



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**

VOLUME 19

Held at :

Library and Archives Canada
Bambrick Room
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Thursday, September 19, 2024

Tenue à:

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada
Salle Bambrick
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Le jeudi 19 septembre 2024

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING INC.

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Appearances / Comparutions

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Appearances / Comparutions

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Sujit Choudhry

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Churchill Society

Malliha Wilson

The Pillar Society

Daniel Stanton

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Conservative Party of Canada

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Human Rights Violations

Neil Chantler

David Wheaton

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Yuen Pau Woo

Sikh Coalition

Balpreet Singh

Prabjot Singh

Bloc Québécois

Mathieu Desquilbet

Iranian Canadian Congress

Dimitri Lascaris

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Ottawa, Ontario

--- L'audience débute le jeudi 19 septembre 2024 à 9 h 32

--- The hearing begins Thursday, September 19, 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: Alors, bonjour tout le
monde. Mr. Sheppard.

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

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

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

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

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. WIT0000091.FR:

Résumé de l'entrevue : Bureau de la

Commissaire aux élections fédérales
(Caroline Simard et Carmen Boucher)
(l'étape 2)

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

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

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000580.EN:

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

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000585.FR:

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

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

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000581.EN:

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

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000581.FR:

Rapport sommaire: Entités
gouvernementales fédérales
intervenant dans les affaires

d'ingérence étrangère (mis à jour)

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

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000582.EN:

Overview Report: Foreign Agent
Registries.pdf

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000582.FR:

Registres des agents étrangers

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

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000583.EN:

Overview Report: Introduction to
Intelligence Concepts.pdf

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000583.FR:

Rapport sommaire : Introduction aux
concepts du renseignement.pdf

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

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000584.EN:

Overview Report: Summary of
Countering Foreign Interference Act
(Bill C-70).pdf

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000586.FR:

Rapport sommaire : Résumé de la Loi
sur la lutte contre l'ingérence
étrangère (projet de loi C-70).pdf

1 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Overview Report:
2 Parliament and the Legislative Process, COM589.EN and
3 COM589.FR.

4 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000589.EN:**

5 Parliament and the Legislative
6 Process

7 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000589.FR:**

8 Le Parlement et le processus
9 législatif

10 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And finally, Overview
11 Report: Political Parties' Rules and Processes, COM591.EN and
12 COM591.FR.

13 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000591.EN:**

14 Overview Report - Political Parties'
15 Rules and Processes

16 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. COM0000591.FR:**

17 Rapport sommaire - Règles et
18 processus des partis politiques

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

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

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

27 We're beginning today with Mr. Jon Irwin and
28 Mr. Robin Marty from the Green Party of Canada. If the

1 witnesses could please be affirmed.

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

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

7 **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you.

8 **--- MR. JONATHAN IRWIN, Affirmed/Sous affirmation solennelle:**

9 **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you.

10 Et maintenant, pour Monsieur Marty.

11 Pourriez-vous, s'il vous plait, indiquer
12 votre nom complet et épeler votre nom de famille pour la
13 transcription sténographique.

14 **M. ROBIN MARTY:** Mon nom est Robin Marty. Mon
15 nom de famille est M-A-R-T-Y.

16 **LE GREFFIER:** Merci.

17 **--- M. ROBIN MARTY, Affirmed/Sous affirmation solennelle:**

18 **LE GREFFIER:** Merci beaucoup.

19 Maître, vous pouvez procéder.

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

21 **--- EXAMINATION IN-CHIEF BY/INTERROGATOIRE EN-CHEF PAR**

22 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:**

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

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

28 Good morning, everybody. My name is Jonathan

1 Irwin, I'm then Interim Executive Director of the Green Party
2 of Canada. Been in this position only for a short time. I
3 started in early August 2024, but I had the pleasure of
4 joining the Green Party back in November of 2023 initially as
5 the Director of Finance and Administration.

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

8 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Sure. My name is Robin
9 Marty. So I'm currently the National Campaign Director for
10 Green Party of Canada. I'm working for the Green Party since
11 2015 in many different positions. So and I'm Director of
12 Mobilizing as well since 2021.

13 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** All right. Let's do a
14 little bit more housekeeping if we can. Could the Court
15 Operator please pull up WIT76.EN? And while that is being
16 pulled up, gentlemen, you recall being interviewed by
17 Commission counsel on August 23rd of 2024. Is that right?

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

19 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes, that's right.

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

24 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** We have, yes.

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

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

28 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

1 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And are there any
2 corrections, additions, or deletions you would like to make
3 to this summary?

4 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** No.

5 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** No, we had a chance to
6 make any necessary adjustments prior to coming today. So
7 everything looks great.

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

10 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

11 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** We do.

12 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. WIT0000076.EN:**

13 Interview summary - Green Party of
14 Canada (Jon Irwin and Robin Marty)
15 (Stage 2)

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

19 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. WIT0000076.FR:**

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

22 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** The next document I
23 would like to bring up is GPC1_EN. Can you please confirm
24 that at the request of Commission counsel, the Green Party
25 prepared an institutional report?

26 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** That's correct.

27 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And this is a copy of
28 that report. Have you had an opportunity to review this

1 document?

2 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

3 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

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

7 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

8 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

9 --- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. GPC0000001 EN:

10 Response to: Foreign Interference
11 Commission / Commission sur
12 l'ingérence étrangère

13 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: Okay. Thank you. And
14 that can be brought down.

15 So with those preliminaries out of the way,
16 I'd like to start by talking to you about political parties
17 as potential targets of foreign interference in Canada. So
18 I'll start with a general question, and that's, do you
19 believe that in Canada political parties are a potential
20 target for foreign interference activities?

21 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

22 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes, without question.

23 MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD: And why is that without
24 question?

25 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Well, that's -- I think
26 political parties are -- could be under threat with a
27 nomination, any nomination contest we nominate candidates, we
28 elect MPs, we are forming governments. So there is like just

1 position of power behind political parties which mean
2 potential foreign interference and threats.

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

9 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** And that's with respect
10 to political parties themselves. Will you have a similar
11 view about members of Parliament being targets of foreign
12 interference?

13 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

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

17 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes. Candidates and
18 leadership contestants, obviously.

19 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely. Yeah, I
20 believe it's at the individual level where the foreign
21 interference would have the greatest impact. That's you
22 know, getting the -- getting an individual in a position of
23 power within a political party would be the ideal spot for
24 bad actors from other nations to have an impact on our
25 political system in general.

26 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Okay. The Green Party
27 is the smallest of the political parties that has
28 representation in the House of Commons. And one of the

1 themes that came out of your interview with Commission
2 Counsel were some of the unique aspects of being a smaller
3 political party. How does that play out in your minds in
4 terms of the vulnerability of the Green Party as being a
5 target of foreign interference?

6 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Well, we can start by
7 speaking about resources, right? So politics is about --
8 also about money and as like, a small party, we have less
9 money, so we have less resources, so we are less equipped to,
10 you know, fight against any potential foreign interference or
11 threats against the party. So we are working -- we have to
12 be sometimes innovative with a decision we're making to
13 protect the party and this institution. So that reality as
14 being like, a small party, we have less resources, so we are
15 more vulnerable in some extent.

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

21 We are very much in a period of growth and
22 rebirth at this point. That includes an increase in our
23 membership. We are implementing strategies to grow our
24 membership and with that rapid growth comes an inability for
25 us internally to review individuals, you know, beyond the
26 basic checks and balances.

27 So that's kind of the trade off that we're
28 accepting at this point. But we're certainly not happy about

1 the risks that are inherent to the process currently.

2 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** In your interview, one
3 of the comments that you made is that while the Green Party
4 can't eliminate the risk of foreign interference, it can
5 reduce it. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about some
6 of the tools and strategies that are available to you in
7 order to try to address some of those foreign interference
8 risks that you face?

9 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yeah, so we -- after the
10 2019 general election we've implemented some new processes
11 with vetting and screening of candidates and also leadership
12 contestants. So we are, for example, working now with an
13 external company to do like, professional screening of any
14 potential candidates that want to run for us. It includes
15 like social media vetting, internet search, and so we are
16 working with professional company doing it for big
17 corporations, not just political parties.

18 So of course it's -- it hasn't been
19 implemented. It was in our discussion during the interview.
20 We didn't implement this new process necessarily for foreign
21 interference, because we were not speaking about foreign
22 interference in 2020. It was for over malicious actors we
23 were seeing trying to integrate the party, for example
24 individuals that were not sharing values and the policy of
25 the Green Party that we could see as sometimes even
26 extremists, the far right. So trying to bring policies that
27 are not in line with Green Party.

28 So working with this new process and with

1 this external company, we've been able basically to catch the
2 individuals willing to run for us for during a general
3 election and wanted basically to derail the policy as well.
4 It can be, like, people being pro-life, or people being,
5 like, with, like, racism, or antisemite comments on social
6 media that we could not see, but it doesn't be, like,
7 necessarily responsive on foreign interference. It was --
8 today, I think, this process definitely help us against
9 foreign interference, but it's imperfect because we -- let's
10 be honest, a malicious actor working or being affiliated with
11 a foreign state or foreign company, corporation will not be
12 really publicly advocating for a foreign state if you are --
13 been working for; right? So it will be more secretive. So
14 it's a good tool that we have, but it's -- we allege it's
15 imperfect and it hasn't been built for that purpose.

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

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

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

27 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

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

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

6 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** I think kind of both. We -
7 - I think if I'm going to this external professional company
8 doing vetting and saying, like, okay, we want to catch any,
9 like, potential interference threat coming from, you know, a
10 foreign state agent, they will respond to me, what are you
11 talking about? Like, spy? Like, they will just respond we
12 can't do that. We are -- you know, we are not like an
13 intelligence -- we're not CSIS. And so the limitation is
14 also the fact of whether even the company we are using, we
15 could not improve or process necessarily with this company to
16 respond to this level of interference. So I think -- I feel
17 we are doing the maximum that we can with our resources and
18 with the tools that are available to us, but I think we need
19 to go to somewhere else where we could have, like, more
20 sources from the government and maybe from the CSIS to work
21 with local parties, to help, maybe, with specific vetting or
22 on candidates and leadership contests.

23 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah, the lack of
24 resources is our biggest challenge, for sure. When we're
25 looking at allocating a hundred thousand dollars and we're
26 deciding, okay, how best are we going to use these dollars
27 from a spending perspective, you know, protecting ourselves
28 from the risk of foreign interference is not number one

1 because we have, you know, relatively few staff and we're
2 trying to, you know, change the country. So there are some
3 trade-offs and it's quite unfortunate. You know, if there
4 was ever an opportunity for the government to provide
5 political parties, specifically those who have MPs in office
6 collected, I think it would be a wonderful idea if there was
7 an opportunity for a specific funding to be provided to these
8 organisations to focus specifically on protecting our nation
9 from foreign interference. I think that's really the best
10 logical option that hopefully will be available one day.

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

15 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Right.

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

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

21 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** No.

22 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** I don't believe so, but
23 if I'm being -- you know, telling my whole story, I actually
24 -- one of my early positions in my career was across the
25 street in the West Memorial Building. I was actually a
26 property accountant there roughly in 2001. And given the
27 location where I was working, I was required, I believe --
28 I'm going from memory -- I believe I had secret clearance at

1 one point in time. You know, here we are 23 years later.
2 I'm sure that's long lapsed, but I just wanted to mention
3 that.

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

8 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** No plans immediate that
9 I'm aware of. Mind you, we are very willing to take those
10 necessary steps to have access to the information that I feel
11 would be very beneficial to our party for this specific
12 reason that we're meeting today.

13 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Okay. The Commission
14 also anticipates hearing evidence that the SITE Task Force,
15 and that's the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections
16 Task Force within the Government of Canada has also offered a
17 series of unclassified briefings to political parties in
18 connection with byelections that have taken place since the
19 44th general election. And we anticipate that the evidence
20 that we will hear is that the Green Party did not participate
21 in at least the most recent briefings in 2024. First can I
22 ask, were you aware that unclassified briefings were being
23 offered to political parties around the byelections?

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

25 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** I was not aware either,
26 but it comes kind of back to resources, if I'm being honest
27 again. We are, you know, a small group of staff, and we're
28 very taxed, and we accomplish as much as we can in a given

1 day, and it's very possible that we were notified, and it
2 simply just fell through the cracks. So I can't say with
3 certainty that we were not notified of this. In retrospect,
4 I think I speak for both Robin and myself when I say that we
5 certainly would have appreciated participating in those
6 sessions. I think they'd be very valuable to us.

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

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

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

13 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** So if the Green Party
14 hasn't participated in those unclassified briefings, and
15 aside from the leader, does not currently have someone to
16 receive classified information from the Government of Canada
17 on foreign interference threats, where does the Party look to
18 to obtain information about foreign interference issues?

19 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** The only place where we
20 received extensive information on foreign interference was at
21 the ACPP of Election Canada, so the Advisory Committee of
22 Political Parties. The first time in September 2023, we had
23 the CSIS coming for a presentation on foreign interference to
24 all political parties, and explaining and showing the
25 different threats, examples of interference that has been
26 notified in 2021 general election. And we had the
27 opportunity also to discuss again in June of this year, 2024,
28 at the ACPP meeting of this year of some proposal rules or

1 new rules that Election Canada were thinking to implement and
2 wanted the major, I will say, or political party's feedback
3 on this ---

4 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** I'll second that.
5 Elections Canada I feel did a great job bringing foreign
6 interference to the forefront, especially during the ACP
7 meeting in June of this year. I, unfortunately, was not part
8 of the political sphere last year, so I did not get to take
9 part in the session where CSIS was in attendance, but it was
10 certainly beneficial as a group to sit down with our fellow,
11 you know, political parties to discuss foreign interference
12 in general and to get an opportunity to provide feedback
13 directly to Elections Canada on the various new procedures
14 that they're suggesting. There was a lot of pushback from
15 the political parties in terms of what Elections Canada
16 brought forward. The general consensus seemed to be, and I
17 shouldn't speak for other political parties, but the vibe
18 that I got from the room was essentially, again, focusing
19 largely on resources and the fact that it felt like Elections
20 Canada was putting the emphasis on political parties
21 specifically to be responsible for protecting our nation from
22 foreign interference. It felt like there were increased
23 demands coming our way with no additional support. So that
24 was a little bit concerning.

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

1 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah, so I'm just going
2 back from memory at this point, and I can't speak to the
3 specific suggestion that they brought forward, but if I
4 recall correctly, they suggested that each political party
5 should essentially have a full-time member dedicated to this
6 specific initiative. And if I'm looking at the staff of the
7 Green Party of Canada, I'm thinking, my goodness, okay, if
8 we're going to dedicate one whole full-time equivalent to
9 this role, where do I, you know, reallocate that -- those
10 funds from? So there's going to be another area in our
11 organization, whether it's communications, whether it's, you
12 know, IT, or another department all together, that's going to
13 have a negative impact on us specifically. And, you know,
14 regardless of the size of the political parties, I think they
15 all felt the same way.

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

1 becoming, like, an issue.

2 There were some counterproductive proposals
3 as well, like Elections Canada proposed maybe we could
4 organize the -- your nomination contest. And I don't think
5 Elections Canada realized the number of hours it will require
6 from them, like responding all the different questions from
7 any member on the ground and the potential conflicts when we
8 are managing nomination races on the ground. I don't think
9 they realize what the political party is involved.

10 And last thing, and for me it was even more
11 counterproductive, was, like, to disclose the number of votes
12 in a nomination contest publicly, which for me is just giving
13 to any foreign knowledge actors evidence that, let's say, the
14 number of votes to get, like, an MP elected, so let's say we
15 can take, like, the Conservative Party, for example, in a
16 Conservative riding, the nomination contest is happening, and
17 the number of votes is very low to get, like, a nomination
18 contestant nominated for the Conservative Party, it will just
19 be like an evidence to any foreign state or foreign actor
20 that this knowledge that, "Oh, this is really, like, -- it
21 really takes, like, really low number of votes to get, like,
22 an MP elected in this riding."

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

27 So that's what the conversations were about.

28 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** With the little time I

1 have remaining, I'd like to talk a little bit about
2 membership rules with respect to the Green Party. So I
3 understand it that in order to become a member of the Green
4 Party, an individual needs to be either a citizen or a
5 permanent resident. Is that correct?

6 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Correct.

7 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

8 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Okay. I'm curious as
9 to why the Green Party draws the line at permanent residency,
10 as opposed to, for example, citizens only on the one hand, or
11 anyone who resides in Canada on the other?

12 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** I cannot say why. I just
13 will mention that we, the Green Party, we didn't change our
14 rules around membership for a long time. I'm involved since
15 now almost a decade in the Green Party and the rules didn't
16 change. So it has always been permanent resident or Canadian
17 citizen to be a member of the Green Party and each member
18 becoming -- joining the party needed to wait 30 days, a
19 month, before being able to vote in any election of a Green
20 Party, like nomination contest, leadership, internal
21 governance election.

22 So I don't have an answer for why the line
23 has been drawn there. For me it just makes sense that
24 permanent residents have, like, rights, have been screened
25 already. So -- and they can -- that -- these individuals can
26 donate to a political party; right? So -- which, you know,
27 like, -- so but I'm just guessing that when the line has been
28 drawn there, it's because permanent resident can donate --

1 well, so why excluding them?

2 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah, I think this
3 process, it allows us to have some control over who is
4 getting involved with the Green Party of Canada. Looking at
5 it from my accounting lens, I'm seeing these donations come
6 in and the transactions come in, and every individual who
7 donates to us has to provide their full address. So we're
8 able to see, okay, where does this person actually reside?
9 If it's outside of Canada, those monies are going back.
10 We're not keeping those. We don't want anything to do with
11 that. That's just one control mechanism that we currently
12 have in place that we stand by.

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

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

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

23 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** To get more participation
24 of young voters, to be -- to young people before, you know,
25 below 18. We are, you know, advocating to decrease the age
26 of voting in Canada as the Green Party. And I think it's
27 important in terms of -- well, democracy for young people to
28 start voting in a political party, understanding how it

1 works, and I think -- and we get, like, engagement from young
2 people in our party because they can -- they feel they can
3 participate in participate in policies, new policies being
4 voted, and so long answer short is ---

5 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** No, that's it. We're
6 looking ahead to the future as a party and our young Greens
7 are wonderfully talented. They get really involved. They
8 bring a lot of great energy. And, you know, even looking at
9 our federal council, one of the members, I believe he's 16
10 years old at this point in time. His contributions to the
11 group are outstanding and we're so lucky to have an
12 individual like that at our governance level. Young Greens
13 are huge contributors to what we do.

14 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:** Do you think that
15 younger people are potentially more vulnerable from being
16 coerced, or exploited, or manipulated from foreign actors
17 than an adult might be?

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

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

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

10 So I agree with Robin, and I think it's the
11 older generation, my generation and above, that are probably
12 more vulnerable, if anything.

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

15 Madam Commissioner, those are my questions.

16 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

17 I have one question for you. Am I right in
18 saying that you do not permit the purchase in bulk of
19 membership?

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

21 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

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

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

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

1 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah.

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

10 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

11 So the first one to cross-examine is counsel
12 for Jenny Kwan.

13 **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY/CONTRE-INTERROGATOIRE PAR**

14 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:**

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

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

24 Right now, as a political Party, do you use
25 TikTok?

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

27 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** And do you allow
28 candidates, those that are running in a nomination race or a

1 leadership race, to use TikTok?

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

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

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

6 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Not currently that I
7 know of, either.

8 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Okay. I'd like to
9 CAN4358_0001.

10 I'm not sure if you've had a chance to review
11 this document, and I'm not going to be going into it in a
12 whole lot of detail, but if you just see on that first page,
13 this is an analytical brief produced by CSIS on TikTok that's
14 been made public through this Commission process. And it
15 says that:

16 "TikTok, the People's Republic of
17 China's first western-centric social
18 media application, has the potential
19 to be exploited by the PRC government
20 to bolster its influence and the
21 highly addictive short video
22 application owned by PRC's ByteDance
23 allows access to sensitive user data
24 and, despite assurances to the
25 contrary, personal data on TikTok
26 users is accessible to China."

27 In light of this, would you consider changes
28 to your current policies regarding the use of TikTok by

1 candidates, those running in nomination or leadership races?

2 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Well, I think it goes back
3 to the discussion we had before, changing to what. That's
4 where -- exactly where we need reports and guidance, right,
5 what policy we need to implement. We can draft a new policy
6 on everything, but if we need more -- we have a lack of
7 resources, as we have been saying, so we will need just
8 guidance from the government, CSIS on tell me -- tell
9 political Parties which new policy we need to adopt and
10 what's -- and provide some guidance.

11 However, we could draft a new policy tomorrow
12 about TikTok and one for Meta and one for X and -- but will
13 it be a good policy, will it be good enough. You know what I
14 mean? We will need like more direction and guidance, so.

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

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

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

22 I understand where we're trying to go in
23 terms of the protection here, but to focus specifically on
24 TikTok, I think, is a big mistake. I think social media as a
25 whole is a serious risk, so I think just to focus on one
26 specific platform would be a little bit foolish, if I'm being
27 honest.

28 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** And I appreciate the

1 commentary. And I think here the sort of distinguishing
2 factor in some cases has been the ability of foreign states
3 to access and use that information. And what makes TikTok
4 potentially different in some respect is the ability of a
5 foreign state that we've seen conducting FI activities in
6 Canada having access to that personal data and that
7 information.

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

12 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely.

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

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

24 So for example, would your Party set a
25 minimum verification requirement for member IDs and
26 residences?

27 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** We would. I think I'd
28 be hesitant to say absolutely yes because I look at, you

1 know, your question from the Green Party's perspective. If
2 we're going to increase our rules, it could potentially lead
3 to a drop in membership. And I think if we implement, you
4 know, additional controls that have that type of impact, I
5 think all political Parties should be required to follow suit
6 to keep the field, you know, level as possible from a
7 competitive standpoint.

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

9 And so right now, for example, you don't
10 verify whether someone who has declared themselves to be a
11 Canadian resident or a citizen is, in fact, Canadian resident
12 or a citizen. I believe I read in your interview summary
13 that no proof is required. Is that correct?

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

15 So there is -- when -- for someone becoming a
16 member, they need to -- there is a question like do you
17 certify that you are a Canadian citizen or a resident
18 permanent, so they need to check that box. So this is -- and
19 if they do not, they cannot proceed.

20 So again, there is a level of trust, right.
21 For every political Party, like when you have thousands and
22 thousands of members joining your party, you need -- you
23 cannot, like, verify one by one, like, individual, if they
24 are indeed a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. You
25 have to -- you know, if someone is disclosing that they are,
26 that's their responsibility as well.

27 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Right. Yeah, the ID
28 verification not only comes in when we're looking at the

1 young Greens joining our group, and where they are not
2 interested in paying the small membership fee, that's where
3 we do that additional check.

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

10 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Not currently.
11 Unfortunately, we don't have the capacity or the
12 technological ability to do that at this point in time.

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

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

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

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

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

28 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Yeah, that a similar set of

1 rules, or ones that are specific for nomination processes,
2 would govern those processes and it would be through the Act,
3 as opposed to different political party's rules ---

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

5 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** --- that you would have
6 sort of a standard set of rules under the Act that would
7 govern these processes.

8 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Well so it's going back to
9 our previous conversation a bit earlier on, like, it depends
10 what's the -- like, what is under the Act. And that was the
11 whole discussion for hours at the ACP meeting, is Election
12 Canada will over -- like, implement new rules with reports
13 for EDA that conduct the nomination contests on the ground to
14 -- or is Elections Canada will completely conduct as, like, a
15 general election? And I don't think they can do that. They
16 don't understand, like, the nature of a nomination contest on
17 the ground, where you have, like, tensions, you can have
18 complaints, you have, like, -- so the Commissioner of
19 Elections Canada will be -- will receive a lot of complaints
20 to look at.

21 So we're not necessarily against. We're just
22 saying -- we're told just -- well, we've told Elections
23 Canada it's really, really complex. It's not just, like,
24 "Oh, well we'll just oversee the nomination contest," and
25 that's it. So it's what rules and what staff allocation they
26 can provide and I -- we are -- the consensus with all
27 political parties, that we are struggling -- we were
28 struggling to understand how Elections Canada will be able to

1 include nomination contests in the Act. But I think this is,
2 like, an ongoing conversation and Elections Canada was also
3 trying to get feedback from political parties maybe to tweak
4 their proposals that -- and their recommendations.

5 So that's -- long story short, it's complex
6 and it's not like just yes, no, we agree, or we disagree.
7 It's we need to see and we need -- the conversations need to
8 continue on exactly what Elections Canada wants to do with
9 it.

10 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** And I appreciate that that
11 was a fairly broad question. Maybe narrowing it into a more
12 specific point, one of the other recommendations was that the
13 -- from NSICOP was that interference in nomination and other
14 political party processes be criminalized in Canada, meaning
15 that if you were to interfere, let's say in this case it's FI
16 activities, that breach the rules, that those would be
17 criminal sanctions. Would you have any views on
18 criminalizing FI in the nomination process or other party
19 processes?

20 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** On paper it's a good thing.
21 Again, the implementation, I would like to -- I will have
22 questions. You know, the political aspect needs to be
23 thought; right? So I'm saying that my opponent is, like,
24 under, like, political interference with, like, -- and he's a
25 malicious foreign actor and breaching the rules, so I made a
26 complaint. What will be, like, the decision regarding that
27 situation? So my opponent is under direct influence, I
28 think, so I make a complaint.

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

5 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** I appreciate that. And my
6 very last question is actually just to think about the Green
7 Party. You had mentioned that you're a smaller party, that
8 you feel like foreign interference is perhaps -- that you're
9 a less likely target for it, given your current size,
10 although there's always room for growth and you may not be in
11 the future. But can I ask that if you viewed your likelihood
12 of being a target for FI in ridings where you have someone
13 elected, or you have in the past, or you're a fairly solid
14 competitor to other mainstream parties, would you agree that
15 your ability to be a target in those ridings is no different
16 than some of the larger parties?

17 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Absolutely. We -- the
18 comment about we are potentially less a target is also
19 probably because we -- as a small party, we are doing things
20 really professionally. We have not -- we didn't change our
21 membership rules in the last few years to try to increase,
22 massively, our membership, like as some political parties
23 did.

24 And I feel that during the ACP meeting,
25 there was also a comment being made that there is, like, we
26 don't have the same rules across different political parties
27 and there is one that is major one that is allowing anyone
28 becoming a member for free, that's also a comment we made,

1 that we feel we're less a target because we're probably less
2 vulnerable in that aspect with our rules.

3 But in our -- absolutely we are -- we can be
4 a target for any riding where we're competitive, or even if
5 we're not; right? When we implemented process, vetting
6 process, it was not just about foreign interference. As I
7 said, it's because we were seeing that we were becoming
8 vulnerable for malicious actors that were, you know,
9 extremist groups that were trying to infiltrate political
10 parties, et cetera. So we are constantly a target, as any
11 other party. And it's -- even smaller parties can be more
12 vulnerable because the number of memberships are lower as
13 well, so you can, like, take control of local association, or
14 the governance of a party, with less votes.

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

17 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Thank you so much.

18 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

19 Counsel for the Concern Group.

20 **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY/CONTRE-INTERROGATOIRE PAR**

21 **MR. DAVE WHEATON:**

22 **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** Good morning. I'm Dave
23 Wheaton. I'm counsel for the Chinese Canadian Concern Group.

24 I'd like to follow up on something you
25 mentioned earlier, which you expressed that requiring parties
26 to disclose vote counts could actually help foreign actors
27 identify vulnerable ridings. Did I understand that
28 correctly?

1 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Can you speak a bit
2 louder?

3 **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** Oh, my apologies.

4 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** You're very tall and the
5 mic is ---

6 **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** Better now?

7 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** --- quite low.

8 **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** Okay. So to follow up on
9 something you had mentioned earlier, you had expressed that
10 requiring parties to disclose vote counts could actually help
11 foreign actors identify vulnerable ridings. Did I understand
12 that correctly?

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

14 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

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

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

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

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

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

26 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

27 **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** And to follow up on
28 something else you've said, I think you've expressed in your

1 interview summary that it felt like Elections Canada was
2 unloading responsibility of protecting against foreign
3 interference onto political parties. Is that right?

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

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

8 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Correct.

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

13 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

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

17 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yeah, the potential is
18 there. It depends how implementation actually looks in
19 practice.

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

23 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Absolutely.

24 **MR. DAVE WHEATON:** Okay. Thank you. Those
25 are my questions.

26 **THE CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

27 Next one is the Attorney General.

28 --- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY /CONTRE-INTERROGATOIRE PAR

1 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:**

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

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

7 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

8 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

9 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** Another one is respect for
10 diversity?

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

12 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

13 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** And if I can marry the two
14 together, is it fair to say the Green Party supports the
15 democratic participation in Canada of people from diverse
16 backgrounds?

17 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

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

19 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** When people from diverse
20 backgrounds participate in our democracy it enriches and
21 strengthens that democracy?

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

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

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

27 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

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

1 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** They can volunteer with
2 political parties?

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

4 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely.

5 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** They can express their
6 views on political issues?

7 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

8 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

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

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

12 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Yes.

13 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** And all of this is healthy
14 activity in a free and fair democracy?

15 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes.

16 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Absolutely.

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

21 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Absolutely.

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

23 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** And so, it's important not
24 to limit or discourage the democratic participation of
25 Canadians?

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

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

28 **MS. RYANN ATKINS:** Including people from

1 diaspora communities?

2 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

3 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Of course.

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

7 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

8 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Absolutely.

9 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Or voting in democratic
10 processes?

11 MR. ROBIN MARTY: M'hm.

12 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

13 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Or expressing their
14 political views?

15 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

16 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yes.

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

19 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

20 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Absolutely.

21 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Even if the party thinks
22 the criticism is unfair?

23 MR. ROBIN MARTY: Yes.

24 MR. JONATHAN IRWIN: Yeah, we welcome all
25 comments, absolutely.

26 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Thank you. Those are my
27 questions.

28 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: Thank you.

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

4 **MR. ROBIN MARTY:** Yes. Thank you very much.

5 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** You're free to go.

6 **MR. JONATHAN IRWIN:** Thank you for having us.

7 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So we'll come back at
8 10:50.

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 10:50 a.m. Cette séance de la Commission est
13 maintenant suspendue jusqu'à 10 h 50

14 --- Upon recessing at 10:29 a.m./

15 --- La séance est suspendue à 10 h 29

16 --- Upon resuming at 10:53 a.m./

17 --- La séance est reprise à 10 h 53

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 10:53 a.m.. Il est 10 h 53.

25 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Alors, Maitre Ferguson.

26 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Bonjour, Madame la
27 Commissaire. Matthew Ferguson pour la Commission.

28 Juste avant de débiter avec monsieur

1 Desquilbet, mon collègue, Me Sheppard, me souligne qu'il
2 voulait déposer le document G... le document, en fait, le
3 résumé d'entrevue du Parti Vert sous la cote GPC... GPC1_FR.
4 Donc...

5 So, GPC1_FR, it's the French interview
6 summary for the Green Party.

7 Sorry, the institutional report, yeah. Thank
8 you.

9 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. GPC0000001 FR:**

10 Réponse à : Foreign Interference
11 Commission / Commission sur
12 l'ingérence étrangère

13 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Alors, on peut affirmer
14 le témoin.

15 **LE GREFFIER:** Merci. Monsieur Desquilbet,
16 pourriez-vous s'il vous plait indiquer votre nom complet et
17 épeler votre nom de famille pour la transcription
18 sténographique?

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Donc, mon nom
20 est Mathieu Desquilbet. Mon nom de famille, c'est D-E-S-Q-U-
21 I-L-B-E-T.

22 **LE GREFFIER:** Merci. Et pour la déclaration
23 solennelle, affirmez-vous solennellement que vous direz la
24 vérité, toute la vérité et rien que la vérité?

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, je l'affirme.

26 **--- M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET, Affirmed/Sous affirmation**
27 **solennelle:**

28 **LE GREFFIER:** Merci beaucoup. Maître, vous

1 pouvez procéder.

2 **--- EXAMINATION IN-CHIEF/EXAMINATION EN-CHEF PAR**

3 **MR. MATTHEW FERGUSON:**

4 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Merci. Bonjour
5 Monsieur Desquilbet.

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Bonjour.

7 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Vous avez été rencontré
8 par les avocats de la Commission le 23 aout 2024, c'est bien
9 ça?

10 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

11 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et un résumé de
12 l'entretien a été créé à la suite de cette entrevue, c'est
13 bien ça?

14 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

15 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Monsieur Court
16 Operator, je vais appeler le document WIT, W-I-T, 90.FR.

17 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. WIT0000090.FR:**

18 Résumé de l'entrevue FINALE - Bloc
19 Québécois (Mathieu Desquilbet) (étape
20 2).pdf

21 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Donc, Monsieur
22 Desquilbet, je projette à l'écran le résumé de l'entrevue.
23 Est-ce que vous avez eu l'occasion de réviser ce document-là
24 et approuver?

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Tout est
26 conforme. On a eu des allées et venues pour des petites
27 corrections, mais tout est conforme.

28 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Très bien. Alors, est-

1 ce que vous vous adoptez ce résumé comme faisant partie de
2 votre témoignage ici devant la Commission?

3 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

4 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Très bien, merci. Je
5 vais également déposer la traduction anglaise du résumé
6 d'entrevue sous la cote DWIT90.EN.

7 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. WIT0000090.EN:**

8 Interview Summary: Bloc Québécois
9 (Mathieu Desquilbet)

10 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et je vais également
11 demander le document BLQ5, s'il vous plaît.

12 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Alors, Monsieur
13 Desquilbet, devant vous, on voit le rapport institutionnel.
14 Est-ce qu'on peut juste descendre la page un peu, s'il vous
15 plaît? Il y a un rapport institutionnel du Bloc québécois
16 qui a été préparé pour la Commission sur l'ingérence
17 étrangère, c'est bien ça?

18 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

19 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et alors je dépose ce
20 document-là sous la cote, en fait, BLQ5 ainsi que la version
21 traduite en anglais sous la cote BLQ6.

22 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. BLQ0000005:**

23 Rapport institutionnel

24 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. BLQ0000005:**

25 Institutional Report - Bloc Québécois

26 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Alors, Monsieur
27 Desquilbet, vous occupez présentement le poste de directeur
28 général du Bloc québécois, c'est bien ça?

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est bien ça.

2 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et vous êtes en
3 poste depuis quand?

4 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Depuis le 15 août
5 2022.

6 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et donc, vous
7 n'étiez pas en poste lors des deux élections générales de
8 2019 et 2021?

9 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non, en effet.

10 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et je comprends
11 que vous êtes détenteur d'un baccalauréat en sciences
12 politiques?

13 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

14 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

15 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Vous n'étiez pas
16 directeur général, mais étiez-vous impliqué au sein du Bloc?

17 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Merci pour la
18 précision. En fait, à l'élection de 2019, je travaillais au
19 Parti québécois à ce moment-là. Et à l'élection de 2020, 21,
20 par contre, j'ai été embauché comme directeur des opérations
21 en janvier 2020. Donc, suite à l'élection de 2019, directeur
22 des opérations à la permanence du Parti. Donc, j'étais dans
23 l'organisation, j'étais juste pas directeur général...

24 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** D'accord.

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** ... à ce moment-là.

26 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Donc, vous étiez, en
27 janvier 2020, directeur des opérations au Bloc québécois.
28 Ensuite, à partir de août 2022, directeur général.

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Dans
2 l'entretemps, j'ai été aussi adjoint parlementaire de la
3 députée Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné à Ottawa.

4 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Merci. Et pourriez-
5 vous brièvement nous exposer vos rôles et vos fonctions à
6 titre de directeur du Bloc québécois? Directeur général.

7 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Ben, en tant
8 que directeur général de la permanence du Bloc québécois,
9 qu'on appelle aussi secrétariat national dans nos statuts et
10 règlements, mais dans le jargon, on parle beaucoup de la
11 permanence. En fait, je dirige une équipe, une petite équipe
12 qui constitue la permanence du Parti. Donc, nous, notre
13 rôle, c'est beaucoup d'administrer le Parti. Donc, les... le
14 membrariat, le financement, les bénévoles, préparation des
15 instances, des congrès, les conseils généraux, préparation
16 électorale, formation des bénévoles. Tout ce qui est en lien...
17 le côté partisan, en fait, du Parti, c'est ce qu'on
18 administre, nous, sous la direction du Bureau national du
19 Bloc québécois.

20 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et donc, dans le
21 secrétariat national, on parle d'une équipe de cinq employés
22 permanents?

23 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et c'est quoi...
25 vous parlez de la fonction du secrétariat national, c'est
26 l'administration générale du Parti?

27 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, essentiellement.

28 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Gestion des finances?

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Des finances. C'est
2 ça. On a quelqu'un au registrariat. On a quelqu'un aux
3 finances. On a quelqu'un à l'organisation en ce moment.

4 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et c'est qui qui
5 agit comme agent principal auprès d'Élections Canada?

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est moi-même.

7 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** C'est vous-même?

8 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

9 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Très bien. Maintenant,
10 si j'aborde le sujet de l'ingérence étrangère, j'aimerais
11 aborder la question, en fait, la position générale du Bloc
12 québécois face à l'ingérence étrangère.

13 Est-ce que le Bloc québécois considère que
14 l'ingérence étrangère dans les processus électoraux et les
15 institutions démocratiques fédéraux comme un problème
16 important?

17 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, tout à fait.
18 C'est un problème que, dès je crois novembre 2022 là, quand
19 ça a sorti beaucoup dans les médias, c'est là qu'on a été
20 beaucoup interpellé là-dessus, sur ce sujet-là, oui.

21 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et qu'est-ce qui a
22 interpellé le Bloc spécifiquement?

23 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ben, vous savez, le
24 respect des institutions démocratiques, l'intégrité de nos
25 institutions, c'est quelque chose... c'est des valeurs très
26 importantes pour nous, au Bloc québécois, pour la démocratie
27 et pour les citoyens et citoyennes du Québec là. Donc, c'est
28 important.

1 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et depuis quand le Bloc
2 québécois est-il au courant de l'existence même de ce
3 problème-là de l'ingérence étrangère? Est-ce que c'est avant
4 novembre 2022, avant les sorties?

5 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Dans notre cas à
6 nous, c'est vraiment en novembre 2022, parce que nous, au
7 Québec, en tout cas, puis dans notre parti, on n'a pas été
8 témoin de quelconque ingérence. C'est quand il y a eu des
9 articles sur le sujet que ça nous a préoccupés. Et c'est
10 pour ça qu'on en a fait un dossier important de notre côté.

11 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et je comprends
12 également que c'est le Bloc québécois qui a fait parvenir une
13 plainte au Bureau de la Commissaire aux élections fédérales
14 au sujet de l'ingérence étrangère à l'automne 2022, c'est
15 bien ça?

16 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Effectivement.

17 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et c'était quoi
18 l'objet de la plainte au juste?

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Dans le fond, on a
20 communiqué une lettre du chef de notre parti à la commissaire
21 directement par courriel, dans un premier temps. Mais on a
22 aussi fait des plaintes sur le site Web du site du Bureau de
23 la Commissaire aux élections fédérales, beaucoup en
24 mentionnant un peu ce qui était sorti dans les médias là.
25 Nous, on n'amenait pas des preuves là. On voulait juste
26 qu'il y ait une enquête sur le sujet. Donc...

27 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** C'était fondé sur les
28 allégations...

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, sur les
2 allégations.

3 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** ... que vous... dont vous
4 aviez pris connaissance dans les médias?

5 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exactement.

6 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Est-ce que vous aviez
7 une préoccupation que ça pouvait toucher à des
8 circonscriptions au Québec?

9 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Rendu là, ça peut
10 toucher à toutes sortes... on connaît pas l'ampleur. Donc,
11 c'est important qu'on creuse. Donc, ça pourrait, mais
12 c'était ça notre préoccupation.

13 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et savez-vous
14 qu'est-ce qui est advenu de cette plainte qui a été déposée
15 auprès du Bureau de la Commissaire aux élections fédérales?

16 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ben, on a reçu un
17 accusé de réception au moment où on l'a déposée, mais on n'a
18 pas eu de suivi par après.

19 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Vous n'avez pas eu de
20 suivi par après?

21 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non.

22 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Puis d'un point de
23 vue d'administration interne, est-ce qu'il existe une
24 personne ressource pour l'éducation d'ingérence étrangère au
25 sein du Bloc québécois? Ou est-ce que d'éventuels incidents
26 d'ingérence étrangère, ça relève de qui chez vous de traiter
27 ces questions-là?

28 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ben, disons, aux

1 partis même, du côté de la permanence, on n'avait pas de
2 personne ressource pour ce dossier-là parce que c'était pas
3 d'un enjeu avant. Nous, notre but, c'est surtout de faire
4 respecter nos statuts et règlements internes du parti auprès
5 de nos membres, nos militants et nos élus. Mais bien sûr,
6 c'est sûr qu'à l'aile parlementaire, il y a des porte-parole
7 dans multiples dossiers, comme vous savez, au Parlement.
8 Donc, c'est plus du côté parlementaire que ce dossier-là
9 chemine dans les commissions et tout.

10 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et est-ce qu'il y a des
11 discussions... je veux pas trahir des secrets du caucus, mais
12 est-ce qu'il y a des discussions internes à propos de
13 l'ingérence étrangère? Que ce soit avec le secrétariat
14 national ou avec les députés?

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ben, comme toutes
16 sortes de sujets d'actualité importants, majeurs, c'est sûr
17 que ça a fait l'objet de certaines discussions, mais pas...
18 j'ai pas grand-chose d'autre à dire à ce sujet-là.

19 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Si j'aborde
20 maintenant des sujets qui ont été identifiés ou des zones qui
21 ont été identifiées comme étant des vulnérabilités des partis
22 politiques, notamment dans les courses à l'investiture et à
23 la chefferie.

24 Si j'aborde dans un premier temps les courses
25 à l'investiture, est-ce que j'ai raison de dire... d'affirmer
26 qu'il y a deux possibilités au Bloc québécois menant à
27 l'investiture d'un candidat? C'est que la personne participe
28 à une course à l'investiture, un candidat, ou par

1 désignation?

2 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est exact.

3 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et de façon
4 générale, quelle est la préférence du Bloc entre ces deux
5 options-là.

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** En étant un parti très
7 démocratique avec nos membres, c'est sûr que la tenue
8 d'assemblées générales d'investiture, c'est la préférence du
9 parti et des militants. Par contre, il y a certains moments
10 qu'il y a des désignations, par exemple dans des
11 circonscriptions où est-ce qu'il y a peu d'organisations
12 électorales, ben, au moment venu des élections ou du
13 déclenchement, il faut y avoir des candidats partout, donc on
14 procède à des nominations à ce moment-là et il y a... ça fait
15 que ça, c'est notre préférence. En 2021, ils ont eu moins que
16 d'habitude en raison de la pandémie.

17 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Moins d'une nomination ou...

18 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Plus de...

19 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** ...ou...

20 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Plus de nominations,
21 moins d'assemblées d'investiture...

22 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Moins d'assemblées.

23 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** ...à cause des défis
24 logistiques que ça imposait.

25 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et au niveau des
26 désignations, pouvez-vous exposer brièvement le processus mis
27 en place par le Bloc Québécois? Comment vous procédez à la
28 désignation ou à la nomination d'un candidat?

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ça peut être fait de
2 plusieurs façons, mais dans le fond, les deux façons les plus
3 populaires, si on veut, c'est que dans un premier temps, on a
4 des personnes qui nous sollicitent, qui lèvent la main pour
5 dire « j'aimerais être candidat pour vous », donc, c'est sûr
6 qu'ensuite vient une rencontre, une enquête sur la personne
7 et tout. Il y a des fois que c'est le parti qu'on approche
8 des gens pour... on sollicite des candidatures nous-mêmes pour
9 certaines circonscriptions dans le but d'avoir la plus grande
10 qualité dans nos candidatures et aussi avoir une belle... une
11 bonne représentativité aussi, que ce soit pour la parité ou
12 la diversité. Donc, les nominations nous aident à combler
13 aussi ces défis-là.

14 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et comment est-ce
15 qu'on... une fois qu'on sollicite un candidat ou un candidat
16 s'offre à vous pour une circonscription en particulier,
17 comment est-ce que vous arrivez à une décision de choisir ce
18 candidat-là, de procéder par nomination? Est-ce que ça... est-
19 ce qu'il y a un vote à l'interne au sein du Secrétariat
20 national?

21 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Ben, c'est... en
22 fait, c'est lors des réunions du bureau national du parti que
23 les nominations sont proposées et entérinées à ce moment-là.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce que le Bloc
25 effectue des vérifications d'antécédents de ces candidats
26 potentiels?

27 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

28 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** De quelle manière?

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** De plusieurs manières.
2 C'est sûr qu'on vérifie... on fait remplir déjà un
3 questionnaire à chaque personne qui veut être candidat pour
4 nous, donc on demande des questions sur... très variées sur
5 leur passé, leur lieu de résidence, leur position politique,
6 leur idéologie. On vérifie aussi, bien sûr, tout ce qui est
7 de nature criminelle au pluriel, on demande à la personne
8 déjà de nous faire... de nous dire s'il y a des enjeux, mais
9 nous, on vérifie aussi après, on fait aussi une vérification
10 des réseaux sociaux ou une revue de presse pour voir si on
11 trouve pas aussi des choses sur ces gens-là.

12 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Donc, vous faites
13 une recherche basée sur des sources ouvertes pour procéder à
14 cette vérification d'antécédents.

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

16 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et si on découvre
17 justement il y a une telle vulnérabilité chez un candidat,
18 qu'en faites... que faites-vous?

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** À ce moment-là, ben,
20 il y a une recommandation défavorable, donc quand on... là, il
21 y a une décision qui doit être prise au Bureau national, ben,
22 le bureau national est informé de tout ça, donc,
23 généralement, ça fait en sorte que le bureau national
24 n'entérine pas cette candidature-là. Donc, il y a un droit de
25 veto du bureau national pour les candidatures.

26 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** À quel moment est-ce que
27 ce droit de veto là peut s'exercer?

28 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** À tout moment.

1 Idéalement, ce qu'on fait, c'est qu'on vérifie avant, avant
2 d'enclencher quelconques procédures, on n'attend pas que...
3 idéalement, on n'attend pas que la personne ait gagné une
4 investiture pour...

5 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-mm.

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** ...dire « vous ne pouvez
7 pas être candidat ». Mais le plus tôt qu'on peut le faire, on
8 le fait.

9 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mais est-ce que vous
10 avez le pouvoir, si quelqu'un est investi justement comme...

11 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

12 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** ...comme candidat, vous
13 pouvez exercer votre droit de veto par la suite?

14 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Il y a un article
15 dans les statuts et règlements du parti qui permet au bureau
16 national de faire ça. Et aussi, au déclenchement des
17 élections, c'est le parti qui doit informer Élections Canada
18 des candidats qui représentent... qui portent la bannière du
19 Bloc Québécois, donc on a le pouvoir de ne pas nommer une
20 personne.

21 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et ça, c'est prévu à vos
22 statuts et règlements du parti.

23 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exactement.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

25 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** De façon réaliste, c'est
26 plus difficile une fois que quelqu'un a été investi?
27 J'imagine parce que les membres ont voté? Est-ce que ça s'est
28 fait de désavouer, en quelque sorte, quelqu'un qui a été...

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Pas...

2 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** ...investi après une course?

3 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Moi, j'ai pas vécu ça
4 personnellement. Je sais pas si dans le passé, ça, c'est déjà
5 arrivé, mais à ma connaissance, non.

6 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mais le pouvoir existe.

7 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Il existe, oui.

8 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et dans le contexte
9 d'une course à l'investiture, qui peut voter?

10 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Donc, c'est les
11 membres du Bloc Québécois qui résident dans la
12 circonscription où est-ce qu'il y a l'investiture.

13 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Donc, il faut être
14 membre et résider dans la circonscription où l'investiture a
15 lieu.

16 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exact.

17 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

18 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Être membre en règle.

19 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Membre en règle.

20 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Il faut avoir
21 renouvelé sa carte si elle est expirée.

22 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et justement, ça
23 m'amène à vous parler de comment on devient membre du Bloc
24 Québécois?

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** En ce moment, selon
26 nos statuts qui datent du dernier congrès du Bloc Québécois
27 qui a eu lieu au mois de mai l'année dernière, en 2023,
28 maintenant ça prend l'âge minimal pour être membre du Bloc

1 Québécois, c'est 14 ans, et il faut avoir payé sa cotisation.
2 C'est pas mal les seuls critères, je dirais, à l'heure
3 actuelle pour devenir membre.

4 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Donc, 14 ans et plus et
5 payer sa cotisation.

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Mm-mm.

7 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Qui est de combien?

8 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** De cinq dollars par
9 année.

10 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Cinq dollars. Et est-ce
11 que c'est une cotisation annuelle ou une fois?

12 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Annuelle.

13 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Annuelle. Et donc, il
14 n'y a pas de... n'importe qui, n'importe quel... n'importe qui
15 peut devenir membre du Bloc Québécois, pas juste des citoyens
16 canadiens, des résidents permanents, n'importe qui dans le
17 monde peut devenir membre du Bloc Québécois.

18 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Effectivement. Tsé,
19 nous, tout ce qu'on possède en tant que parti politique, les
20 ressources qui nous sont octroyées par Élections Canada,
21 c'est la liste électorale. Donc, nous, tout ce qu'on peut
22 vérifier, c'est si cette personne-là fait-tu partie de la
23 liste électorale ou pas. Si elle est résidente permanente, si
24 elle est travailleur temporaire, quoi que ce soit, on peut
25 pas vérifier cette info-là, ça fait qu'on n'a pas... pour le
26 moment, y'a pas de critères à ce niveau-là pour, exemple, que
27 ça soit juste des citoyens.

28 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et c'est pas une

1 exigence que vous demandez non plus de montrer... est-ce que
2 vous demandez une preuve de résidence ou est-ce que vous avez
3 cette possibilité-là?

4 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non. Au niveau de la
5 Loi électorale, y'a rien qui indique ça. La seule précision
6 qu'il y a, c'est pour le financement politique où est-ce que
7 là, il faut être citoyen ou résident permanent et avoir
8 18 ans et plus. Donc, quand les gens font une contribution,
9 ben, ils s'engagent à être... à dire qu'ils sont citoyens ou
10 résidents permanents pour faire une contribution.

11 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

12 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Puis encore là...

13 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Et si quelqu'un n'est pas
14 sur la liste électorale, est-ce que c'est un empêchement de
15 devenir membre? J'imagine que non puisque...

16 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non.

17 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** ...à 14 ans, on peut
18 être membre puis on n'est pas sur la liste électorale.

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exactement.

20 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Alors, y'a pas une
21 adéquation entre les deux là.

22 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non. Souvent, quand
23 ils atteignent l'âge de 18 ans, là, ils apparaissent dans nos
24 listes, nos listes électorales. Donc, là, on fait le lien
25 entre les deux. Mais jusque-là, ils sont sur notre liste de
26 membres, mais sont pas... on n'a pas d'autres listes pour
27 valider quoi que ce soit.

28 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Est-ce que vous avez des

1 statistiques sur le nombre de personnes hors Québec ou hors
2 Canada qui sont... en fait, hors Canada, qui sont membres du
3 Bloc Québécois?

4 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Je vous l'avais
5 fourni dans l'entrevue là. Je vais vous le trouver. Donc,
6 c'est 0,06 % des membres du Bloc Québécois qui n'habitent pas
7 au Canada.

8 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Qui n'habitent pas au
9 Canada.

10 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est très... une
11 infime... une infime partie, et y'a une chose aussi, c'est que
12 ces gens-là, ça veut pas dire qu'ils habitent, exemple, en
13 France présentement, qu'ils sont pas citoyens canadiens.
14 Donc...

15 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-mm.

16 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Tsé, y'en a... on a des
17 citoyens qui sont à l'extérieur, mais ils ont mis une adresse
18 pour recevoir la documentation ou leur carte de membre par la
19 poste à l'international, mais on n'a pas de façon de valider.

20 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** De valider.

21 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est ça.

22 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** ...mais vous demandez
23 quand même des... pas nécessairement des preuves, mais des
24 informations de nature à pouvoir fournir des adresses pour
25 envoyer la documentation et des courriels et...

26 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est ça.

27 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** ...ici.

28 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** À l'heure actuelle,

1 ils peuvent donner l'adresse de leur choix.

2 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

3 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Sauf dans le cas d'une
4 contribution où est-ce que là, ben, il faut être résident ou
5 citoyen, donc on a un peu plus de vérifications à ce niveau-
6 là.

7 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Puis là, je vais
8 revenir à ça un peu plus tard, mais je veux juste finir là-
9 dessus parce que, sur la question de la course à
10 l'investiture, vous avez dit : pour voter à une course à
11 l'investiture au Bloc Québécois, il faut être membre...
12 excusez-moi... il faut être membre puis il faut résider dans
13 cette circonscrip... dans la circonscription.

14 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exact.

15 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Comment vous faites
16 cette vérification-là de résidence dans la circonscription?

17 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est ça. Donc, tous
18 les membres qui ont une adresse... parce qu'on a aussi des
19 membres ailleurs au Canada, peut-être ça va en étonner
20 certains d'entre vous, mais au Bloc Québécois, on a des
21 membres et des donateurs canadiens, de Colombie-Britannique
22 ou de l'Ontario, par exemple, ces gens-là font partie du Bloc
23 Québécois, mais malheureusement, ils ne peuvent pas voter à
24 une investiture parce qu'ils ne résident pas dans une des
25 circonscriptions au Québec où est-ce que nous on présente... il
26 y a une assemblée d'investiture, par exemple.

27 Donc... donc, c'est ça.

28 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et est-ce que c'est

1 les mêmes critères applicables aux courses à l'investiture
2 qui sont applicables aux courses à la direction?

3 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** À la course à la
4 direction, on ne demande d'être membre, d'habiter, de résider
5 dans une circonscription en particulier. Donc, tous les
6 membres du Bloc Québécois ont le droit de vote dans une
7 course à la chefferie.

8 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et...

9 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Juste une question.

10 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Oui.

11 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Est-ce qu'il faut être...
12 est-ce qu'il faut habiter dans la circonscription depuis un
13 certain temps ou à partir du moment où on y habite le jour du
14 vote, c'est suffisant?

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Em... en fait, non. Si
16 on y habite, on a le droit de vote.

17 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Et est-ce que c'est la
18 même chose pour le member... le fait d'être membre du parti,
19 c'est-à-dire qu'à compter du moment où on est membre le jour
20 de l'élection, on peut voter, ou est-ce qu'il y a un minimum,
21 une durée minimum pendant laquelle on a dû être membre avant
22 l'élection?

23 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exact. En fait, dans
24 nos statuts et règlements, il est prévu un délai de 30 jours.
25 Donc, quand quelqu'un devient membre du parti, il devient
26 membre 30 jours après le moment qu'on a reçu sa cotisation.
27 Donc, ça empêche aussi des gens à la dernière minute
28 d'inonder le parti ou d'inonder une circonscription, par

1 exemple.

2 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et le vote, que ça soit
3 à l'investiture ou à la direction, se fait de quelle manière?
4 Je présume il y a une partie qui est faite en présence... en
5 fait, normalement elle est faite en présentiel, est-ce que ça
6 peut se faire à distance?

7 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Pour les assemblées
8 générales d'investiture, c'est des votes qui se tiennent en
9 présence, habituellement. Un peu à la même manière qu'une
10 élection générale, tant au fédéral qu'à d'autres niveaux.
11 Donc, on a de l'inscription, on a des listes électorales
12 internes, les gens vont s'inscrire, ils vont... il y a des
13 isoloirs, des urnes, des bulletins de vote, il y a des
14 scrutateurs, y'a un président d'élections, donc il y a une
15 conformité à ce niveau-là à l'interne. C'est tout en
16 présence. Alors, on n'en a pas fait de votes virtuels.
17 C'était un des enjeux qu'on avait en 2021 avec la pandémie,
18 si on y allait vers ça, puis finalement on n'a pas été de ce
19 côté, avec... sur cette avenue.

20 Pour les courses à la direction, ça fait un
21 petit bout qu'on n'en a pas eu parce que la dernière course,
22 ç'a pas été une course tant que ça, ç'a plus été une
23 acclamation.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-mm.

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** La cheffe d'avant, ç'a
26 été aussi par acclamation. Mais traditionnellement, nous, les
27 courses à la direction, si on avait à en avoir une, souvent
28 y'a deux votes possibles : on peut voter... ou même trois : ça

1 peut être un vote postal, ça peut être un vote téléphonique
2 ou par internet. Puis à ce moment-là, ben, les gens doivent
3 s'identifier avec leur numéro de membre et aussi un NIP, un
4 numéro d'identification personnel, qui leur sont envoyés par
5 la poste de manière différente, un peu comme quand on reçoit,
6 ben, à l'époque là, on recevait une carte de crédit, on
7 recevait le NIP dans un deuxième envoi.

8 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Oui.

9 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Donc, c'est un peu la
10 même méthode là.

11 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce que vous
12 avez des chiffres, vous avez... évidemment, y'a pas de courses
13 à la chefferie qui sont annoncées, mais est-ce qu'il y a des...
14 est-ce que vous avez des préparations pour des... la question
15 est sensible, mais en fait, je veux savoir, vu que vous
16 parlez de méthodes un peu plus analogues par le passé, pour
17 les prochaines courses à la chefferie, est-ce qu'il y a des
18 choses qui sont déjà prévues?

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non. En fait, c'est
20 pas quelque chose qu'on voit venir à court terme ni à moyen
21 terme, bien sûr. C'est vraiment quand le poste de chef
22 devient vacant, c'est le bureau national qui met sur pied les
23 éléments pour la course à la direction, donc tous les détails
24 sur le vote, comment ça va se passer, c'est quoi la période
25 électorale, c'est quoi le processus de vote, les mécanismes,
26 donc c'est à ce moment-là qu'on le décide.

27 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et donc, vous avez la
28 possibilité de revoir les mécanismes avant une telle course à

1 la chefferie.

2 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exactement.

3 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et de façon
4 théorique, si le Bloc Québécois constatait des irrégularités
5 dans... reliées à une potentielle tentative d'ingérence
6 étrangère lors d'une course à la cheff... que ce soit à
7 l'investiture ou à la chefferie, quel processus serait
8 déployé?

9 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Vous savez, y'a aucun
10 parti qui est à l'abri de potentielle ingérence.

11 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-mm.

12 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Nous, au Bloc
13 Québécois, puis j'imagine... je peux pas parler au nom des
14 autres partis, mais je me doute bien aussi que quand il y a...
15 quand, disons, il y a une affluence de membres ou d'achats de
16 cartes de membres dans un endroit particulier, quand on parle
17 d'investiture ou quand on parle de course à la direction, il
18 y a des mécanismes en ce moment de détection de d'ça. On le
19 voit, on... puis on enquête là-dessus, on... tsé, que ça soit des
20 dons par internet ou des dons papier, avec des fiches, les
21 fiches sont numérotées, on peut tracer qui avait ces livrets-
22 là, donc on a une bonne idée aussi d'où ça vient.

23 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Donc, à votre avis,
24 vous avez des processus en place pour détecter de telles
25 irrégularités.

26 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exact.

27 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et S'il y a quelque
28 chose qui survient, est-ce que vous avez la possibilité de

1 mettre fin ou suspendre une course à l'investiture ou à la
2 direction?

3 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Oui, le Bureau
4 national peut agir dans ces circonstances.

5 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Il y a peut-être une
6 question que j'ai oubliée. Lorsqu'on veut devenir membre, je
7 sais que c'est quand même un montant qui est pas très élevé,
8 mais est-ce que... comment se paye ce montant-là de cinq
9 dollars? Est-ce que c'est par carte de crédit? Est-ce qu'on
10 peut payer en comptant?

11 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ça peut être en argent
12 comptant, par chèque, par carte de crédit, PayPal.

13 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

14 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** On n'accepte pas la
15 cryptomonnaie au Bloc Québécois.

16 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Vous n'acceptez pas.
17 Est-ce qu'il y a une raison particulière ou...

18 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non. On a juste jamais
19 été vers ça.

20 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce que vous,
21 vous considérez... est-ce que le Bloc Québécois considère que,
22 de façon générale et non particulière au Bloc Québécois, que
23 les courses à l'investiture des partis politiques sont un
24 mécanisme vulnérable à des tentatives d'ingérence étrangère?

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Oui, comme je
26 vous dis, on n'est pas à l'abri personne de ça, donc, oui, ça
27 pourrait être... ça pourrait être la cible là.

28 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Mm. Mais nous, on n'a
2 pas été témoins dans notre histoire de d'ça là.

3 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Donc, vous avez
4 jamais... vous avez pas connaissance de tentative d'ingérence
5 étrangère lors d'une course à l'investiture par le passé.

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exact. Mais c'est pas
7 parce qu'on n'en a pas eu qu'on... tsé, on se prémunit quand
8 même de mécanismes pour empêcher ça aussi.

9 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce que c'est la
10 même réponse pour les courses à la chefferie?

11 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est la même chose.
12 Ça, y'a aussi des vérifications supplémentaires qui se font
13 pour valider l'identité de la personne, donc... parce que dans
14 les courses à la chefferie, c'est un plus grand volume.
15 Souvent, le membrariat d'un parti augmente de façon
16 fulgurante, surtout selon le nombre de candidatures qu'il y a
17 à la direction.

18 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-mm.

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Chaque équipe vend des
20 cartes de membre, donc c'est sûr qu'il y a une affluence,
21 mais on s'assure que ces gens-là existent. Il y a un contact
22 qui est pris avec les nouveaux membres pour s'assurer qu'on
23 parle bien à un humain là parce que... c'est ça.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et vous avez indiqué
25 lors de votre entrevue que, selon vous, les courses à la
26 chefferie étaient moins susceptibles d'être affectées par des
27 activités d'ingérence étrangère que les courses à
28 l'investiture. Pouvez-vous nous expliquer un peu ou élaborer

1 là-dessus?

2 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'était surtout dans
3 le cas de... une investiture, c'est très local, donc, tsé,
4 c'est plus facile, je dirais, pour des personnes mal
5 intentionnées d'agir puis d'essayer de contrôler une
6 association ou le résultat d'un vote, quoique, comme je vous
7 dis, on se prémunit de d'ça le plus possible.

8 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-mm.

9 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Une course à la
10 direction, c'est quand même un gros volume. Au Bloc
11 Québécois, on a quand même plusieurs milliers de membres là,
12 donc il faudrait quand même... on n'est pas... on n'est pas un
13 des plus grands partis puisqu'on est juste au Québec, mais on
14 est... au Québec, on est quand même un grand parti, donc on est
15 capable de se... s'il y avait quelconques tentatives dans une
16 course à la direction, ça prendrait beaucoup, beaucoup
17 d'achats de cartes de membres.

18 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Mais je pense que vous
20 allez parler plus tard de financement, mais...

21 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Oui.

22 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Y'a ça aussi qui est
23 important.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Oui, on pourrait
25 l'aborder, j'y arrive, mais juste avant... là, il y avait la
26 question des associations de circonscriptions fédérales que
27 je comprends est un peu différent chez vous. Actuellement,
28 vous en avez six.

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exact.

2 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Pouvez-vous nous
3 expliquer pourquoi vous en avez juste 6 alors qu'il y a 78
4 circonscriptions au Québec?

5 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Il fut une époque
6 où est-ce que le Bloc Québécois, comme les autres partis,
7 avait des associations enregistrées auprès d'Élections
8 Canada.

9 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-mm.

10 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Le nombre
11 d'associations a diminué au moment où est-ce que le
12 financement public des partis politiques a cessé. Donc, ça
13 s'est terminé en 2015, je pense, la dernière année qu'il y a
14 eu du financement public. Donc, de garder nos liquidités dans
15 plein de comptes de banque, dans 78 comptes, ça devenait un
16 enjeu aussi de gestion justement de notre financement,
17 puisque là, à partir de maintenant, on se partage le même
18 montant. Donc, quand quelqu'un contribue au Bloc, il y a une
19 part qui s'en va à la circonscription, puis il y a une part
20 qui va disons, on appelle... on dit le « national », mais au
21 parti.

22 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-hm.

23 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Donc, on se partage
24 les mêmes sources de financement. Donc, pour nous, c'était
25 plus simple de gérer ça à même notre administration centrale,
26 si on veut, pour répartir ensuite les sommes dans les
27 circonscriptions.

28 C'est sûr qu'au moment venu d'une élection,

1 les candidats ont des agents officiels qui vont ouvrir des
2 comptes bancaires pour l'élection. Et là, on fait des
3 transferts dans ces comptes-là. Mais, c'est ça, il en reste
4 six à l'heure actuelle. Année après année, ça diminue.
5 C'est quelque chose qui tend à diminuer le plus possible,
6 oui.

7 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Est-ce que vous
8 prévoyez que, éventuellement, ce sera zéro association de
9 circonscription fédérale? Est-ce que ça, ça fait partie de
10 vos projets de fermer toutes ces associations-là?

11 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Écoutez, c'est sûr
12 que pour une association de faire des rapports annuels à
13 Élections Canada, de... c'est sûr que s'ils déposent... je pense
14 qu'il y a un certain seuil, je crois, de mémoire, que c'est
15 10 000 \$. S'ils déposent plus de 10 000 dans leur compte, il
16 faut qu'ils se fassent vérifier par un auditeur, un
17 vérificateur comptable.

18 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-hm.

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Quand ils ont des
20 changements de président, de trésorier, il faut qu'ils
21 fassent des changements à l'institution bancaire. C'est de
22 plus en plus lourd aussi pour les bénévoles. Élections
23 Canada ont quand même des exigences importantes.

24 Pis c'est pas une mauvaise idée qu'il y en
25 ait, c'est juste qu'au bout de la ligne, c'est des bénévoles
26 qui administrent ça pis ça devient un fardeau plus qu'autre
27 chose. Fait que la plupart se désengagent volontairement.
28 On croit que ça va se diminuer encore. Peut-être un jour

1 viendra la décision où ce qu'on dira, ben, on en a plus, mais
2 en ce moment, c'est ça la situation.

3 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et donc, il y a
4 une certaine centralisation des finances au Bloc québécois
5 qui est gérée par le national, dans le fond.

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, c'est ça.

7 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Maintenant, si je
8 tourne vers, justement, le financement politique des partis,
9 lors de votre entrevue, vous avez mentionné que l'actuel
10 système des contributions politiques en place depuis 2015
11 était susceptible d'être manipulé à des fins d'ingérence
12 étrangère. Pouvez-vous élaborer là-dessus?

13 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, bien sûr. Ben,
14 puisque le financement public a été aboli, le plafond, si on
15 veut, le montant de contribution maximale pour cette année,
16 c'est 1 725 \$. Ce montant-là fluctue de 25 \$ annuellement.
17 Donc, l'année prochaine, ce sera 1 750 par exemple.

18 Un montant de cet ordre-là, pour nous, c'est
19 préoccupant parce que ça... l'argent peut influencer, selon
20 nous, beaucoup plus que l'achat groupé de cartes de membres
21 ou d'influencer un vote d'une investiture.

22 On l'a vu... puis quand on parle d'influence,
23 on parle... même, on peut aller plus loin que juste l'ingérence
24 étrangère. On peut parler d'influence de groupes mal
25 intentionnés ou de pression. Donc, pour nous, c'est pas
26 quelque chose... t'sais, on l'a vu aussi dans les dernières
27 années au Québec, particulièrement avec la Commission
28 Charbonneau et tout. Il y a eu des changements à la loi

1 électorale là-dessus pour, justement, rabaisser le montant
2 maximal à 100 \$, mais de bonifier le financement public.

3 Donc, pour nous, au Bloc québécois, ça a
4 toujours été une demande, un vœu de retourner un système
5 public qui est basé un peu sur le nombre de votes obtenus
6 lors d'une élection mais tout en permettant quand même un
7 montant aux gens qui veulent contribuer, mais qui soit
8 minimal là. Comme au Québec, c'est 100 \$, mais à 1 725 \$,
9 c'est élevé. C'est facile d'acheter, t'sais, comment je
10 pourrais dire... essayer d'influencer à des montants aussi
11 gros.

12 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Donc, la position du
13 Bloc, c'est justement de revenir vers un système de
14 financement public des partis politiques?

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exact.

16 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce que vous
17 avez des exemples, que ce soit... des exemples de tentatives
18 d'ingérence étrangère par le... justement, par le biais des
19 contributions de donations politiques?

20 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non. On n'a pas... au
21 Bloc québécois, on a des donateurs, on a des généreux
22 donateurs, on a des donateurs de plus petits montants, on en
23 a de toutes sortes. On n'a pas senti... on n'a pas vu
24 d'ingérence ou quoi que ce soit.

25 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Faites-vous des
26 vérifications justement sur vos donateurs?

27 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Encore là, là-
28 dessus, ce que j'aimerais mentionner, c'est que la Loi

1 permet, comme je vous disais tantôt, que seul un citoyen ou
2 un résident permanent peut faire une contribution politique
3 fédérale. Par contre, pour nous, on peut pas vérifier
4 vraiment s'il est résident permanent. On peut... pis même s'il
5 est citoyen, ça veut pas dire qu'il est inscrit à la liste
6 électorale. Parce que tout ce qu'on possède, nous, c'est la
7 liste électorale.

8 Donc, c'est pour ça qu'on aimerait, pour
9 faire un meilleur travail... puis, ça, on a des discussions
10 chaque année avec Élections Canada au comité consultatif des
11 partis politiques pour avoir plus de données pour vérifier
12 nous-mêmes nos contributions. Parce que là, on l'accepte
13 sur la base que la personne s'est engagée à nous dire qu'il
14 est citoyen ou résident permanent, mais nous, on n'a aucun
15 moyen de vérifier cette information-là.

16 On n'a pas non plus les dates de naissance
17 des électeurs. On n'a pas... pour nous, c'est ça. Je
18 comprends qu'on veut protéger la vie privée. C'est quelque
19 chose... c'est une tendance qui est louable. Par contre, pour
20 bien faire notre travail, ben, malheureusement, avec les
21 années, on n'a pas ces données-là. On a perdu même des
22 données. Donc, c'est difficile pour nous de faire notre
23 travail convenablement.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Donc, dans le fond,
25 vous demandez plus de données d'Élections Canada pour pouvoir
26 faire des vérifications sur vos donateurs, vos contributeurs?

27 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Et même sur nos
28 membres. On sait que Élections Canada a la liste des

1 résidents permanents. On sait qu'ils ont la liste des futurs
2 électeurs; donc, des électeurs qui n'ont pas encore le droit
3 de vote mais qui vont l'avoir. Ça nous permettrait bien sûr
4 de vérifier... pas juste pour le financement, mais aussi pour
5 nos membres, pour s'assurer qu'ils existent bien.

6 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Qu'ils existent
7 bien, c'est ça?

8 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

9 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Maintenant, si je
10 change un peu de sujet, j'aimerais aborder avec vous la
11 question de la mésinformation et de la désinformation,
12 lesquelles ont été évoquées comme des tactiques d'ingérence
13 étrangère utilisées par des acteurs étatiques et non
14 étatiques.

15 Premièrement, est-ce que vous êtes d'accord
16 avec le fait que la mé et désinformation peut être utilisée
17 comme des véhicules d'ingérence étrangère? Comme des
18 vecteurs d'ingérence étrangère?

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

20 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Et comment est-ce que
21 le Bloc se prémunit justement contre la mésinformation et la
22 désinformation?

23 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Je sais pas comment
24 répondre à cette question-là.

25 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** On s'entend que c'est
26 pas un sujet qui est nouveau, il y en a toujours eue, mais
27 avec les médias sociaux, avec les médias traditionnels, la
28 convergence entre les médias sociaux et les médias

1 traditionnels, comment vous répondez ou vous vous protégez
2 contre la désinformation en ligne?

3 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est sûr que, comme
4 vous l'avez dit, c'est dans l'air du temps là, pas juste au
5 Québec ou au Canada, mais aux États-Unis aussi pis partout.
6 On sait qu'il y a beaucoup de désinformation.

7 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-hm.

8 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Donc, pour nous,
9 c'est important de véhiculer des faits. C'est difficile avec
10 certaines personnes qui tirent des sources, disons, peu
11 fiables journalistiquement.

12 Mais c'est difficile à contrer. C'est un
13 problème que, pas juste les partis politiques, tout le monde
14 vit. Même le fait que, par exemple, on peut pu partager des
15 articles de journaux sur Facebook ou Instagram à cause de
16 tout ce qui s'est passé avec eux, ça nuit et ça contribue à
17 la désinformation aussi.

18 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce que vous...
19 est-ce qu'il y a des lignes directrices pour mettre en garde
20 des candidats ou futurs candidats contre certaines agences de
21 presse ou médias?

22 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Pas officiellement.
23 Souvent, ça vient avec le fait que quand il y a une demande
24 d'entrevue, on vérifie c'est quoi le média puis on leur
25 suggère ou non de répondre selon la crédibilité.

26 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. À votre avis, quel
27 rôle devraient jouer les partis politiques, de façon
28 générale, dans la lutte contre la désinformation et la

1 mésinformation?

2 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Comme je vous dis,
3 moi, au parti même, au niveau de l'administration du parti,
4 on joue notre rôle. Par rapport à... mais par rapport à la
5 lutte à la désinformation, c'est quelque chose qui est plus
6 grand que nous là. Je pense que c'est plus au niveau des
7 gouvernements d'agir.

8 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Avez-vous connaissance
9 de tentatives d'ingérence étrangère par le biais de la
10 désinformation ou de mésinformation des médias qui
11 sollicitent vos candidats pour des entrevues, par exemple?

12 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est déjà arrivé
13 dans le passé qu'il y a eu des médias, comme je vous dis, peu
14 crédibles, je vais dire ça poliment... mais souvent, on leur
15 dit juste qu'on n'est pas intéressé.

16 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Si... là on revient sur
17 votre... vous avez indiqué lors de votre entrevue que le Bloc
18 québécois n'a jamais été, à votre connaissance, cible de
19 tentatives d'ingérence étrangère. J'aimerais aussi aborder
20 avec vous des hypothèses que vous avez émis à ce sujet-là,
21 pourquoi le Bloc serait plus à l'abri des tentatives
22 d'ingérence étrangère. Vous avez mentionné, je pense que
23 c'est au paragraphe 8 de votre... du résumé d'entrevue, que une
24 des hypothèses c'est la vocation fondamentalement
25 indépendantiste du Parti et sa focalisation sur les intérêts
26 du Québec et des Québécois. Comment... pouvez-vous élaborer
27 là-dessus?

28 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** En fait, comme je

1 vous le disais, c'est une hypothèse parce qu'on n'a pas de
2 certitude sur ça.

3 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Oui.

4 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Mais en étant un
5 parti d'opposition à Ottawa, que c'est réalistement presque
6 impossible d'être au pouvoir là, à moins de vraiment une
7 division des votes, pis même là c'est pratiquement
8 impossible. T'sais, les ingérences étrangères, souvent, ben
9 justement, vont vouloir influencer des gens au pouvoir.
10 Donc, nous, en n'étant pas aptes mathématiquement à être au
11 pouvoir, on est peut-être moins une cible à cause de ça.
12 C'est une hypothèse, mais on n'a pas de certitude là.

13 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Vous avez déjà été le
14 parti d'opposition officiel en 92?

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Ben, lors d'un
16 gouvernement majoritaire, donc...

17 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Oui. Et là, on peut
18 dire que vous avez un peu plus de pouvoir actuellement. Vous
19 détenez un peu la balance du pouvoir avec un gouvernement
20 minoritaire, c'est bien ça?

21 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Mm-hm. Oui.

22 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Est-ce ça... est-ce que
23 ça, ça... votre réponse demeure la même avec le fait que vous
24 détenez un certain pouvoir pour renverser le gouvernement ou
25 pas?

26 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, bien sûr. Ce
27 que je dis, c'est pas que le Bloc québécois a aucun pouvoir.
28 On a un pouvoir. On veut l'exercer, ce pouvoir-là. Par

1 contre, on peut pas former le gouvernement. Donc, c'est là
2 que je veux dire qu'on peut pas aller aussi loin que ça.
3 Mais, c'est ça. Pourquoi on n'a pas été victime d'ingérence
4 étrangère? On en a pas d'idée là.

5 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** D'un point de vue
6 extérieur, est-ce que vous avez considéré la possibilité que
7 la vocation... en fait, le projet politique du Bloc québécois,
8 c'est-à-dire l'indépendance du Québec, de faire du Québec un
9 pays, puisse en faire une cible attrayante pour des
10 puissances étrangères malveillantes qui voudraient semer
11 justement la division et nuire à la Fédération canadienne?

12 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** On peut... tous les
13 partis peuvent être la cible d'ingérence étrangère. C'est
14 pour ça que je ne nous exclue pas de ça. Je vous explique
15 juste que nous, on n'a pas jusqu'à présent été la cible
16 d'aucune ingérence à notre connaissance. Mais il est pas
17 impossible qu'on le soit un jour. Pis c'est pour ça qu'il
18 faut être vigilant pis qu'on aille des mécanismes pour s'en
19 prévenir.

20 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Là, j'aimerais
21 aborder maintenant la question des interactions avec le
22 Gouvernement du Canada et ses agences.

23
24 Lors de votre entrevue, vous avez mentionné
25 avoir eu des rencontres portant en tout ou en partie sur
26 l'ingérence étrangère avec Élections Canada, le Groupe de
27 travail sur les menaces en matière de sécurité de
28 renseignement visant les élections, autrement connu sous le

1 nom SITE en anglais, le SCRS et le Centre canadien pour la
2 cybersécurité.

3 Est-ce que vous avez eu d'autres rencontres
4 que celle-ci par rapport aux agences fédérales ou
5 départements fédéraux?

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Pas à ma
7 connaissance, non.

8 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et là, est-ce
9 qu'il s'agissait de rencontres qui étaient classifiées ou non
10 classifiées?

11 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non classifiées.

12 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Avez-vous des
13 représentants du Bloc québécois qui ont justement des
14 habilitations de sécurité très secrètes?

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Pas à ma
16 connaissance.

17 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

18 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Je suis pas au
19 courant.

20 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** On est au courant que,
21 je pense que c'est dans les médias, c'était mentionné dans
22 votre résumé d'entrevue également, que monsieur Yves-François
23 Blanchet, qui est le chef du Parti, était en processus pour
24 obtenir une habilitation sécuritaire « très secrète » pour
25 pouvoir consulter le rapport non caviardé du NSICOP. Est-ce
26 que vous êtes au courant de ce processus-là?

27 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Je suis au
28 courant qu'il y a cette démarche-là qui est en cours.

1 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** La démarche est en
2 cours?

3 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

4 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Donc, chez vous,
5 vous avez pas la possibilité de recevoir des informations
6 classifiées n'ayant pas de membre ou député qui a une
7 habilitation sécuritaire « très secret »?

8 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Je ne crois pas.
9 Mais moi, c'est ça, je suis plus au parti; je suis pas à
10 l'aile parlementaire. Donc, je suis moins au courant peut-
11 être de ces petits détails-là.

12 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Vous avez
13 également mentionné dans votre entrevue que vous avez des
14 rencontres avec Élections Canada et avec d'autres partis
15 politiques, justement au sujet de l'ingérence étrangère.
16 Est-ce que vous pouvez nous en dire davantage?

17 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Ben, les
18 rencontres, c'est des rencontres annuelles qu'on tient avec
19 Élections Canada, le comité consultatif des partis
20 politiques. Donc, c'est une rencontre annuelle avec
21 Élections Canada et l'ensemble des représentants des partis
22 politiques pour discuter de toutes sortes de sujets.

23 Moi, j'ai participé, même avant que je sois
24 directeur général, quand j'étais à la permanence, j'ai
25 participé aussi à ces rencontres-là dans le passé, en Zoom,
26 parce que c'était la pandémie. Mais c'est ça, c'est juste
27 depuis 2023 que là, on a abordé les questions d'ingérence.

28 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'était pas une
2 question qui était mis de l'avant avant.

3 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Avec Élections Canada?

4 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Avec Élections
5 Canada.

6 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce que... et
7 comment est-ce que vous avez trouvé ces séances
8 d'information-là?

9 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Très intéressantes.
10 Toujours intéressant de voir aussi... c'est l'occasion aussi
11 pour nous de se rencontrer entre partis politiques pour
12 discuter d'administration des partis et de toutes sortes de
13 mesures.

14 Donc, je pense qu'Élections Canada voulait
15 notre avis sur des hypothèses ou des propositions sur comment
16 administrer nos courses à l'investiture ou à la direction.
17 Eux autres aussi, ils semblent aussi préoccupés et se
18 questionnent sur ça là.

19 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** C'est une rencontre à
20 laquelle les partis politiques participent tous en même
21 temps?

22 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

23 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** C'est-à-dire, c'est pas
24 une rencontre distincte par parti politique?

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non, c'est ça.
26 C'est tout le monde en même temps. Souvent sur deux jours
27 là.

28 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et il y a combien...

1 est-ce que c'est juste des partis qui sont... ont des sièges à
2 la Chambre des communes ou c'est plus que ça ?

3 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est... tous les
4 partis politiques enregistrés sont invités. Ça arrive qu'un
5 parti se... n'est pas présent, mais la plupart le sont.

6 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** ls sont invités?

7 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

8 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Vous avez également
9 mentionné lors de votre entrevue une rencontre avec le Groupe
10 de travail en matière de... avec SITE en 2023. Quelle était la
11 teneur de cette rencontre-là?

12 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'était dans le cadre
13 de l'élection partielle dans Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Westmount.

14 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** On nous avait
16 convoqué à une rencontre d'information sur les possibilités
17 d'ingérence ou qu'est-ce qu'il fallait surveiller pis des
18 mises en garde ou des outils. Ils voulaient me transmettre
19 de l'information, donc vu que c'était une élection partielle
20 qui avait lieu au Québec, on n'a participé.

21 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK.

22 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** On n'a pas participé
23 à ceux quand c'était à l'extérieur.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** C'est juste au Québec
25 où vous vous êtes concentrés. Et là, est-ce que ça avait...
26 est-ce que c'était seul avec le groupe de travail ou est-ce
27 que c'était avec d'autres... en présence de d'autres partis
28 politiques aussi?

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** De mémoire, c'était
2 avec les autres partis.

3 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et quelle était la
4 teneur de cette rencontre-là?

5 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Comme je vous dis, je
6 pense que c'était vraiment pour nous mettre en garde sur
7 certaines choses, qu'est-ce qu'il fallait vérifier pis nous
8 donner les ressources, t'sais, la ligne téléphonique, si
9 jamais on entendait parler de quelque chose. C'était
10 beaucoup à ce niveau-là. À titre préventif, je dirais.

11 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Donc... c'est ça.
12 Donc, c'est justement à titre préventif. Est-ce que vous
13 avez trouvé l'information qui était dispensée, qui était
14 utile?

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, toute
16 information préventive est utile.

17 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Relativement au groupe
18 de travail SITE, il a été mentionné que le Bloc québécois
19 n'avait pas accepté l'offre de recevoir des breffages
20 classifiés dans les élections 2019 et 2021. Est-ce que vous
21 savez pourquoi?

22 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Je me souviens qu'on
23 s'en est... on en avait discuté lors de l'entrevue.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Mm-hm.

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** J'ai pas eu de
26 réponse à ça. Je sais pas pourquoi le Bloc québécois a pas
27 participé à ces rencontres-là. Comme je soumettais
28 l'hypothèse de peut-être qu'il y a eu un oubli de répondre ou

1 quoi que ce soit là. Mais effectivement, on n'avait pas
2 participé à ça, mais j'sais pas la raison là.

3 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et, donc, à votre
4 connaissance, c'était pas par un manque d'intérêt?

5 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non.

6 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. En 2019, avant les
7 élections de 2019, il y avait combien de membres du Bloc qui
8 étaient au Parlement?

9 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Il y avait 10... 10
10 députés.

11 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Dix (10) députés, OK.
12 Ça, c'est avant les élections de 2019?

13 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui.

14 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce que, de
15 façon générale... donc, si je comprends bien votre réponse,
16 est-ce que je comprends que le Bloc québécois accepterait une
17 telle offre par SITE pour assister à des breffages classifiés
18 à l'avenir, pour les élections futures?

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Ben, comme
20 toutes demandes qu'on a reçues depuis, on les a acceptées.
21 Comme je vous dis, peut-être que dans le rythme d'une
22 élection, ça s'est perdu, je sais pas là. Mais c'est sûr que
23 là, on va porter un intérêt plus sérieux.

24 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Est-ce que... de façon
25 générale, est-ce que vous considérez que davantage
26 d'informations devraient être communiquées aux... par le
27 gouvernement et ses agences aux partis politiques?

28 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Comme je vous

1 dis, tout ce qui peut aider à la prévention, c'est utile.
2 Puis c'est sûr que l'information aussi, de savoir ce qui en
3 découle pis si on doit savoir des choses qui peuvent nous
4 aider, nous aussi, à nous protéger contre l'ingérence
5 étrangère, on est preneurs.

6 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. De façon générale,
7 si le Bloc devait répondre à un potentiel incident
8 d'ingérence étrangère le ciblant, est-ce que vous savez... est-
9 ce que vous avez... est-ce que vous détenez l'information
10 nécessaire sur la marche à suivre? Qui contacter? Quoi
11 faire?

12 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Ben, on a reçu...
13 on a reçu des informations à ce sujet-là, fait qu'on sait
14 quoi faire. Pis c'est sûr que nous aussi, on a, comme on en
15 parlait plus tôt, un bureau national, qui est un peu notre
16 conseil d'administration au parti. Donc, c'est sûr que tout
17 va remonter là aussi pour les informer, mais on a aussi des
18 ressources qui nous ont été fournies pour communiquer cette
19 information-là.

20 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce que le Bloc
21 a pris des mesures à l'interne afin d'informer ses employés
22 ou ses députés des menaces d'ingérence étrangère? Est-ce que
23 vous avez des outils, des ressources?

24 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** On a reçu du ministre
25 Leblanc une trousse d'information par rapport aux ingérences
26 étrangères. Donc, c'est une trousse qu'on a bien reçue. Les
27 employés, on l'a eue. C'est une trousse qu'on va remettre
28 aussi à nos potentiels candidats. On commence, en ce moment-

1 même, on a deux candidats officiels au Bloc québécois pour la
2 prochaine élection; donc c'est quelque chose qui va faire
3 partie de... quand on leur envoie de l'information, on va aussi
4 leur envoyer la trousse.

5 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et je vois que le
6 temps file, mais j'aimerais aussi avec... peut-être aborder,
7 pour clore... pas votre témoignage mais mon interrogatoire...
8 certaines... j'aimerais aborder avec vous certaines pistes de
9 solutions afin de contrer et prévenir l'ingérence étrangère,
10 en ce qui concerne plus particulièrement les partis
11 politiques et les vulnérabilités qui ont été identifiées.

12 De façon générale, pouvez-vous nous exposer
13 la position du Bloc québécois sur les avenues de réformes
14 proposées impliquant la réglementation sur certains processus
15 internes des partis politiques par des agences
16 gouvernementales telles que Élections Canada ou la
17 Commissaire aux élections fédérales? Par exemple, la gestion
18 ou la réglementation des courses à l'investiture et à la
19 chefferie.

20 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Ben, là-dessus,
21 nous, notre position est assez claire qu'on tient à notre
22 indépendance, à notre autonomie des partis politiques. On
23 administre nos choses correctement. On a bien sûr une
24 reddition de compte envers Élections Canada, parce qu'on
25 existe par la *Loi électorale*, donc on est redevable à
26 Élections Canada. Donc, tout ce qui est rapports financiers,
27 tout ça, on remplit nos obligations. Par contre, d'avoir une
28 organisation externe qui vient administrer ou gérer nos

1 courses à l'investiture ou à la direction, ça alourdit aussi
2 le fardeau.

3 Comme je vous le dis, nous, on est déjà
4 organisé de manière professionnelle pour organiser nos
5 élections internes. Donc, on n'a pas besoin d'ingérence
6 autre dans nos processus. Ce qu'on voudrait, c'est justement
7 juste être mieux outillé. Comme je vous dis, avoir des
8 listes, des informations pour mieux faire notre travail.

9 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Est-ce que le Bloc
10 serait davantage favorable à un modèle de réglementation axé
11 sur l'imposition des exigences réglementaires, mais dont
12 l'application revient aux partis? C'est-à-dire qu'il y a un
13 cadre réglementaire qui est en place, mais l'application
14 revient aux partis?

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ça dépend des
16 règlements que... des structures réglementaires, mais à la
17 pièce là. Je... on verra ce qui sera recommandé ou proposé,
18 mais...

19 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Et est-ce que, à
20 votre avis, les partis ont les ressources suffisantes pour
21 administrer l'application des mesures additionnelles, par
22 exemple, des vérifications additionnelles sur les membres ou
23 sur leurs candidats?

24 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Comme je vous ai dit,
25 il nous manque... on aimerait avoir plus d'informations. Nous,
26 tout ce qu'on dispose comme outil, c'est la liste électorale.
27 La liste électorale, il y a le nom, l'adresse, le prénom des
28 électeurs, mais on n'a pas les résidents permanents, on n'a

1 pas les futurs électeurs. Donc, c'est difficile pour nous de
2 faire mieux. On n'a pas le sexe. On n'a pas les dates de
3 naissance. Donc, c'est de l'information qu'il faut chercher
4 nous-mêmes, qu'il faut demander aux gens. Donc, c'est sûr
5 qu'on n'est pas outillé comme on devrait l'être, selon moi.

6 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Donc, selon vous, il
7 manque des informations qui devraient vous être communiquées?

8 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Exact.

9 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Est-ce qu'il y a
10 d'autres mesures dont nous n'avons pas discuté aujourd'hui ou
11 lors de votre entrevue que vous préconisez afin de contrer et
12 prévenir l'ingérence étrangère?

13 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Pas qu'on n'a pas
14 discuté. Juste redire que, pour faire en lien avec ce que
15 vous avez dit, il y a... comme je le répète, le financement
16 politique de revoir la méthode de financement politique pour
17 qu'il y aille une part publique pis que les plafonds de
18 dépenses, de contributions, soient moins élevés. Ça, c'est
19 quelque chose, je pense, qui peut être fait, qui est simple
20 comme solution pis qui aura un impact là.

21 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** OK. Est-ce qu'il y a
22 d'autres choses que vous désirez mentionner à la Commission?

23 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non, je pense que
24 c'est tout.

25 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Alors, ça fait le tour
26 de mes questions. Merci, Monsieur Desquilbet.

27 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Merci.

28 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Merci, Maître Ferguson.

1 Alors, il y a des questions des avocats représentant les
2 participants. Alors, le premier, Maitre Sirois, qui
3 représente l'Alliance démocratique russe-canadienne.

4 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** L'Alliance démocratique
5 des Canadiens russes.

6 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Je l'ai dit à l'envers.

7 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** C'est ça. Moi aussi,
8 je le dis toujours à l'envers.

9 **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY/CONTRE-INTERROGATOIRE PAR**

10 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:**

11 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Bonjour. Enchanté.

12 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Bonjour.

13 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** J'aimerais commencer
14 par attirer votre attention à RCD 11, s'il vous plait.

15 **--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. RCD0000011:**

16 L'ingérence de la Russie dans les
17 élections et les référendums des pays
18 de l'alliance

19 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Il s'agit d'un rapport
20 de l'OTAN intitulé « Ingérence de la Russie dans les
21 élections et les référendums... » - pn peut descendre pour voir
22 le titre, s'il vous plait - « ... dans les élections et les
23 référendums des pays de l'Alliance ». Ça a été préparé par
24 Suzanne Davis des États-Unis le 18 novembre 2018, comme on
25 peut voir ici.

26 J'aimerais, s'il vous plait, aller à la page
27 4, paragraphe 9. On y parle ici des objectifs de l'ingérence
28 de la Russie et un peu d'exemples de qu'est-ce qui s'est

1 passé dans d'autres pays. Je vais lire peut-être les deux
2 premières phrases, juste pour donner une introduction. On
3 voit :

4 « Les objectifs de l'ingérence de la
5 Russie varient selon les cas et ne
6 s'excluent pas mutuellement. Selon
7 les analystes, les autorités russes
8 adoptent 'une approche opérationnelle
9 opportuniste'. »

10 La troisième phrase.

11 « Le premier de leurs objectifs est
12 d'exacerber les tensions sociales
13 préexistantes au sein d'une
14 société. »

15 Je vais vous amener juste à un exemple à la
16 fin de ce paragraphe-là. On parle :

17 « En Espagne, les médias et les bots
18 russes ont alimenté le sentiment
19 nationaliste en Catalogne,
20 contribuant ainsi à l'une des plus
21 grandes crises constitutionnelles de
22 l'époque moderne. Ces incidents
23 montrent comment la Russie fait usage
24 de la technologie pour affaiblir un
25 gouvernement en place, fragiliser
26 l'opposition ou encore discréditer la
27 démocratie libérale. »

28 Bon, je sais que le Bloc québécois ne va

1 évidemment pas intentionnellement se servir de ce genre de
2 discours-là, mais je me demande s'il y a un risque que
3 certains partis politiques participent ou bénéficient de
4 manière non intentionnelle ou accidentelle à ce genre de
5 manipulation de l'opinion publique par la Russie.

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Fait que vous voulez
7 savoir quoi?

8 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Dans le fond, est-ce
9 que par accident, en faisant la promotion de certaines idées,
10 par exemple l'indépendance, que certains partis politiques
11 peuvent bénéficier ou accidentellement contribuer à ce genre
12 de situation-là, de division de la société comme à l'intérêt
13 de la Russie?

14 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Je pense que personne
15 est à l'abri de tout ça là, peu importe les allégeances ou
16 l'idéologie.

17 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Et est-ce que c'est
18 possible pour les partis politiques de limiter ce risque-là?

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** On contrôle pas
20 l'Internet là. Il y a des bots russes, comme vous faites
21 mention, et nous, on n'a pas le pouvoir de régler ça.

22 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Est-ce que le
23 gouvernement l'aurait, le pouvoir ou comme... est-ce qu'il y a
24 des outils qui pourraient être mis en place?

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ce sera à eux... à leur
26 poser la question à eux.

27 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Vous n'avez pas de
28 recommandations à faire – par exemple, sur comment contrôler

1 l'espace médiatique pour limiter ce genre de promotion du
2 discours?

3 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Non. Nous, on contrôle
4 ce qu'on contrôle, donc nous... tous nos systèmes
5 informatiques, nos militants, nos militantes, nous on prêche
6 pas par la désinformation ou par des tactiques de ce genre-
7 là, ça fait qu'on n'est pas là-dedans.

8 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Merci.

9 On peut descendre le document, s'il vous
10 plait.

11 Vous dites que le Bloc Québécois n'est pas
12 là-dedans, absolument, je veux pas... je ne conteste pas la
13 date sur ce point-là du tout, mais je veux essayer de voir
14 s'il n'y a pas d'autres partis politiques qui peuvent être
15 plus extrêmes ou, comme, qui veulent des votes à tout prix
16 pourraient plus activement bénéficier de ces discours-là, par
17 exemple en donnant des entrevues à des médias étrangers
18 contrôlés par la Russie ou en partageant des fausses
19 informations qui sont créées par la Russie visant à
20 promouvoir des intérêts plus extrêmes dans le but de gagner
21 des votes.

22 Est-ce que c'est quelque chose qui est
23 possible que certains partis politiques opportunistes eux
24 aussi essayent de surfer sur cette vague-là un peu?

25 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Je ne peux pas dire
26 pour les autres. Je le sais pas.

27 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** OK. J'aimerais attirer
28 votre attention sur un autre document, ça s'appelle CAN004245

1 ou CAN4245. C'est un rapport du 6 septembre 2019 du Groupe de
2 travail sur les menaces en matière de sécurité et de
3 renseignement visant les élections – en anglais, ça s'appelle
4 SITE Task Force.

5 On peut descendre un peu.

6 Êtes-vous familier avec le SITE Task Force,
7 ce groupe de travail là?

8 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, oui.

9 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** OK. Ici, c'est un
10 paragraphe qu'on voit RRM Canada – qui est, en anglais, le
11 Rapid Response Mechanism Canada qui surveille les réseaux
12 sociaux pendant les périodes électorales – a identifié deux
13 articles de *Sputnik*, un média contre, au départ, la Russie, à
14 propos de l'élection qui approche.

15 Le premier article est identifié par RRM
16 Canada et est une entrevue en français avec un candidat du
17 Bloc Québécois qui se présentait contre le premier ministre
18 dans le district de Montréal... euh, de Papineau à Montréal.

19 Je suis curieux de savoir : est-ce que c'est
20 quelque chose que vous avez... le Bloc Québécois a été mis au
21 courant à l'époque? Je sais que vous n'étiez pas là, vous
22 personnellement, mais avez-vous eu de l'information sur ces
23 évènements là ou...

24 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, je suis au
25 courant de ce candidat-là, comme vous dites. C'est juste que
26 le monsieur qui était candidat n'était pas candidat officiel.
27 C'est quelqu'un qui voulait être candidat pour le Bloc
28 Québécois dans la circonscription de Papineau, mais à la...

1 justement, à la nomination, au déclenchement, c'est pas lui
2 qui a été nommé pour plein de motifs. Donc... donc, il a été
3 écarté.

4 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** OK. Quelle est la
5 distinction entre un candidat officiel ou un candidat non
6 officiel, comme dans ce cas-là, par exemple?

7 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Ben, vous, demain
8 matin, vous pouvez écrire dans tous les journaux que vous
9 allez être candidat du Bloc Québécois dans une
10 circonscription, vous êtes candidat intéressé, vous êtes
11 candidat pressenti, vous êtes candidat... mais vous n'êtes pas
12 candidat officiel. Un candidat officiel, c'est quand un
13 candidat a remporté une assemblée générale d'investiture ou a
14 été nommé officiellement par le parti. Malheureusement, ben,
15 on a souvent des problèmes avec ça, y'a des gens qui
16 s'inventent candidats, puis dans ce cas-ci, c'était le
17 président de la circonscription du Bloc Québécois de Papineau
18 qui voulait être candidat, mais que ç'a pas été lui au final.

19 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Est-ce qu'il y a des
20 moyens pour le Bloc ou d'autres partis politiques de
21 contrôler un peu ces faux candidats?

22 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, s'ils mettent le
23 parti dans l'embarras, on essaye de discuter avec eux pour
24 que ça aide, mais... c'est ça, dans ce cas-ci précis, il n'a
25 pas été candidat, donc, pour nous, il agissait comme un...
26 comme question qui voulait l'être, mais il l'était pas.

27 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** On peut descendre le
28 document. Je pense que j'ai peut-être... pardon, je voulais

1 dire fermer le document. On n'en aura plus de besoin.

2 Plus largement, juste sur la question de
3 donner des entrevues à des médias étrangers, comme *Sputnik*
4 par exemple, est-ce qu'il y a des directives au sein du Parti
5 Québécois pour essayer de donner de l'information aux
6 candidats sur quels médias pourraient être plus dangereux en
7 termes d'entrevues ou d'interactions?

8 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Généralement, la
9 consigne, c'est quand on a une demande d'entrevue, de le
10 communiquer avec nous, puis nous, on les aide pour les
11 entrevues. Puis quand on voit que c'est un média douteux ou
12 étranger et non pertinent, non crédible, ben, notre
13 recommandation à eux, c'est de ne pas livrer cette entrevue-
14 là.

15 Par contre, comme je vous dis, y'a des gens
16 qui peuvent agir de leur propre gré. J'ai déjà vu ça dans le
17 passé aussi, des gens qui ont envoyé des communiqués de
18 presse à des journaux pour dire qu'ils étaient candidats, par
19 exemple, puis qui n'étaient pas candidats là. On ne peut pas
20 empêcher... c'est dur à contrôler, ça, mais c'est sûr que notre
21 ligne, c'est de ne pas donner ce genre d'entrevues là.

22 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Et pour les vrais de
23 vrais candidats, quand vous donnez une recommandation, par
24 exemple de ne pas donner une entrevue, cette recommandation-
25 là est suivie ou... c'est une recommandation ferme ou c'est...

26 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui, oui, c'est ferme.

27 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Et si un candidat décide
28 quand même de procéder à une entrevue, est-ce que c'est... il y

1 a des conséquences par rapport à ça ou...

2 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est pas arrivé. Je
3 leur conseille pas d'essayer. <Rires>

4 **Me GUILLAUME SIROIS:** C'est bon. Et ça conclut
5 mes questions. Merci beaucoup.

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Merci.

7 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Merci.

8 Alors, Maitre Choudhry, je pense, pour Jenny
9 Kwan?

10 Ah! C'est votre collègue.

11 So Ms. Kakkar.

12 **(SHORT PAUSE/COURTE PAUSE)**

13 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Good morning, Commissioner.
14 Good morning. I am counsel for MP Kwan, and -- sorry; I'm
15 hearing my own voice in this, and that is disturbing, but all
16 of you already know that because you're listening to me as
17 well.

18 **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY/CONTRE-INTERROGATOIRE PAR**

19 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:**

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

27 I wanted to start by asking you the Bloc
28 Québécois has taken the position that it doesn't want to have

1 regulations in place, perhaps, or oversight, it prefers its
2 independence. But is your position that if the -- whether it
3 was Elections Canada or another government agency that
4 required a minimum level of identity verification from each
5 political party, is it your position that the Bloc Québécois
6 would be opposed to such a measure?

7 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** On n'est pas contre
8 toute réglementation, mais on est contre toute... comment je
9 pourrais dire... d'ingérence d'organisations externes dans nos
10 contrôles de notre administration.

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

15 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Comme je vous dis, on
16 n'est pas contre cette possibilité de réglementation là, mais
17 on voudrait faire cette vérification-là nous-mêmes. Donc, on
18 aimerait avoir les ressources, les informations pour nous-
19 mêmes faire les vérifications.

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

24 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Avez-vous un exemple
25 pour préciser votre question?

26 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Absolutely. So, for
27 example, if one political party did not require multi-step
28 verification, let's say, and another did, would it make it

1 more likely, do you agree, that the one political party that
2 doesn't require that kind of verification may be an easier
3 target for FI, and so FI actors could exploit those
4 differences in the rules between political parties?

5 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Bien, en fait, je
6 crois que chaque parti est capable de faire ses propres
7 vérifications. Je comprends qu'il pourrait y avoir des
8 critères différents selon les partis, mais je peux pas parler
9 au nom des autres partis sur si on voudrait avoir toute la
10 même ligne sur nos critères de vérification ou, exemple, nos
11 critères pour être membre du parti, je pense qu'il en revient
12 à l'autonomie des partis de décider ça.

13 Par contre, si jamais il y a une règle qui
14 s'impose et qui dit que... ben, je vais prendre par exemple le
15 financement politique, seuls les citoyens ou résidents
16 permanents canadiens âgés de 18 ans et plus peuvent faire un
17 don. Ça, c'est la même règle pour tout le monde, mais y'a pas
18 un parti qui a les outils pour vérifier ça correctement en ce
19 moment. Donc, même ça, c'est la base puis on l'a pas. Ça fait
20 qu'avant de nous imposer plus de vérifications, je pense
21 qu'il faudrait nous offrir plus de ressources.

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

27 What I didn't see -- and I apologize if it
28 was there -- is what Elections Canada said to you or the

1 reasons they gave you for not giving you that information.

2 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** En fait, les réponses
3 données par Élections Canada sont très minimales. On pense
4 que c'est beaucoup par souci de confidentialité des données
5 puis de respect de la vie privée, qu'on ne veut pas nous
6 donner, par exemple, les dates de naissance puis le sexe des
7 électeurs et électrices du Canada – ou du Québec, dans notre
8 cas –, mais on a fait la suggestion à chaque réunion de
9 comités consultatifs des partis politiques et avec Élections
10 Canada. On leur a demandé de... quand on a abordé les questions
11 de résidents permanents versus citoyens, d'avoir ces listes-
12 là.

13 Donc, pour le moment, la réponse qu'on a eue,
14 c'est « ah, on va vérifier, on va vérifier », ça fait qu'on
15 attend.

16 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** I appreciate the answer and
17 the clarification.

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

22 But you talked about a specific candidate's
23 race where there was a large cultural community that rallied
24 in support of them. And you said that it would be mistaken
25 to assume that simply because there was an influx of
26 volunteers from a particular cultural community that somehow
27 foreign interference was involved.

28 And I think that's a very helpful statement

1 because there's a balance here to be struck between
2 participation of diaspora communities and their protection,
3 on the other hand, as they are more vulnerable to FI actors.

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

11 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est une bonne
12 question. Je ne pense pas, mais dans ce cas précis là que
13 j'avais donné, c'était surtout pour pas... pas tout mêler les
14 choses. Donc, c'est pas parce qu'il y a une diaspora qui
15 s'implique au sein de notre parti qu'ils tentent avec leur
16 pays d'origine de faire de l'ingérence étrangère. Donc,
17 c'était ça mon point dans ce paragraphe-là de l'entrevue.

18 Mais par rapport aux enquêtes sur des
19 personnes qui seraient... tsé, nous, ce qu'on vérifie, c'est
20 pas tant... c'est surtout les comportements et les faits qu'on
21 a à l'interne. Si les autorités, comme la GRC ou le SCRS, eux
22 autres font leurs propres enquêtes sur ces individus-là, donc
23 nous, on ne peut pas remplacer les forces de l'ordre là dans
24 ça.

25 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** No, and I appreciate that.
26 And I didn't mean to suggest that, you know, the Bloc
27 Quebecois had done anything wrong in this instance. What I
28 more wanted to understand is after those briefings, do you

1 feel like you have information as a political Party to be
2 able to identify foreign interference as opposed to
3 participation in -- by a diaspora community? Do you have
4 indicators of what you are looking for that will help you
5 make the distinction so you don't over or under-react in any
6 situation?

7 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Oui. Ben, comme je
8 vous dis, les breffages, les séances d'information qu'on a
9 eus avec les différents groupes ont été pertinents à titre
10 préventif. Je pense que nous, de notre côté, on a apprécié
11 recevoir cette information-là. Et comme je vous dis, nous, on
12 n'en a pas été témoins d'ingérence étrangère, donc, pour
13 nous, ça s'ajoute à un bagage de plus qu'on a reçu pour nous
14 prévenir contre ça, mais on... comme je vous dis, pour nous,
15 c'était bien suffisant.

16 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** I appreciate that.
17 Just turning to my very last set of
18 questions, and this is related specifically to TikTok -- and
19 perhaps I can ask for CAN4358_0001 to be put up.

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

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

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

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

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

6 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** On n'a pas de
7 politiques à l'interne, exemple, pour nos membres ou nos
8 militants, mais pour nos députés et nos employés, c'est une
9 plateforme qu'on n'a pas... on interdit l'accès. On n'utilise
10 pas TikTok pour promouvoir des messages de notre côté.

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

14 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** C'est une bonne
15 question. On pourra vérifier, mais pour le moment, comme je
16 vous dis, c'est juste par rapport à nos députés et ils n'ont
17 pas le droit d'avoir l'application TikTok, sur leur téléphone
18 par exemple, pour toutes les raisons qu'on connaît.

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

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

22 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Pas à ma connaissance,
23 non. Mais pas... pas pour... en tout cas, je veux pas parler au
24 nom de l'aile parlementaire du Bloc Québécois, mais je crois
25 que ça inclut leurs appareils personnels. Ils n'ont pas de
26 comptes TikTok, ils ne l'utilisent pas.

27 **MS. MANI KAKKAR:** Thank you so much. Those
28 are all my questions.

1 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Merci.

2 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Merci.

3 Le prochain participant est Human Right
4 Coalition.

5 Do we have someone? Yes?

6 No questions?

7 Merci. So... alors, le prochain c'est Attorney
8 General. Do you have any questions?

9 **Me HELEN ROBERTSON:** Merci, Madame la
10 Commissaire. Helene Robertson.

11 Non, Maitre Ferguson a passé sur tous les
12 enjeux dont j'avais des questions, alors j'ai de bonnes
13 nouvelles pour vous, pas de questions.

14 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Merci.

15 Maitre Ferguson, réinterrogatoire?

16 **Me MATTHEW FERGUSON:** Non, Madame la
17 Commissaire. Merci.

18 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Alors, merci beaucoup...

19 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Merci à vous.

20 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** ...Monsieur Desquilbet, et
21 vous êtes libre de quitter au moment que vous le souhaitez.

22 **M. MATHIEU DESQUILBET:** Parfait. Merci
23 beaucoup.

24 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Merci bien.

25 Alors, on va suspendre pur le lunch et on va
26 conserver le même horaire parce qu'il y a des témoins qui
27 doivent arriver, alors le retour, même si on finit 10 minutes
28 plus tôt que prévu, on va reprendre à 13 h 45.

1 So, 1:45.

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

4 This sitting of the Commission is now in
5 recess until 1:45 p.m. Cette séance de la commission est
6 maintenant suspendue jusqu'à 13 h 45.

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

8 --- La séance est suspendue à 12 h 13

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

10 --- La séance est reprise à 13h47

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

13 This sitting of the Foreign Interference
14 Commission is now back in session. Cette séance de la
15 Commission sur l'ingérence étrangère est de retour en
16 session.

17 The time is 1:47 p.m. Il est 13 h 47.

18 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Bon après-midi. Alors,
19 peut-être avant de débiter, juste faire une petite mise au
20 point pour le bénéfice non pas des gens dans la salle mais
21 des gens qui nous écoutent. Lorsque c'est le temps des
22 contre-interrogatoires et certains ont peut-être constaté que
23 des participants ne posent aucune question. Il faut
24 simplement savoir que chaque participant est libre de
25 demander ou non du temps pour pouvoir poser des questions.
26 Alors, c'est pas une décision de la Commission d'en écarter
27 certains. C'est vraiment au choix des participants.

28 So maybe I should repeat what I said in

1 French. For those that are maybe wondering, and I'm sure
2 it's nobody in the room are wondering why we are doing it,
3 but when there's some participants that do not ask any
4 questions to a witness, it's their choice because what we do
5 is daily we ask who are the participants that would like to
6 cross-examine a given witness, and sometimes, you know, there
7 is some participants for whatever reason that decide that
8 they don't have any questions to ask. So it's not the
9 Commission's decision. Thank you.

10 So it's for you, Me Krongold.

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

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

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

18 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. Lucy Watson. W-A-T-
19 S-O-N.

20 **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you. Now for the
21 affirmation.

22 **--- LUCY WATSON, Affirmed/Sous affirmation solennelle:**

23 **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you.

24 Counsel, you may proceed.

25 **--- EXAMINATION IN-CHIEF BY/INTERROGATOIRE EN-CHEF PAR**

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:**

27 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Thank you very much.

28 Good afternoon, Ms. Watson.

1 MS. LUCY WATSON:

2 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Do you recall being
3 interviewed by Commission Counsel, along with your colleague,
4 Jesse Calvert on August 27th of this year?

5 MS. LUCY WATSON: I do.

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

10 MS. LUCY WATSON: I have.

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

14 MS. LUCY WATSON: That's correct.

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

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

19 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: And so, with that
20 amendment, are there any other corrections, additions, or
21 deletions that you would want to make to your summary?

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

23 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And do you adopt
24 the contents of this interview summary as part of your
25 evidence before the Commission?

26 MS. LUCY WATSON: I do.

27 --- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. WIT0000087.EN:

28 Interview Summary: New Democratic

1 Party (Lucy Watson and Jesse Calvert)

2 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: The NDP also prepared
3 an institutional report at the request of Commission counsel.
4 Is that correct?

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

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

9 MS. LUCY WATSON: I have.

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

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

15 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Yes.

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

18 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: I believe it's page 6.
19 And we can turn it up, it's around the middle of the page
20 point. If we can keep going down, I believe, it's 3.41(a).
21 There we are.

22 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

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

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

MS. LUCY WATSON: That's right.

MS. LUCY WATSON: I do, yes.

Institutional Report of the New
Democratic Party of Canada.pdf

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. WIT0000087.FR:

--- EXHIBIT No./PIÈCE No. NDP0000001.FR:

1 translation

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

5 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

6 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And I understand
7 you served as the National Campaign Coordinator in the 2015
8 Federal Election?

9 MS. LUCY WATSON: That's correct.

10 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: You were then a Deputy
11 Chief of Staff from 2016 to 2018?

12 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

13 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: You then spent around
14 five years as the provincial director of the Ontario NDP, so
15 the provincial party?

16 MS. LUCY WATSON: I did.

17 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: And you returned to
18 federal politics in January of this year when you assumed
19 your current role?

20 MS. LUCY WATSON: I returned earlier than
21 that. I served as Senior Advisor for a few months before I
22 became the National Director.

23 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: I'm sorry. Thank you
24 for that clarification.

25 I wanted to just begin by asking you
26 generally about the party's views about the foreign
27 interference threat, and in particular, I want to ask you
28 what impact have the foreign interference allegations that

1 were made in the last two elections, an in particular Jenny
2 Kwan's allegations had on the party's approach and views
3 about foreign interference.

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Sure. Well, first I'll
5 start by stating that we do acknowledge that there is a
6 potential for foreign interference in the work of political
7 parties, just given the nature, you know, the fact that we
8 are political parties, that we are active on the political
9 scene. I think that is further compounded by the fact that
10 the NDP, in particular, is a membership driven and volunteer-
11 based organization. That is one of any number of concerns
12 and considerations that we have as a party.

13 I do want to also note that I have no reason
14 to believe that there has been foreign interference within
15 the NDP's internal affairs. That's setting aside, or course,
16 the very serious concerns that MP Kenny Kwan has brought
17 forward. But in terms of the nomination procedures and such
18 that are internal to the NDP, I have no concerns with regard
19 to foreign interference at this juncture.

20 I think it would be fair to say that we now
21 approach our work with an additional lens with regard to
22 foreign interference. Or that lens is one of the potential
23 for foreign interference. So ensuring that, you know, the
24 senior staff in the party are aware that this is an issue
25 they should be alive to. Ensuring that as we're moving
26 through some of our internal processes, we're applying this
27 lens. So for example, when we are engaged in the vetting
28 process of prospective nomination contestants.

1 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** What does the party
2 consider to be the most important vulnerabilities that it
3 faces?

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I think that there is a
5 vulnerability in terms of the financing of political parties.
6 So we are entirely reliant on donations. And I think there
7 is a vulnerability there in that there could be foreign
8 actors who are able to navigate the system in order to make
9 donations, in order to finance the work of political parties.
10 Again, I have no reason to believe that is an issue for the
11 NDP, but I think there is a potential vulnerability there.

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

18 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Yeah. Well, let's talk
19 about the nomination contests. There have been concerns
20 expressed by Canada's security and intelligence community
21 about potential vulnerabilities in political party nomination
22 processes. In terms of eligibility to vote in an NDP
23 nomination contest, one requirement I understand that exists
24 is that the person must of course, be a party member. Is
25 that right?

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

27 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And you alluded
28 to this earlier, but one of the unusual features of the NDP

1 is that membership is usually administered at the provincial
2 or territorial level. Is that correct?

3 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes, that's correct.

4 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Can you -- yeah, please
5 explain.

6 MS. LUCY WATSON: The party's constitution or
7 federal constitution sets out some basic criteria. But it's
8 the provincial constitutions that govern membership in a much
9 more detailed fashion.

10 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Let's talk about
11 some of those criteria that exist nationally and some of the
12 variations that exist as well. First of all, does a person
13 have to be a citizen or permanent resident to become a member
14 of the NDP?

15 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

16 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. In the
17 documentation that the party provided as an appendix to its
18 institutional report, it doesn't appear that all of the
19 provincial parties have a requirement that a person be a
20 permanent resident or a citizen. In fact, most of the
21 constitutions just refer to a person being a resident. And
22 I'm wondering if you can explain that disparity?

23 MS. LUCY WATSON: I cannot. That predates
24 me.

25 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay.

26 MS. LUCY WATSON: But it is understood across
27 the -- throughout the party that citizenship or permanent
28 residency is required. On our website for example, on the

1 federal party's website, we require that an individual who is
2 applying for membership acknowledge that they are either a
3 citizen or permanent resident. And I believe -- I haven't
4 canvassed all the provincial websites -- but I believe that's
5 the case on a number of the other provincial websites.

6 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. So it's not an
7 explicit requirement, but it seems to be sort of, defacto a
8 requirement?

9 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. That's right.

10 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** You mentioned an
11 acknowledgement, what is the form of acknowledgement that a
12 person has to make to being a PR or a citizen?

13 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** It's a check box.

14 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** A check box on ---

15 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We ask -- we ask somebody
16 to make that acknowledgement.

17 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Oaky. Is there any
18 verification of whether a person is in fact a citizen or a
19 PR?

20 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No. We don't seek
21 identification upon registering or applying as a member. We
22 approach nomination meetings differently. There is an
23 additional level of scrutiny that is applied for nomination
24 meetings. So if an individual is eligible to vote in a
25 nomination meeting, they are a member in good standing, they
26 live in the riding, they are asked at a registration desk at
27 a nomination meeting to provide proof of identity.

28 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. So let's turn to

1 that. So when there are in person nomination contests and a
2 person shows up who would otherwise be qualified, what kind
3 of proof do they have to show that they are who they say they
4 are, proof of identification?

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

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

9 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

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

13 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Correct.

14 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. How is the
15 address verified?

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

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

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No, that's produced by
23 Elections Canada.

24 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I see. Okay.

25 And that list would indicate what, exactly?

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

27 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay.

28 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** And what about those

1 that are not appearing on the list?

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

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

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

12 Do they have to show any proof of their
13 identity?

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** What we would have at the
15 nomination meeting registration desk would be a membership
16 list, so a volunteer will welcome the member, take their
17 name, confirm that they appear on the membership list for
18 that particular riding and is therefore eligible to vote in
19 the nomination meeting, and will request a piece of
20 identification.

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

27 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I just want to ask for
28 clarification of something.

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

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

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

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

16 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay.

17 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I couldn't say with
18 absolute certainty that this is approached with consistency,
19 but I think I would feel comfortable saying the vast
20 majority.

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

23 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** EDAs are given guidance on
24 how to process, if you will, members who are attending a
25 nomination meeting, so there is guidance that is provided
26 that is consistent.

27 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And does it mandate
28 that a second piece of identification be required if the

1 address doesn't match?

2 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I would have to go back and
3 confirm that against the instructions that are provided, but
4 it is -- I will also say that Party staff are involved for
5 the most part in nomination meetings, helping with the
6 facilitation of the meeting, and so Party staff understand
7 and know that this is a requirement. So that also -- that's
8 an additional balance in terms of this -- in terms of this
9 process.

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

13 Is there any point where that is verified by
14 the Party?

15 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Citizenship or permanent
16 residence, no, not explicitly.

17 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay.

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

20 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

21 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** --- before being able to
22 vote?

23 How many days?

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, it's 45 days.

25 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Forty-five (45) days.

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** So you have to have applied
27 for membership 45 days prior to the nomination meeting.

28 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

1 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Right. I understand as
2 well that throughout the country, there is a fee that is
3 required to become a Party member?

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There is, yes.

5 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And does the amount
6 vary by region?

7 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** It does. By province, yes.

8 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Fair enough.
9 We don't need to get into all the details of
10 it. I understand federally it's \$10. Is that right?

11 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. Yeah.

12 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** What forms of payment
13 are accepted?

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We accept payment by credit
15 card, and that is limited to Visa, MasterCard, Amex. We
16 accept cash payment, payment by cheque. I think that's the
17 extent of it.

18 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Does the name
19 and address on the credit card that someone uses to pay for
20 their membership have to match the name and address that the
21 person is giving as their -- as their address and identity?

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Currently, our system
23 doesn't allow for us to compare those two pieces of
24 information, so it would only be identified through a manual
25 check.

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Are bulk
27 purchases or bulk memberships allowed?

28 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There's no such thing as

1 bulk memberships. There may be an instance where an
2 individual nomination contestant or leadership contestant
3 goes out and undertakes a membership drive using paper forms,
4 and so might go door to door, might go to an event with a
5 bunch of paper forms and encourages people to sign up for a
6 membership. Those might be submitted by one individual, but
7 I wouldn't consider it -- you know, it's bulk in that there
8 are -- there could potentially be a few membership
9 applications that are being delivered to the Party for
10 processing at one time, but there's -- the only -- the only
11 membership that would possibly fall into the category of bulk
12 membership would actually be a family or a household
13 membership where multiple people who are living in the same
14 house, household, or in the same family can apply for
15 membership as a group. And so that, you know, might be four
16 or five people who are living in one household.

17 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Does the Party have any
18 ways of detecting suspicious activity around new Party
19 memberships or confirming the legitimacy of Party
20 memberships?

21 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We do.
22 In the instance -- maybe just going back to
23 your question around bulk memberships, in the event we
24 received a volume of paper memberships, which doesn't happen
25 frequently at all, but if we received a high volume of paper
26 memberships, we do have the ability and we have undertaken
27 spot checks of those memberships to confirm that the
28 individual application was, in fact, submitted by the

1 individual who's named on the form, that they did intend to
2 sign up for membership in the Party, and that it is -- that
3 they did make payment for the membership.

4 So we will undertake a review of those
5 memberships.

6 And then in terms of memberships that may
7 come in online, we do have the ability to flag repeated use
8 of one credit card, for example. So if one card is being
9 used to pay for multiple memberships, that will be noted in
10 the system.

11 We also receive daily reports on our
12 membership signups and our membership numbers, so if there
13 were a spike in memberships, it would be immediately evident
14 to us that there was some activity happening in a particular
15 riding and would prompt a conversation, an internal
16 conversation about what the nature of that activity was.

17 So it could well be somebody who's preparing
18 for a nomination race, in which case we would -- it would be
19 easily explainable. But if we weren't, you know, able to
20 understand what that activity was, we would look into it
21 further.

22 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And by "look into it
23 further", what kind of checks or inquiries might you do in
24 this instance?

25 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** It could involve
26 conversation with the organizer or the staff person who's on
27 the ground who might have greater familiarity with activity
28 in the region, but it might also include reaching out to the

1 folks who had signed up to ask them whether or not they did,
2 in fact, sign up for membership in the Party and confirming
3 that they had made payment from their personal funds.

4 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Are there any ways of
5 detecting suspicious activity around cash memberships?

6 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That would be the spot
7 check that I just referenced in terms of the larger volume of
8 membership applications, and that is simply a matter of
9 contacting the folks who have submitted an application form
10 with a cash payment and asking for them to confirm that they
11 did indeed make that payment and that they are in fact the
12 person who had submitted the application form.

13 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And who does these
14 checks? Is it the federal party or is it the provincial or
15 regional party that typically is accepting the actual
16 memberships?

17 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** It varies. It varies. So
18 in some instances, it might be easier to deliver membership
19 forms to a provincial office. In others, it might be simpler
20 just to deliver them to the federal office. So it depends in
21 part on who has the resources to undertake the spot check.
22 It depends on whether or not it's a federal nomination or a
23 provincial nomination in terms of who is primarily
24 responsible for undertaking that work. And it will be staff
25 of the party.

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And when you
27 talk about transactions or memberships being flagged and
28 these discussions occurring and maybe some investigations

1 taking place, are there protocols or rules about it, or is it
2 a discretionary decision?

3 MS. LUCY WATSON: I don't know -- I have not
4 undertaken this process since I became the national director.
5 When I was the provincial director in Ontario, we did have a
6 set protocol that we followed when we were undertaking this
7 type of check.

8 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And are you
9 aware of -- is there -- is there a federal -- at the federal
10 level, is there a protocol?

11 MS. LUCY WATSON: I don't know that there's
12 anything that is -- I haven't come across anything, but
13 again, it hasn't been an issue in the number of months that
14 I've been the national director.

15 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay.

16 MS. LUCY WATSON: But I think, you know,
17 there are staff who have undertaken this work in the past,
18 and so, you know, they would lead the process to ensure that
19 it was consistent and that we were, you know, approaching it
20 with the degree of, frankly, sensitivity that it needs to be
21 approached with.

22 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. I'm just
23 wondering, if there's no sort of nationwide set of protocols
24 for all branches of the party, can you -- is it possible that
25 there are different levels of scrutiny, different triggers,
26 different knowledge level in the folks who are doing this
27 kind of investigation or looking at these sorts of issues
28 from region to region?

1 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** You know, yes, because
2 people are just human, but it's -- to be really clear, there
3 would be a significant number of conversations. There would
4 be a lot of communication happening about this if it were the
5 case that a volume of membership applications were submitted
6 and needed to be -- and obviously warranted a check. There
7 would be conversations that were happening amongst folks in
8 the federal party office and in a provincial office.

9 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** All right. And just to
10 turn to a slightly different area, which is donations to the
11 party, are there any differences in the way that the party
12 receives and processes donations, as opposed to membership
13 fees?

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Any difference in terms of
15 just the straight up processing?

16 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Yeah.

17 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No. The only difference is
18 that a membership fee would be coded differently at the
19 backend for the accounting staff so that we can appropriately
20 track membership fees versus donations. But I think that
21 would be the only distinction.

22 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And in terms of
23 whether the party has any ways of detecting suspicious
24 contributions to the party, are there any differences in that
25 respect? Does the party have ways of detecting suspicious
26 donations?

27 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Again, if one credit card
28 was being used to make multiple donations in different

1 people's names, that would be flagged. We only accept Visa,
2 Mastercard, Amex, and obviously all of those credit card
3 companies have their own internal checks against fraud.

4 We receive a daily report about donations,
5 similar to the membership report. We receive a daily
6 donation report. And so if there were spikes in donations,
7 if there was a spike in the number of max donations that the
8 party was receiving, that would be identified within 24
9 hours.

10 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And if there
11 were any sort of flags or checks on donations, again, they
12 may be dealt with at the federal level, they may be dealt
13 with at the provincial/regional level? Is that right?

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Any donations to the
15 federal party flow through the federal party's
16 infrastructure.

17 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Right. Okay.

18 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** So the provincial parties
19 have their own infrastructure and process donations
20 provincially.

21 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** All right. Okay.

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** So it would only be those
23 that were flowing to the federal party.

24 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Just to briefly
25 -- we'll get back. We've spoken about membership now and
26 then we can come back -- or sorry, there's one other aspect
27 of membership to speak about, which was alluded to earlier,
28 which is the age requirement. And without getting into all

1 the detail, the upshot of it is that the minimum age to vote
2 in an NDP nomination contest is either 12, 13, or 14,
3 depending on the region you're in.

4 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

5 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Is that essentially
6 correct?

7 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

8 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. And there's more
9 detail in the interview summary, but I won't trouble everyone
10 with those fine points.

11 We've already spoken a little about the
12 voting process for in-person nomination contests.

13 MS. LUCY WATSON: M'hm.

14 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: I understand the NDP
15 also allows virtual nomination meetings. Is that right?

16 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes. That was obviously
17 more prevalent during covid. During this cycle, I can't say
18 with absolute certainty whether or not there's been a virtual
19 -- I think there has been one virtual nomination meeting that
20 I can think of, but the vast majority are in person.

21 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Let me see if I
22 can summarize this accurately. When there's a virtual
23 nomination meeting, there's no check of a person's
24 identification? Is that correct?

25 MS. LUCY WATSON: Like, form of ID?

26 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Yeah.

27 MS. LUCY WATSON: Correct.

28 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay.

1 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That is my understanding.

2 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And the way that you --
3 the measure that you take to get the electronic ballot to the
4 right person is you send it to the email address that's on
5 file with the party for that person? Is that correct?

6 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, and we use a third-
7 party voting system. So it's removed from the party staff.
8 We use an external vendor to support that work.

9 Maybe just to back up a second. So in order
10 to be eligible to vote in a nomination meeting, one has to
11 meet all of the membership criteria. One has to have
12 registered or applied to be a member 45 days in advance of
13 the nomination meeting. The nomination contestants then have
14 the ability to review all of the memberships that have --
15 that are active within the riding and are folks who are
16 eligible to vote in the nomination meeting. So there's a
17 level of scrutiny that is applied by all of the nomination
18 contestants. I think I go into detail in my submissions, but
19 there is a process through which they can appeal names that
20 appear, members that appear on that list, and then there's a
21 process by which I have to consider those appeals and make a
22 decision as to whether or not the membership is valid.

23 The -- we then provide that list and the
24 contact information to the external vendor, who is then
25 responsible for ensuring that the folks on the membership
26 list receive -- I think they get a code. They have to use
27 the code in order to log in in order to cast their ballot.

28 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Let me just give

1 you a scenario though. In a virtual nomination contest,
2 someone goes on the website, they sign up, they give a name,
3 they give an address and the riding, they give an email
4 address. Would it not be the case that they might well be
5 able to cast a ballot without ever having to show proof of
6 their identity or their residency, obviously beyond their own
7 say so?

8 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There is a possibility,
9 yes.

10 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Do you think that that
11 is something of a vulnerability in the NDP's nomination
12 processes?

13 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do think it is a
14 vulnerability. But again, we -- the vast majority of our
15 nomination meetings are held in person. The membership lists
16 are scrutinized by the nomination contestants. The
17 nomination contestants, for the most part, reach out to
18 people who appear on that membership list in order to solicit
19 their support for their candidacy. Party staff interact with
20 the members who appear on the membership list. So while we
21 may not currently require a form of government ID to support
22 that application, there are a number of other touch points
23 that I think guard against the possibility of there being
24 foreign interference in that regard.

25 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. I want to turn
26 to the vetting of nomination contestants. I understand that
27 the NDP does vet nomination contestants; is that right?

28 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We do.

1 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And whose
2 responsibility is that ultimately?

3 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Well, it's the
4 responsibility of the federal party. We have a staff team
5 who are dedicated to undertaking this work. The applicant,
6 the nomination -- the potential nomination contestant will
7 submit paper -- we have a form that they are required to
8 complete. They submit that information to the team of
9 vetters, and the vetters review the information they've been
10 provided. They also look at a number of other sources, and
11 they then make a recommendation as to whether or not the
12 individual should be approved to seek the nomination or not
13 approved.

14 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Does the party do
15 anything to scrutinize potential nomination candidates --
16 I've got that right -- for foreign interference
17 vulnerability? And whether that means concerns that the
18 person is a witting or unwitting proxy or that they might be
19 vulnerable to foreign interference.

20 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, we do.

21 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And how does the
22 party do that?

23 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There are a number of
24 questions on the questionnaire that provide some insight,
25 including questions around political activity, involvement in
26 clubs, associations, and if it's the case that we think that
27 there has -- that there is a potential, we follow up with an
28 interview. So we'll have one of our staff spend time

1 speaking with the person and exploring some of those issues
2 and concerns with them directly.

3 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I understand that over
4 the last several years the party has had various interactions
5 with government security and intelligence agencies, SITE
6 being the most obvious one. I'm wondering if the party's
7 been provided any training or training resources by
8 government to help the party in that vetting process?

9 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There was a memo, a manual
10 that was provided through Minister Leblanc's office, and I'm
11 just trying to think if it included guidance in this regard.
12 I don't recall, but, no, not in any of the interactions that
13 I've had with the SITE Task Force have we been provided with
14 guidance or best practices in terms of the vetting process.

15 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Would more resources or
16 training in that area assist the party in vetting candidates?

17 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, that would be helpful.

18 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Just one final
19 point, so I understand that the end result of the vetting
20 process is a potential nomination candidate gets a sort of
21 thumbs up or thumbs down. If the person gets a thumbs up,
22 until what point can the party withdraw its approval for the
23 nomination candidate?

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** At any point in the
25 process.

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I want to turn briefly
27 to leadership contests in the NDP, if I could. I understand
28 that there are no sort of standing leadership contest rules;

1 is that right? They're drafted *ad hoc*?

2 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, that's correct. For
3 every -- in advance of a leadership contest, rules are
4 drafted and are taken to the Federal Council for review and
5 adoption.

6 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And I understand
7 -- is it right that in the -- well, the last NDP leadership
8 contest was 2017?

9 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** M'hm.

10 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And what form of
11 voting occurred in that contest?

12 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I believe it was all
13 online.

14 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Do you know what
15 kind of identity verification occurred in that leadership
16 contest?

17 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Could not speak to that.

18 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Has the party
19 given any thought to how concerns about foreign interference
20 might impact the rules in the next leadership context,
21 whenever that should occur?

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, that will be a factor.
23 We have not -- we do not anticipate a leadership race anytime
24 soon, but when it is time, in the very distant future, we
25 will add that as one of the considerations.

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Fair enough. One
27 question around that, has the party historically done vetting
28 of leadership candidates?

1 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I can't speak to previous
2 leadership contests. I believe there was a vetting process
3 of sorts for the 2017 leadership contest, but I couldn't say
4 with absolute certainty.

5 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Is that
6 something the party will consider implementing or
7 strengthening in the future?

8 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, absolutely.

9 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** All right. Are there
10 any resources that would assist the party, again, when the
11 time comes in the future to ensure that its leadership
12 processes are secure?

13 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I think, you know, we've --
14 we heard a bit this morning about resources. The reality is
15 that all of these exercises are resource intensive, so the
16 reality is that finances are an issue. I think it would also
17 be instructive and helpful to have guidance, guidelines, best
18 practices, especially from those who are experts in the
19 field, who understand the ways in which foreign interference
20 could come into play within the context of a leadership race.
21 Recommendations as to how to guard against that would also be
22 very welcome.

23 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I want to turn to cyber
24 security. I understand that the party has taken steps to
25 strengthen its IT infrastructure, and I'm hesitant to go into
26 too much detail because I'm not a ---

27 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I'm hesitant to answer.

28 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** --- technical expert.

1 You know, fair enough. We're in the same boat. I appreciate
2 that.

3 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Someone said yesterday
4 that you should call your kids.

5 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Maybe too much eye
6 rolling if I do that, but as I understand from the interview
7 summary, and this information may have come from Mr. Calvert
8 who's a little more informed and maybe a little younger than
9 I am as well, that some of the changes to the NDP IT
10 infrastructure have included a robust firewall, a whitelist
11 system, which is described in the interview summary, and
12 constant monitoring of the network; is that right?

13 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That's right. We also work
14 with an external consultant who works very closely with a
15 team to ensure that we are applying best practices. We have
16 somebody who's on staff full time who is responsible for this
17 work. And then, obviously, there are other members on staff
18 who know a lot more than I do about these matters, but the
19 consultant that we work with is quite reputable, reliable,
20 and has been -- has provided some helpful guidance in this
21 regard.

22 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Has the party
23 had contact with the Cyber Centre?

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

25 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And has the
26 Cyber Centre been helpful in its dealings with the party?

27 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I haven't had direct
28 contact with the Centre. Jesse Calvert, National Deputy

1 Director, has been in contact with them. I think in some
2 ways it has been helpful around very specific issues, but
3 more generally, I think it has not been a great source of
4 support or advice.

5 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Are there
6 further measures that the Cyber Centre has recommended or
7 suggested might be things that the party could explore that
8 the party has not explored?

9 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Not to my knowledge.

10 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Is -- in your
11 view, does the party have the resources to sufficiently
12 safeguard its electronic infrastructure?

13 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** While I'm confident in the
14 safeguards that we have in place currently, I think I am also
15 keenly aware that this is a fast-moving issue, if you will,
16 and, no, I don't have confidence, frankly, that the party or
17 parties have sufficient resources to meet the challenges that
18 are in the future. And I think, you know, that's something
19 that I speak to in -- we speak to in the interview, that
20 there should be some consideration to supporting the
21 political parties and enhancing and bolstering their security
22 when it comes to our online activities.

23 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And does that mean more
24 advice, more manuals, or money, or what are we talking about?

25 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** All of the above.

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I want to turn to a
27 slightly different topic still in this domain. Candidates
28 and campaign staff, where do they get their devices, like,

1 their cell phones, their computers, their laptops that
2 they're using to engage in campaigning and fundraising during
3 an election campaign?

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** So individual candidates
5 and their campaign team specifically?

6 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Yeah.

7 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** They are primarily
8 responsible for sourcing their equipment. In some instances,
9 they rent the equipment. In other, I'm sure, that people are
10 using their personal equipment.

11 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Do candidates
12 and campaign staff receive the same level of protection from
13 cyber intrusion that the NDP's internal systems have?

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No. There are -- you know,
15 candidates are provided with a Party email, and so that Party
16 email would be protected in the same way that, say, my Party
17 email is protected, so it's sort of, you know, in some
18 respects no, but in others where they have an email address
19 that is owned and administered by the Party, they would
20 benefit from those same protections.

21 But I would say that it is uneven.

22 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Like features
23 like -- and again, we may not -- I don't -- maybe you don't
24 know exactly what these mean, but things like a robust
25 firewall, a whitelist system, the constant monitoring that
26 the Party has are not offered by the Party to candidates and
27 campaign staff. Is that fair?

28 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That is fair.

1 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. We've heard some
2 evidence this week that MPs will sometimes maintain a
3 personal device that they will only use for their campaign
4 work or fundraising, right, so work outside their duties as
5 MPs. And it's really the same question. Does the Party
6 offer to MPs for their personal devices that are used for
7 campaigning the same protections that the NDP's internal
8 systems have, or are they in the same boat as every other
9 candidate?

10 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Not to my knowledge, no.
11 Now, those MPs or incumbents would be using a
12 Party email address and, you know, we host web pages on the
13 Party site, so those channels would be protected in a way
14 that the Party's central channels, if you will, are
15 protected.

16 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** But the devices
17 themselves are essentially up to the MP to procure and
18 protect and ---

19 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah. We don't provide
20 those.

21 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Does the Party
22 offer advice or IT support for MPs' or candidates' personal
23 devices?

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We do provide guidance to
25 candidates and their campaign managers or campaign teams
26 about best practices, yes. And of course, if we had a
27 candidate contact us and say that they'd encountered an
28 issue, we would work with them to resolve it.

1 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** We imagine a scenario
2 where we have a foreign actor who accesses a candidate's, you
3 know, personal device that's being used for campaigning and
4 fundraising that may contain very personal, maybe
5 embarrassing, private information about that person. Do you
6 agree that that is a potential vulnerability in the system?

7 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do.

8 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I want to turn to
9 disinformation.

10 Do you think there's a risk of foreign
11 interference occurring through disinformation campaigns?

12 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do, very much so. And in
13 fact, just thinking back to your -- one of your earlier
14 questions about those areas in which -- those areas I would
15 identify as being most vulnerable, this is one. And I
16 neglected to mention that, but this is most certainly one.

17 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And has the
18 Party experienced disinformation that it believes may be from
19 a foreign source?

20 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

21 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. Do you want to
22 elaborate on that at all?

23 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** My only -- my only
24 hesitation there is I am not equipped to investigate, so I
25 can only -- I can only draw certain conclusions based on the
26 information that we have. But yeah, we've seen, you know,
27 bots, we've seen fake accounts. We've -- you know, all of
28 the things that are delineated in various documents that have

1 been put before this Commission, we've experienced all of
2 those on our Party accounts and on our leader's account.

3 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And in terms of the
4 Party's own beliefs or suspicions, do you believe they're
5 coming from domestic sources, other political Parties, that
6 sort of thing?

7 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No, I suspect it's external
8 and it's foreign actors.

9 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** What mechanisms exist -
10 - well, let's start with within the Party to say track and
11 respond to disinformation?

12 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** It's all done on a case-by-
13 case basis. We don't have the resources to be tracking this
14 in any systematic way, so you know, our -- members of our
15 staff will identify posts that they have come across or that
16 have been forwarded to them or they'll notice that there is
17 really unusual activity that's happening on a -- on one of
18 our posts. They'll identify it. We will report it out to
19 the SITE Task Force and we will also connect -- contact, if
20 we have a contact, whichever social media channel has been --
21 is involved, so for example, Meta.

22 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And how effective are
23 the complaints to, for example, Meta?

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Mixed results, I would say.
25 The response has -- the response time has been very -- has
26 really lagged, has been really slow.

27 I will say that I think it's picked up over
28 the last couple of months in terms of how quickly we're

1 hearing back from them, but it can take anywhere from five to
2 10 days to receive a response and to know that action has
3 been taken in response to a complaint that we have submitted
4 to them.

5 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. In addition to -
6 - I guess I should say, so Meta, as I understand it, is the
7 parent company for Facebook and Instagram.

8 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah.

9 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Are there other social
10 media platforms where the Party has identified
11 disinformation?

12 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Certainly X, or Twitter.

13 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And how
14 responsive has X been to complaints?

15 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** They could only be
16 responsive if we could contact them. We don't have a contact
17 name, so not responsive.

18 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Very lawyerly point,
19 but a fair one.

20 Have you gotten any help from government? I
21 know you said you reported your concerns to SITE. Maybe you
22 can expand on that and let us know kind of what kind of
23 response you were able to get.

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Sure. We've reported it
25 out to SITE and, again, I would say that the response varies
26 in terms of how much information is provided back to us about
27 what action has been taken and what the outcome is.

28 We also sought a meeting with the SITE Task

1 Force about this issue. I don't remember when it was. I'm
2 sure I say that -- I must mention it somewhere in my
3 documents, but fairly recently we sought out a meeting with
4 the SITE Task Force to address this issue very specifically.
5 And I will say it was helpful in that it was an opportunity
6 to connect with a number of folks who were involved in the
7 task force, but the feedback or the advice that we received
8 was really, really basic and didn't speak to the specific
9 issues that we were seeing and experiencing with regard to
10 bots, et cetera.

11 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Do you have any
12 opinions or recommendations on the role of government in
13 countering mis and disinformation?

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do make some -- we do
15 make some recommendations in my submission.

16 I think that we would -- we would certainly
17 recommend that government regulate -- and I think this is a
18 proposal that has been put forward, but that government
19 should regulate social media companies. Specifically, we
20 have called for the creation of an independent social media
21 watchdog for legislation to bring greater transparency to
22 social media companies' algorithms.

23 We also, you know, make recommendations in
24 terms of just greater support for cyber security, which I
25 know isn't necessarily the same thing, but it is connected.

26 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I want to ask you
27 briefly about what resources the Party provides to various
28 folks involved in the Party processes. So for example, what

1 kind of resources or training is provided in relation to
2 foreign interference, of course, to candidates?

3 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** None to date that I could -
4 - that I could identify, but we are in the process of
5 developing a manual that will be provided to campaign staff,
6 both central campaign staff and the local campaign staff.
7 There will be -- as part of that manual will include how to
8 identify and respond to foreign interference.

9 It's my hope that the recommendations that
10 come out of this Commission's work, recommendations that
11 maybe flow from Elections Canada will inform the content of
12 that section of the manual. And we've had discussions about
13 providing training to candidates.

14 Again, we are certainly -- we are not experts
15 on this matter, so I would be looking to the Commission, to
16 Elections Canada, maybe the SITE Task Force for guidance, in
17 terms of what we should be bringing to our candidates and how
18 we should be training them on this.

19 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And just to square the
20 circle on that, so at present when we talk about campaign
21 staff, they're also not receiving any resources about foreign
22 interference at this time.

23 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Correct.

24 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** The plan is to get ---

25 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** But we really don't have a
26 lot of campaign staff right now because we're, you know, not
27 into the -- not fully into the cycle. So -- but that's
28 correct.

1 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** I want to talk briefly
2 about the mechanisms available to the party to respond to
3 foreign interference if an allegation arose. So essentially,
4 how would the party respond if it received information that
5 -- let's start with a candidate may be involved in foreign
6 interference activities?

7 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** That would be escalated to
8 me.

9 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. And what --
10 again, I'm sure it's fact-specific, but what kinds of steps
11 might you take? What tools do you have available to you to
12 address an allegation of foreign interference? Again, I
13 guess it could be from or against a candidate.

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Right. It's not something
15 that I have had to undertake; at this point this is all a bit
16 theoretical. But I would certainly speak with the individual
17 in question, and I would more than likely seek the support of
18 the SITE Task Force, in terms of determining how best to
19 approach the situation.

20 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Right. Sitting here
21 today, do you feel like you have the expertise or training to
22 know how to address ---

23 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

24 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** --- a problem like
25 that?

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

27 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And similar questions
28 if I were to ask you about, you know, campaign staff or party

1 staff. Again, we know you have access to the SITE Task
2 Force, do you feel that you have the training and expertise
3 to address problems if they came up with those folks,
4 campaign workers, party staff?

5 MS. LUCY WATSON: No.

6 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay.

7 MS. LUCY WATSON: No. That's something that
8 I hope comes out of the work of this Commission.

9 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Just very briefly, to
10 turn to SITE and the briefings that have been provided.
11 First of all, in fairness to you, I understand you don't have
12 security clearance quite yet, and you have never attended any
13 classified briefings, but you're aware of Mr. Calvert's view,
14 if I can -- tell me if this is correct -- that the SITE
15 briefings, generally speaking, have been useful for building
16 a relationship with the S&I community, but the briefings
17 themselves have not provided a lot of useful information?

18 MS. LUCY WATSON: That's my understanding,
19 yes.

20 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: I understand as well
21 that there was a SITE briefing offered in 2024 in relation to
22 the Durham byelection, and the NDP was the only party that
23 attended that briefing. Do you have any information about
24 that?

25 MS. LUCY WATSON: I couldn't speak to whether
26 or not other parties attended. I do know that we had a
27 representative that attended that briefing.

28 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. Just very

1 briefly, EDAs, Electoral District Associations; we call them
2 riding association?

3 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yeah, yeah.

4 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Okay. So there have
5 been some allegations that there might be vulnerabilities in
6 riding associations, specifically the foreign entities could
7 attempt to influence or gain control of an EDA's board, okay?

8 I want to ask you first of all about the role
9 that EDAs play in the NDP. Do they play an important role in
10 the NDP's internal processes?

11 MS. LUCY WATSON: They do. They drive a lot
12 of the work of the party. So riding associations are -- have
13 a number of roles. They can -- they select folks to attend
14 our conventions; they are, in many instances, responsible for
15 overseeing candidates' search work; for helping to facilitate
16 nomination meetings; for recruiting members; for engaging
17 folks in the riding on issues, campaigns that the NDP is
18 undertaking; feeding back information and reflections on what
19 they're hearing locally to the governing bodies of the party.

20 Probably there are a number of other
21 responsibilities that fall to them, but those are some ---

22 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Do they also propose
23 policy resolutions ---

24 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yeah.

25 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: --- that then get voted
26 on ---

27 MS. LUCY WATSON: They do.

28 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: --- in national

1 convention?

2 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. Or they can.

3 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** And that's important
4 because that obviously affects the image of the party, but
5 also can actually affect the platform of the party.

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

7 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. If concerns
8 arose about either a member of a EDA or a whole EDA board, in
9 terms of there being foreign influence or foreign
10 interference with respect to it, is there anything the party
11 can do to address that?

12 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. If that was a concern
13 -- and I will say again that that is not something that has
14 been a concern to date, or an issue that has been raised with
15 us to date -- the National Director or the table officers,
16 the executive, would have a responsibility to take action to
17 address the concerns.

18 You know, really the issues that come to me
19 as the National Director are more about interpersonal
20 relationships and politics and dynamics, but you know, we --
21 I certainly have the authority, as do the table officers and
22 executive to take action if there were serious concerns of
23 this nature.

24 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Okay. That's all my
25 time. Thank you very much.

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Thank you.

27 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thank you. So the first
28 one will be counsel for the Concern Group.

(SHORT PAUSE/COURTE PAUSE)

--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY/CONTRE-INTERROGATOIRE PAR

MR. NEIL CHANTLER:

MR. NEIL CHANTLER: Good afternoon.

MS. LUCY WATSON: Good afternoon.

MR. NEIL CHANTLER: My name's Neil Chantler;
I'm counsel for the Chinese Canadian Concern Group.

We've heard lots of evidence at this Inquiry
that foreign interference comes in many different forms, but
one of the most insidious of those forms is perhaps efforts
or the manipulation of our contests for riding nominees and
perhaps leaders in a party by a foreign state. Do you accept
that the political parties and their executives have a
gatekeeper role to play with that type of interference.

MS. LUCY WATSON: How would you define
"Gatekeeper" in that context?

MR. NEIL CHANTLER: Ensuring that your
membership base are, in fact, meeting the criteria that have
been established for membership in the party, the rules are
being followed, and so on.

MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes, we have a
responsibility.

MR. NEIL CHANTLER: And we've been over today
some of the rules that the NDP requires for membership,
including an individual provide their address; attest to
their citizenship or PR status; provide contact information,
and attest that the membership fees that they're paying come
from their own source of funds.

1 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

2 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Correct? And people are
3 expected to be honest when they provide this information.

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes.

5 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Essentially we're working
6 with an honour system; correct?

7 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** To a large extent, yes.

8 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** And what are the
9 consequences of not being honest? Is it simply removal from
10 the party?

11 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, at this point, yes.

12 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** And do you agree with the
13 general proposition that bad actors, agents from foreign
14 states, for example, who might be trying to join the party
15 for malign purposes, are not going to be dissuaded from
16 providing false information on an application form by those
17 kinds of consequences?

18 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I don't disagree with that.

19 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** And a malign actor might
20 join a party for a variety of different reasons, but one
21 point at which foreign interference might occur is, of
22 course, voting; voting at a riding nomination contest or at a
23 party leadership convention.

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

25 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** And I'll paint a bit of a
26 hypothetical example for you and reflect it upon the NDP's
27 current rules. And it's a hypothetical but it's very much,
28 as they say in the movies, based on a true story, okay?

1 And the story, we can imagine a riding
2 nomination contest in which a foreign state takes an
3 interest, perhaps because a candidate for the nomination is
4 friendly to that state, or in some way coöpted by that state.
5 And let's just say there are a number of students who are in
6 a neighbouring riding who might be under the manipulation or
7 control of that foreign state and may be under some pressure
8 to obey commands or orders or threats from the consulate of
9 their home country, to participate in this behaviour, or
10 risk, perhaps, their stay in Canada. And because of that,
11 the state's malintent, these students have been encouraged to
12 sign up on your online membership form 45 days in advance.
13 And they've provided their required information, although the
14 acquired information is inaccurate. There's no real
15 consequences to providing a false address, for example.

16 And it doesn't really matter how they pay for
17 their membership, because the party's system doesn't allow
18 cross-checking between the address and the payment, you've
19 given evidence today.

20 There's no red flags here. They've applied
21 online. There hasn't been a stack of papers. You testified
22 that might be a red flag. And it's a riding nomination
23 contest, so there's going to be a spike in applications for
24 party membership; right? That's not going to be a red flag.

25 So so far, the party has no ability to detect
26 this behaviour at all. And then when the individuals arrive
27 on voting day, and they've ben provided with, let's say, a
28 piece of mail, perhaps a fraudulent piece of mail that has an

1 address on it, within the riding that matches the address
2 that they falsely attested was their address when they signed
3 up online.

4 In those circumstances, they would freely be
5 permitted to vote in that riding contest; correct?

6 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** There's also an additional
7 layer of scrutiny that's supplied by the nomination
8 contestants. So once that 45-day window has closed, the
9 party then generates the membership list, the updated
10 membership list, generates that, provides it to all of the
11 nomination contestants who scrutinize it.

12 So what I would say is that -- and this is
13 not at all to say that there isn't, you know, the possibility
14 for someone to, you know, thwart the system, if you were, in
15 the way that you have described. But the very fact that
16 nomination contestants have the ability to scrutinize the
17 membership list means that there are folks who are within the
18 riding, within the community, who have contacts, who know the
19 membership, it gives them the ability to identify any issues
20 or red flags. And that does happen. There are nomination
21 contestants who challenge members on the list and it triggers
22 an investigation into that individual's membership and
23 whether or not they are in fact a member, or eligible to be a
24 member, or eligible to be voting in the nomination meeting.

25 So I would add that piece of information in
26 terms of the process that we follow.

27 And then there's the -- there's also the
28 riding association itself. The reality is, is that we are a

1 pretty close-knit party and our riding association executive
2 members and members generally have a very good understanding
3 of who is engaged with the party, whether new or, you know,
4 longstanding members.

5 And so -- and again, that's not say that
6 there isn't the possibility, but I would say that given the
7 nature of the NDP, the close sort of connections and
8 relationships that folks have within a particular riding,
9 there would be red flags in this instance. If there were
10 folks who showed up out of nowhere, there was a mass sign up
11 of members, there would be folks within the riding
12 association and/or folks who were nomination contestants
13 would more than likely raise a flag about that.

14 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Would you agree that it
15 would be relatively easy to add some basic layers of
16 protection to this system to further enhance the reliability
17 of the information that you're getting from applicants for
18 membership? Some degree of verifying an address, requiring a
19 government ID in order to vote, for example, and not relying
20 on a piece of mail, requiring source of funds or member
21 addresses to be verified in other ways? Would you agree
22 there are other layers of protection that could be added into
23 this system?

24 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do. We do ask for
25 government ID though at nomination -- at in-person nomination
26 meetings. It's only in the event the address doesn't match
27 the one that we have on file that we seek additional
28 confirmation like a utility bill.

1 I would say that -- so yes, I think there are
2 other measures that one could certainly identify would be
3 helpful.

4 I think my caution around that is that many
5 of those would come at great expense. You know, there might
6 be -- if we are looking for confirmation of identity by way
7 of a piece of government ID when an individual applies for
8 membership online, that's -- a completely different platform
9 would be required in order to allow for that check at that
10 point of membership application.

11 I think there's any number of best practices
12 or guidance that could be provided to parties to support them
13 in instituting best practices where appropriate and as
14 feasible.

15 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Is some of the reluctance
16 to add additional layers of protection since that your party
17 might be disadvantaged, as compared to other parties? And if
18 so, would it be easier if all parties were provided with
19 appropriate regulations in this area that levelled the
20 playing field?

21 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I think we would be
22 disadvantaged in terms of our resources. Yes. I think if
23 there were to be recommendations for political parties, those
24 recommendations would have to take into account I think the
25 unevenness or the, you know, the disparities between the
26 political parties in terms of the resources that we can
27 commit to this.

28 **MR. NEIL CHANTLER:** Thank you.

1 MS. LUCY WATSON: Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER HOGUE: Thank you.

3 Human Rights Coalition. Do you have any
4 questions? No questions?

5 The RCDA?

6 --- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY/CONTRE-INTERROGATOIRE PAR

7 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:

8 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: Good afternoon.

9 MS. LUCY WATSON: Hello.

10 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: Guillaume Sirois for
11 the Russian-Canadian Democratic Alliance.

12 I would like to ask the Court Reporter to
13 pull your witness summary. It's WIT87. Thank you.

14 I will zero in on the disinformation issue,
15 which is obviously of great concern for the Russian diaspora.

16 I'll go at paragraph 79, please.

17 Yes, at paragraph 79, you talk about two
18 categories of misinformation or disinformation. The first
19 one is fraudsters that use Jagmeet Singh's name because he is
20 a well-known public figure, and mis or disinformation about
21 Mr. Singh. An example of the latter are fake news stories
22 about Mr. Singh.

23 "The NDP has seen "articles" that
24 look like they are by the Toronto
25 Star, with false and inflammatory
26 headlines. These "articles" are
27 placed as advertisements on social
28 media."

1 I'm wondering if you've ever reported these articles to the
2 Commissioner of Canada Elections?

3 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We have reported them to --
4 we've provided these articles to the SITE Task Force and we
5 have reported them to Meta.

6 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. But not to the
7 Commissioner of Canada Elections?

8 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

9 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. And what was
10 the SITE's response to these articles?

11 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** They acknowledged receipt
12 and that was essentially the communication.

13 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Do you find this
14 satisfactory?

15 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

16 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Earlier this week, Mr.
17 Singh was heckled by demonstrators a few blocks away. One of
18 them apparently called him a corrupted bastard. Do you
19 believe that online rhetoric such as the one that's mentioned
20 in your summary could lead to real life violence or threats
21 against MPs or leaders of political parties?

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. Without question.

23 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Do you believe that
24 this may have an impact on their work as MPs or political
25 leaders?

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Without question.

27 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And you believe that
28 those articles or advertisements are foreign interference.

1 That's paragraph 81 that we see on the screen as well. Can
2 you please explain why it's not domestic in nature and why
3 you believe it's foreign interference?

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, again, we obviously
5 don't have the ability to investigate in any way, but I -- we
6 have no reason to believe that this is -- these are other
7 political parties in Canada who are engaging in this
8 activity. And we have not received any information from the
9 SITE Task Force that would lead us to believe these are other
10 domestic political parties who are engaging in this activity.

11 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** M'hm. And you also
12 mention at paragraph 80 that:

13 "The party has also seen activity on
14 party social media accounts where
15 thousands of fake accounts "follow"
16 us, but due to the fact that they are
17 fake, they don't actually engage with
18 our content, which has the effect of
19 suppressing the party's reach and
20 engagement globally"

21 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** M'hm.

22 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** I'm not sure I really
23 understand that sentence or that paragraph. What does it
24 mean that when fake accounts follow the NDP?

25 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** So it might be follows, or
26 it might be comments after social media posts. So the
27 follows, as I understand it, and I am not an expert on social
28 media or social media account management, but it has the

1 effect of artificially ballooning the number of followers of
2 our accounts, and then when those followers disappear, our
3 account -- you know, the algorithm or whatever is out there
4 that determines what appears in front of you is -- it's
5 suppressed. So we may look like, you know, in one day there
6 might be a huge number of followers, and so -- but because
7 it's artificially inflated and those followers then
8 disappear, the account is minimized, is suppressed.

9 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: So you believe that --

10 -

11 MS. LUCY WATSON: Does that make sense?

12 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: Yes. I believe it
13 does. So you believe that, in other words, that the
14 amplification of the NDP's messaging is being influenced by
15 those fake accounts?

16 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

17 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: Okay. And this is
18 also foreign interference in your view?

19 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes.

20 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: Regarding social media
21 companies, during your testimony, you talked about -- you
22 mentioned that Meta Canadian representatives takes five to 10
23 days to respond, which is an improvement, as you've stated.
24 But I'm wondering why is it problematic? Is it problematic
25 that Meta's representatives only respond five to 10 days
26 after highlighting the problem to them?

27 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes, it's highly
28 problematic. The -- sort of our general experience over the

1 last number of months has been between five to 10 days in
2 terms of response time. And by response time, I mean, you
3 know, reporting back what action has been taken on our
4 complaint. So it's the removal of the account that we've
5 seen. It's the removal of the post, for example.

6 But we're very keenly aware that that could
7 be some weeks or months after the first -- after the post was
8 first circulated. We're only, you know, reporting it when we
9 become aware of it, not when it first appears on social
10 media. So the response time is very concerning. And I
11 appreciate that social media platforms have their own
12 internal processes that they follow, some of which is public
13 and has been provided to us, but there's no real consistency
14 in terms of how these posts are being dealt with, to my
15 knowledge, and you know, the damage has been done ---

16 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** M'hm.

17 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** --- because the post has
18 been in circulation, has not been, you know, has not been
19 removed, has not been flagged for however long.

20 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** So for months -- weeks
21 or months, that post has been circulating online, ---

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Could be.

23 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** --- possibly
24 influencing Canadian views.

25 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Exactly. Exactly.

26 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay.

27 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** We have no way of knowing
28 that. And there's no transparency, I would add. There's no

1 transparency around this -- these posts. We have no idea how
2 long they've been in circulation. We have no idea how many
3 views they have received. We have no idea how many times
4 they have been copied and forwarded. And so even if it's
5 removed, frankly, even if it's removed by Meta, the damage
6 has been done in that it's been in circulation for however
7 long. But also it -- you know, the probability that it has
8 been replicated and then recirculated is high.

9 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: M'hm. It's like
10 playing wack-a-mole.

11 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yes, exactly.

12 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: And how often would
13 you say that you make those sorts of complaints to Meta? Is
14 it once a month? Once a week? What's the frequency?

15 MS. LUCY WATSON: It varies. There was a
16 period about a month or six weeks ago where we were
17 submitting something almost every other day.

18 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: Okay. During the
19 byelection, or?

20 MS. LUCY WATSON: No.

21 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: Okay.

22 MS. LUCY WATSON: No, it was actually prior
23 to that.

24 MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS: Okay.

25 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yeah. Yeah. And again,
26 I'll just note that we don't have the internal resources to
27 be monitoring this kind of activity in the way that frankly
28 it needs to be monitored, given the really profound impact

1 that it has on the political landscape.

2 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And you mentioned also
3 that you've seen this kind of activity on other platforms,
4 such as Twitter, Google, YouTube. Do you have contacts with
5 any -- I know you've said no with Twitter, but do you have
6 contacts with the other platforms?

7 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I believe we do have a
8 contact with YouTube.

9 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay.

10 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah.

11 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And their response is
12 better than Facebook?

13 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I couldn't speak to it.
14 That's not one of the channels -- I've been very much engaged
15 on -- with Meta, because that's where we seem to be seeing a
16 lot of these posts. So I couldn't speak with any real
17 authority to the question of YouTube.

18 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. And so I
19 understand that -- do I understand correctly that the social
20 media platforms are not that helpful in helping to resolve
21 that problem at its root and the SITE Task Force at least, or
22 the Federal Government, is not either very helpful for the
23 NDP? Do I understand correctly that you're essentially on
24 your own to deal with these issues?

25 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** For the most part, yes. We
26 appeal to Meta to remove the posts and then they undertake
27 their own internal review as to whether or not the post
28 violates their internal procedures, and then they make a

1 decision as to whether to leave the post up or to remove it.
2 But the onus is on us to identify those posts, to make the
3 argument as to why it should be removed, and then to follow
4 up on the status of Meta's decision making.

5 And I really can't speak at all to the
6 process that the SITE Task Force takes when we submit these
7 complaints. That is not known to me.

8 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And we don't need to
9 pull it back up, but in your witness summary, you also say
10 that you noticed an update already in misinformation or
11 disinformation posts recently?

12 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes. Yes.

13 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. Do you believe
14 that -- I'll just take a step back. Maybe more from a policy
15 perspective, but do you believe that voters have an interest
16 in having access to a safe and healthy media ecosystem free
17 from disinformation and foreign interference?

18 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do.

19 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** This can help make the
20 votes more informed?

21 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Certainly can make the
22 dialogue, the discussion more informed. Yes.

23 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** And do you believe
24 that the government has a responsibility to protect that
25 media ecosystem?

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I do. What sorts of
27 policies would you recommend to -- for the Federal Government
28 to implement?

1 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** What sorts of policies
2 would you recommend to -- for the Federal Government to
3 implement?

4 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I would -- I think I would
5 go back to one of the recommendations that I made in the
6 interview that I did, in which I -- we -- the NDP has called
7 for the creation of an independent social media watchdog, and
8 for legislation to bring greater transparency around social
9 media companies' algorithms.

10 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** I know I'm almost at
11 the end of my questions, but I want to take a step back to
12 the 2015 campaign. I understand you were the national
13 campaign coordinator during that time?

14 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, I was.

15 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** We've heard through
16 media reports that an individual named Mikhail Mikushin, also
17 known as José Assis Giammaria, a Russian spy, volunteered for
18 NDP candidate Sean Devine. Are you familiar with this event?

19 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Only very peripherally.

20 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Is it something you
21 heard -- like, how did you get to learn about this event?

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No direct knowledge. Only
23 through media reports.

24 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Do you believe that
25 volunteering in a political party is a gateway for foreign
26 interference?

27 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Volunteering for a
28 political party? I think it depends entirely on what role

1 you are playing as a volunteer. You know, the volunteer
2 doesn't have any influence over policy or, you know, yeah, a
3 volunteer doesn't have any influence over policy, doesn't
4 have influence solely over who a candidate is, or the type of
5 campaign that's being conducted. So I'd have to probably put
6 more thought into it, but, you know, an individual volunteer
7 who's putting up posters and lawns signs is not -- I don't
8 think that there's a huge risk.

9 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. Perhaps my last
10 question, this is something I -- I'm wondering if you've
11 heard about Russia playing a role actively and trolling
12 during the 2015 election. Is that something you heard about?

13 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** No.

14 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. Maybe if it can
15 help, Tom Mulcair did say during an interview on April 10th
16 of this year that there -- I'm going to quote part of his
17 statement, as early as the election of -- in 2015, he had
18 received indication not from inside the government but from
19 outside that Russia had been playing a role actively and
20 trolling in that election. Is that something you heard about
21 before?

22 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** I couldn't speak to that,
23 no.

24 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Okay. Those are all
25 my questions. Thank you.

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Thank you.

27 **MR. GUILLAUME SIROIS:** Merci.

28 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

1 Counsel for Jenny Kwan?

2 **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY/CONTRE-INTERROGATOIRE PAR**

3 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:**

4 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Ms. Watson.

5 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Hello.

6 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Hello. So for the
7 record, my name is Sujit Choudhry. I'm counsel for Jenny
8 Kwan. So, Ms. Watson, there's a few themes that I was hoping
9 we could discuss in the brief time we have. The first is
10 TikTok. And I take it that you were present at some of the
11 earlier testimony this morning, so I won't take you to the
12 exhibits that were put into the record, but as I think it's
13 now established that the -- that CSIS has taken a view that
14 TikTok poses a threat to Canada's democratic processes
15 because of its ownership structure and access to its data.
16 So if we sort of take that as a given, I'm wondering how,
17 one, you react to that? And in particular, do you think that
18 political parties should remain active on that platform? And
19 should their candidates be active, or how should they
20 approach the fact of that intelligence?

21 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Right. I have not turned
22 my mind to it. It's something I would have to put greater
23 thought into. What I can share with you is that before the
24 party reestablished its TikTok account, and the very fact
25 that I didn't know that we had reactivated our TikTok account
26 is reflective of my non-use of TikTok, but I understand that
27 staff members met with cyber security experts to talk about
28 what best practices could be employed. And so, as a result,

1 the party's TikTok account resides on a cell phone that is
2 not used for any other purpose and is stationary with all of
3 the location features disabled. So as I understand it, the
4 practices that have been employed are those that were
5 recommended by cyber security experts, and we've been assured
6 that that will guard against the possibility of foreign
7 interference.

8 But to the bigger issues, the bigger
9 questions, I cannot reflect on that right now. I'd have to
10 put more thought into it.

11 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Okay. Thank you. So
12 I'd like to shift to a different theme, which has to do with
13 party memberships, eligibility to join a party, eligibility
14 to vote in nominations, and I think that Mr. Krongold had
15 covered -- has covered a lot of the ground that I had wanted
16 to, but I wanted to kind of build on his questions to you and
17 your evidence to ask you some questions about legal
18 regulation, because I think that the questions and answers
19 concern the steps that the NDP has taken on its own. But the
20 question before the Commissioner, a question before the
21 Commission is to what extent there should be legal
22 requirements regarding, for example, who can join a political
23 party, who can vote in a nomination for a candidate or for a
24 leader, and whether those should be somehow rooted, let's
25 say, in amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* or some other
26 statute. And I'm wondering have you -- could you offer us
27 your thoughts on that issue?

28 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, that's -- it's not a

1 conversation that we have had amongst the elected officials
2 of the party, so I will say that what I offer up are more my
3 personal opinions about it. I do have concerns about the way
4 in which that, you know, legislation would interact with the
5 internal decision-making of the party. We are very proud of
6 the fact that our members play such a significant role in
7 shaping the internal policies and procedures and
8 infrastructure of the party and I would not want to see that
9 lost. I would also share that we're also very, very deeply
10 committed to creating a party that is accessible and open to
11 Canadian citizens, permanent residents, folks who want to
12 engage in the political process through the NDP. And so I
13 wouldn't want to see that diluted in any way. So I think,
14 you know, there are guidelines, there are best practices that
15 we would welcome, but if we were to talk about legal
16 requirements and legislation, that's something I would have
17 to take away and put further thought into and have
18 discussions with folks who are integral to the party's
19 governance.

20 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** So just to pick up on
21 that point, so, you know, political parties occupy a very
22 kind of a limital space in Canadian politics; right? They
23 sit adjacent to parliament and legislatures. They aren't
24 formal state institutions, but those bodies couldn't really
25 operate without parties.

26 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Right.

27 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Right. And so the
28 question then is, is there some scope for minimal baselines

1 or basic -- you know, that basically a minimum standard that
2 parties should be expected to comply with as a legal matter
3 but they can build upon, elaborate, vary as long as they
4 comply with those basic requirements?

5 MS. LUCY WATSON: I think so, yes.

6 MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY: Okay.

7 MS. LUCY WATSON: And we do; right? The
8 *Elections Act* does set out some of those criteria in terms of
9 how we function and how candidate's campaigns function.

10 MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY: So just to kind of
11 pursue that, one more point on that them, so the NSICOP
12 report, which I think you must be familiar with, discussed
13 the issue of foreign interference in nominations and also in
14 leadership races. And it actually suggested that foreign
15 interference in those particular forms of political party
16 activity should be criminalized. Do you have a view about
17 that?

18 MS. LUCY WATSON: I do agree it's something
19 that should be taken very seriously, but I don't have a view
20 as to whether or not it should be criminalized. I would have
21 to put more thought into that.

22 MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY: Okay. And then I think
23 the last issue is one that I think has come up in some of the
24 other questions, but I want to come back to it because I
25 think you might -- I want to see if you have more to say.
26 It's about funding and infrastructure and support. And so
27 what I heard you say and particularly in response to Mr.
28 Sirois' kind of questions about social media monitoring and

1 how it seems to consume a lot of staff time, is that the
2 expectations, kind of human resource and financial or
3 otherwise, that are being thrust upon political parties by
4 circumstance, by expectation and possibly by law at some
5 point would be burdensome. And so I'm wondering what that
6 specifically means do you think in terms of public financing
7 and public support for certain functions? And what functions
8 should sit within parties and perhaps what functions ought to
9 be centralized perhaps in Elections Canada?

10 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yeah, in my interview we
11 did make a recommendation that there be some financial
12 support or assistance with regard to bolstering our cyber
13 security. I think that would be a hugely onerous
14 responsibility to put onto political parties. And as we
15 heard this morning, there are -- you know, we range in size
16 and resources, and, you know, if there is -- if there are
17 recommendations that parties meet certain standards, there
18 will -- there -- I would strongly urge the Commission to
19 consider support for those enhancements. And then in terms
20 of the piece around just resources in general, there -- it is
21 a very uneven playing field in terms of the resources that
22 political parties have access to and are able to generate.
23 And, you know, our reliance on donations, I think is, quite
24 frankly, an area of vulnerability and our -- you know, our
25 limited resources limit or dictate the extent to which we can
26 respond to some of these threats.

27 So, for example, social media; we don't have
28 the staff capacity to be monitoring or the software to be

1 monitoring social media to the extent that we currently need
2 to because of the content that we are seeing out there in
3 circulation that then has a negative impact on discourse.

4 So I do think that there is a compelling
5 argument to be made for funding for cybersecurity
6 enhancements for political parties. I think there is a case
7 to be made for the return of the per-vote subsidy to
8 alleviate political parties' reliance on donations.

9 **MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY:** Okay. And then just a
10 last question before I wrap up. So you've referred in your
11 answers to some of the questions posed to you that it's your
12 belief, or your party's position, that the Canadian
13 government has responsibilities to protect certain
14 institutions or practices that are integrally related to
15 Canadian democracy. And so I want to kind of suggest a term
16 to you, and to ask you if this helps maybe delineate the
17 scope of what their responsibilities are.

18 So the term that we've -- that I'd suggest to
19 you is something called Canada's democratic infrastructure,
20 that exists of its formal institutions, so Parliament, the
21 government, Elections Canada, but also other activities,
22 institutions, rules, norms that are immediately adjacent to
23 it. So we had Mr. Genius and Mr. McKay here talking about
24 private devices and email addresses and partisan and
25 parliamentary activity, and it really kind has all been a bit
26 of a mix. And political parties are another piece of that
27 puzzle, right? They are central to how Parliament works, but
28 they're not of Parliament, they're not of the government.

1 And so is that kind of concept useful for
2 thinking about the scope of the government's duty to protect?
3 And if so, what else might fall within the category of
4 Canada's democratic infrastructure?

5 MS. LUCY WATSON: Yeah, it's all part of the
6 ecosystem; there is no question in my mind that it is all of
7 the same ecosystem. What else? I don't know. I would have
8 to think about that. But it is -- it's a very good question.

9 MR. SUJIT CHOUDHRY: Okay. Thank you.
10 Those conclude my questions, thank you, Ms.
11 Watson.

12 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.
13 Attorney General, do you have any questions?

14 MS. RYANN ATKINS: Ryann Atkins for the
15 Attorney General of Canada.

16 We don't have any questions for this witness.
17 Thank you.

18 MS. LUCY WATSON: Thank you.

19 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. And Mr.
20 Krongold, yes, you have one question in the re-examination?

21 --- RE-EXAMINATION BY/RÉ-INTERROGATOIRE PAR

22 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:

23 MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD: Ms. Watson, you were
24 asked a little bit about inauthentic social media activity
25 that was targeting the NDP, and you discussed that you didn't
26 think it was coming from domestic political parties.

27 I'm just wondering if you think this activity
28 could be domestic, inauthentic activity, not from parties but

1 from other Canadians or groups who oppose the NDP's policies?

2 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Yes, it could. And, again,
3 I have no real insight into this. You know, there are
4 members of the team who are monitoring our social media
5 channels and who are monitoring this activity, and as I
6 understand it, there are certain tells that they've been able
7 to identify; I couldn't tell you what those are right now.
8 But what would be hugely helpful is to have a better
9 understanding of where this content is being generated and a
10 better understanding of how to be responding to it and a
11 better understanding of what systems or procedures are in
12 place that are consistent, transparent, to address these
13 issues.

14 **MR. HOWARD KRONGOLD:** Thank you very much.

15 **THE COMMISSIONER:** Thank you.

16 Thank you very much.

17 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Thank you.

18 **THE COMMISSIONER:** So we have completed what
19 we had to do today, so we'll come back tomorrow at 9:30.

20 Thank you for your time.

21 **MS. LUCY WATSON:** Thank you.

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

24 The sitting of the Foreign Interference
25 Commission is adjourned until tomorrow, the 20th of September
26 2024 at 9:30 a.m.

27 Cette séance de la Commission sur l'ingérence
28 étrangère est suspendue jusqu'à demain, le 20 septembre 2024

1 à 9 h 30.

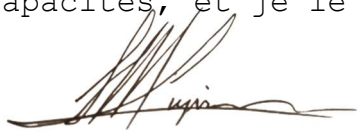
2 --- Upon adjourning at 3:25 p.m.

3 --- L'audience est suspendue à 15 h 25

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5 **C E R T I F I C A T I O N**

6
7 I, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, a certified court reporter,
8 hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate
9 transcription of my notes/records to the best of my skill and
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14 conforme de mes notes/enregistrements au meilleur de mes
15 capacités, et je le jure.

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