thank you.

12 Mr. Masimov, at your consultation meeting,
13 several suggestions were made for how to better support the
14 Uyghur Canadian community in the face of foreign interference
15 and transnational repression. Please share some of those
16 suggestions?

17 **M. KAYUM MASIMOV:** Merci, Madame Rokosh.

18 **Me DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Merci.

19 **M. KAYUM MASIMOV:** C'est une question
20 importante pour nous.

21 We would probably -- we would suggest
22 introducing the Countering Transnational Oppression Act to
23 detect and counter this crime. As the Uyghur diaspora, we
24 are welcoming the adaption of the long overdue Bill C-70, but
25 this bill alone is not sufficient. We think Canada needs to
26 introduce a specific law targeting the transnational
27 repression, intimidation, and harassment. For example, the
28 Bill C-70 does not define what constitutes the transnational

1 repression. There are gaps in criminalizing offences such as
2 online harassment and digital violence, nor it does not
3 address the issue of the refugee espionage.

4 Two, translation and community outreach on
5 legislative provisions. We recommend translating Bill C-70
6 and relevant provisions into Uyghur language.

7 Recently passed Bill C-70 includes provisions
8 to combat foreign interference and protect targeted
9 communities. It is crucial that this legal text, along with
10 guidelines and resources be translated into Uyghur language
11 to ensure that Uyghur Canadians fully understand their rights
12 and the protection available to them.

13 We recommend conducting community education
14 sessions. Organize informational session across major cities
15 and towns with Uyghur Canadian communities, such as in
16 Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, as well as smaller towns,
17 to explain Bill C-70's implications in accessible language.
18 Community meetings should be held in multiple formats, both
19 in person and virtually to maximize accessibility and
20 participation.

21 We recommend taking a look at the mental
22 health and psychological supports. Establishing dedicated
23 mental health support services, because the emotional toll on
24 foreign interference is significant. Many Uyghur Canadians
25 have family members still living under oppressive regimes,
26 and may be directly targeted by -- or by harassment or
27 surveillance in Canada. The government should provide
28 culturally appropriate mental health services, including

1 trauma counselling and psychological support to help
2 community members manage stress and anxiety stemming from
3 these threats.

4 Support networks for families and community
5 members. Create support groups where Uyghur Canadians can
6 connect and share their experiences in a safe environment.
7 The government should fund community-led initiatives to
8 establish these networks and offer professional facilitation
9 when needed.

10 We would further recommend long term
11 organizational and capacity building support to fund Uyghur
12 Canadian organizations to build community resilience.
13 Allocate federal funding to support Uyghur Canadian
14 organizations in their capacity building efforts. This would
15 include resources for advocacy, community outreach, and legal
16 support. Strengthening these organizations will help ensure
17 that they can respond effectively to interference to support
18 their community members.

19 In conclusion, I would say that the Canadian
20 Government must act decisively to address these unique needs
21 of the Uyghur Canadian community in face of increasing
22 foreign interferences. By translating legislative
23 protections, enhancing security measures, and providing
24 tailored support, Canada can ensure that these communities
25 are not only aware of their rights, but also empowered to
26 exercise them without fear. A coordinated and comprehensive
27 approach led by the federal government in partnership with
28 CSIS, RCMP, and community organizations is essential to

1 safeguard the Uyghur Canadian community and uphold Canada's
2 values of inclusion, safety, and human rights.

3 In conclusion again, I would say we need to
4 implement these recommendations. A dedicated task force
5 should be established to oversee the rollout of translation
6 services, security measures, and community outreach. Regular
7 consultations with Uyghur Canadian leaders and organizations
8 will be essential to fine tune these measures and ensure they
9 are responsive to evolving threats.

10 Since I have some time, I would like to wrap
11 up my presentation.

12 J'aimerais remercier le Canada. Le Canada...
13 le Parlement du... le Parlement du Canada était le premier
14 entité législative au monde qui a reconnu le génocide des
15 Ouïghours. La diaspora est très, très reconnaissante envers
16 ce fait.

17 Et aussi, le Canada était le premier qui a
18 adopté la motion M-72. C'est une motion de rapatriement de
19 10 000 réfugiés Ouïghours qui se situent au 13e pays comme...
20 au troisième pays et qui étaient menacés de déportation en
21 Chine. On sait que 10 000 réfugiés Ouïghours va arriver
22 bientôt. Et probablement, fort probablement, cette
23 communauté va encore... va être exposée aux oppressions
24 transnationales.

25 J'aimerais avertir le gouvernement que on
26 doit prendre les mesures pour protéger cette population
27 vulnérable. J'ai pas de temps, mais merci beaucoup encore
28 pour l'invitation.

1 **Me DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Merci, Monsieur.

2 Ms. Leung, at your consultation meeting,
3 suggestions were made for how the Canadian Government and its
4 agencies can best support the Chinese Canadian community.
5 Please discuss some of those suggestions.

6 **MS. KATHERINE LEUNG:** Thank you.

7 There are a few ways that the Government of
8 Canada and its departments can provide further support to
9 diaspora communities that have faced, and continue to face,
10 transnational repression.

11 Let me take you through the perspective of
12 someone who has been threatened, silenced, or harmed by
13 someone acting on behalf of a foreign regime. You likely are
14 afraid, or at least shaken by whatever it was that was done
15 to you, whether it be anonymous threats, witnessing someone
16 surveilling you, being followed, or God forbid something even
17 more frightening like a physical altercation.

18 You do what you think is the right thing and
19 report it to your local law enforcement agency. You tell
20 them all the facts of what you experienced, your background,
21 your work in human rights, and they note it all down. They
22 thank you for the information and your time, but for some
23 members of the Hong Kong community that I have spoken to,
24 this is where the story ends. There is no follow up, no
25 indication of progress, and no sense of safety or closure.

26 Now, I have to note that this is not the case
27 with everyone. I am happy to say that I know some RCMP
28 officers with the National Security Program who diligently

1 follow up with diaspora community members who reported their
2 cases, and that gives reassurance to someone who would
3 otherwise feel unsafe. Unfortunately, I have also heard from
4 community members who tell me that they stopped hearing from
5 the RCMP or their local police after they had finished
6 collecting information. For these individuals, the silence
7 that follows can be as unnerving as the initial threat. The
8 lack of follow up leaves them feeling vulnerable, uncertain
9 if their case is being pursued, and no safer than before they
10 reached out for help.

11 The problem here is twofold. First,
12 individuals who report incidents of transnational repression
13 often do not feel any safer after reaching out to law
14 enforcement, despite the fundamental role of these agencies
15 being to protect them. The expectation is that law
16 enforcement provides more than just a sympathetic ear. Their
17 mandate is to keep Canadians safe and secure. The absence of
18 follow up, whether it be a simple update on the
19 investigation, or increased security measures, or even just
20 an officer checking in, leaves them feeling as though the
21 process of reporting leads nowhere, as though their concerns
22 have been noted, but are not taken seriously enough to
23 warrant action.

24 This leads me to my second point. This lack
25 of follow up erodes trust in the very institutions that are
26 supposed to protect Canadians from foreign threats. When law
27 enforcement fails to communicate progress or follow up on
28 cases, it sends a message, even if it is unintentionally,

1 that the safety of victims is not a priority. The longer
2 these gaps in communication and action persist, the more
3 likely individuals are to feel isolated and disempowered.

4 As a result, some may even become hesitant to
5 report future incidents, believing their voices won't be
6 heard, or that no meaningful protection will be offered.
7 This will in turn compromise Canada's ability to deal with
8 transnational repression. Without reporting, law enforcement
9 lacks the information needed to identify, track, and counter
10 foreign interference, rendering them unable to act and
11 protect those most vulnerable to these threats.

12 What this means is that the cycle of
13 underreporting and the lack of action undermines Canada's
14 overall security efforts and leaves entire communities at
15 risk.

16 A policy suggestion would be to ensure that
17 law enforcement officers follow up on every reported case of
18 transnational repression. This could include an update on
19 the status of the investigation, any steps being taken to
20 enhance the individual's security, and providing information
21 on available resources. Regular communication would reassure
22 victims that their cases are being taken seriously and help
23 build confidence in law enforcement and encourage future
24 reporting.

25 We would also recommend that a dedicated
26 officer or team in respect of law enforcement jurisdictions
27 handle these cases to ensure consistency and improve overall
28 responsiveness. This would not only help provide victims

1 with a greater sense of safety, but also ensures that law
2 enforcement is gathering information necessary to better
3 counter foreign interference in Canada. Thank you.

4 **MS. DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Thank you.

5 Mr. Ghaseminejad-tafreshi, at your
6 consultation meeting the topic of the flow of benefits and
7 funds into the Canadian political system was raised. Please
8 share and explain your suggestions.

9 **MR. AMIR-HASSAN GHASEMINEJAD-TAFRESHI:** Thank
10 you.

11 Diaspora organizations, such as the Iranian
12 Canadian Congress who value Canada's soft power and want the
13 image of Canada to remain as peacekeeper and peacemaker, have
14 anti-war and anti-occupation tendencies. They are eager to
15 find win-win solutions for conflicts. They may be at odds
16 with the tendencies of those who see every situation as a
17 win-lose game and see the use of force as the solution for
18 every problem.

19 There are political actors among our partners
20 and our non-partners who believe that political power grows
21 out of the barrel of a gun, and there are those who instead
22 value the soft power. While war is sometimes inevitable,
23 often a win-win solution is possible. Presumption of the
24 absolute truth of one solution or another to a given problem
25 requires the assumption of infallibility.

26 The worldview of war hawks in our allied
27 nations and in other countries dictates an impossibility of
28 the existence of win-win solutions. Therefore, they attempt

1 to discredit and silence the organisations that do not echo
2 their desire for a confrontational approach. But ideology is
3 not the only factor. It is unfortunate that the
4 privatisation of military industrial complexes all over the
5 world has created incentives for adoption of such a worldview
6 everywhere.

7 At this dangerous moment in world history,
8 many foreign actors have various incentives to interfere in
9 Canada's political discourse. It should be self-evident that
10 it must be illegal for Canadian political actors to engage in
11 what is called favour economy by accepting favours from any
12 channel that may give foreign actors the opportunity to
13 funnel their funds and then influence Canadian political
14 system.

15 All foreign powers, including parties who may
16 come in power in our partner states, may use Canadian
17 thinktanks, diaspora organisations, and other non-
18 governmental institutions to sway our political actors to
19 their ideological ends. Whether or not institutions are
20 aware that their actions is affected by their funding is not
21 important because funding influences diaspora organisations,
22 regardless of the amount of their confidence in themselves.

23 Moreover, Canadian institutions and
24 individuals may be used as a front for foreign entities
25 funnelling favours, benefits, and funds into Canadian
26 democratic system. Entities whose interests are not aligned
27 with national interests of Canada should be monitored for
28 such interference, but authorities should not give Canada's

1 supposed allies a free pass for funding -- for funnelling
2 money into Canadian democracy and public sphere.

3 MPs should not be allowed to accept favours
4 from organisations or individuals whose source of income is
5 opaque or ambiguous. Increasing MPs' allowances to
6 facilitate foreign travel and reasonable accommodation, such
7 that they would not need to accept favours, will be taxpayer
8 money well spent, since it reduces the likelihood of Canadian
9 politicians to be cheaply influenced by foreign entities.
10 Then they can be prohibited from accepting foreign-linked
11 favours and then the purpose of any other benefit may be
12 accept -- may be -- that they may accept can be questioned.

13 All non-governmental institutions who
14 interact in public sphere in Canada should be prevented to be
15 used as middlemen to channel the favours to Canadian
16 political actors. It should be illegal for thinktanks and
17 lobbyists, Canadian or foreign, to conceal the evidence of
18 any foreign funding by any source, and they should be
19 mandated to disclose their sources of funding. Canadians
20 have every right to know the identities of the states,
21 corporations, or foundations they are funding what the
22 influences their public discourse.

23 Universities and thinktanks who accept
24 foreign-linked funding should be required by law to disclose
25 the sources of their funding. All individuals, institutions
26 who provide funding, favours, or benefit to actors in
27 Canadian democracy should be registered with lobbyist status
28 and disclose all their sources of income and spending.

1 A little more time.

2 All political figures in Canadian democracy
3 should be prohibited from accepting favours from foreign
4 entities, or from organisations or individuals whose source
5 of income is opaque or ambiguous. Such behaviour should be
6 regulated. Allowances and budgets should be large enough to
7 facilitate the needs of politicians.

8 I will finish with a quote from the wonderful
9 Canadian TV series, Murdoch Mysteries. In it, while
10 Detective William and Dr. Julia use the most advanced
11 technologies of the time to find criminals, the
12 Inspector Brackenreid had one advice that often helped the
13 start of their very technical investigation. His advice was
14 "follow the money." Thank you.

15 **MS. DAWN PALIN ROKOSH:** Thank you, sir.

16 Commissioner, this concludes our final panel
17 for today.

18 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you very much. I
19 listened very carefully to what you said. I took notes, and
20 by chance I also have others that are taking notes, and will
21 produce summaries because there is a lot of information that
22 have been provided. But I really want to thank you all.
23 Thank you.

24 Alors, demain matin à 9 h 30.

25 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. À l'ordre,
26 s'il vous plait.

27 This sitting of the Foreign Interference
28 Commission is adjourned until tomorrow, the 3rd of October

1 2024 at 9:30 a.m. Cette séance de la Commission sur
2 l'ingérence étrangère est suspendue jusqu'à demain le 3
3 octobre 2024 à 9 h 30.

4 --- Upon adjourning at 4:42 p.m./

5 --- L'audience est ajournée 16 h 42

6
7 **C E R T I F I C A T I O N**

8
9 I, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, a certified court reporter,
10 hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate
11 transcription of my notes/records to the best of my skill and
12 ability, and I so swear.

13
14 Je, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, une sténographe officielle,
15 certifie que les pages ci-hautes sont une transcription
16 conforme de mes notes/enregistrements au meilleur de mes
17 capacités, et je le jure.

18 
19 _____

20 Sandrine Marineau-Lupien
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