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# Special Committee on Canada- China Relations

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Chair: The Honourable Geoff Regan





## Special Committee on Canada-China Relations

Monday, May 31, 2021

• (1830)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 27 of the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, September 23, 2020, the committee is meeting for its study of Canada-China relations.

[Translation]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021.

[English]

Before turning to our witnesses, I'd like to ask if there are any objections to setting aside 10 minutes at the end of today's meeting—so we would end 10 minutes early—to quickly discuss a few items relating to committee business.

Seeing none—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Chair, that wasn't on the notice, and we only have an hour with NSICOP. I suggest that we proceed with the agenda and, if necessary, extend by 10 minutes.

**The Chair:** That may be possible. We'll see. We'll carry on for now.

I would like to welcome our first witnesses for tonight. As an individual, we have Chemi Lhamo, community health lead; and from the Uyghur Research Institute, we have Rukiye Turdush, research director and Uyghur rights advocate.

Thank you very much for being here tonight.

We'll start with the opening remarks from Ms. Lhamo, followed by Ms. Turdush.

Ms. Lhamo, please proceed. You have five minutes.

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo (Community Health Lead, As an Individual):** Thank you.

*Tashi Delek, Anee*, hello, I'm Chemi Lhamo.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the original caretakers of this land, the elders of the past and present, and to any who should have been here, or may be here physically, mentally and spiritually.

My immigrant parents came from the land of snow—Tibet—which, according to Freedom House, is the least free country alongside Syria. A recent Human Rights Watch report stated that children as young as three years old are having their cultural identity stripped away, which to me is another repeat of the horrors of Canada's and Australia's residential schools where indigenous children were killed or forcibly assimilated into the settler society.

Time and time again, we've seen the Chinese government silence voices of Tibetans, Uighurs, Hong Kongers and southern Mongolians. There's no doubt that Chinese government intimidation and geopolitical bullying through aggression and expansion across borders from the South China Sea to the India-Tibet border presents a clear threat to both regional and global security.

However, today, let me share with you my experiences of the CCP attempting to silence and infringe upon my right to freedom of speech and expression, even in an open and democratic society like Canada.

In 2019, I became the target of wrath, most likely crafted by the Chinese Communist Party, when I ran for student elections at the University of Toronto Scarborough. Before the election had even begun, or results had even come out, my phone had started going off with notifications. There were over 10,000 comments on my social media posts and then an online petition against me for simply being a candidate because of my Tibetan identity—not because of my work or my capabilities.

The comments were harsh. They included rape and death threats targeting not just me, but my family. There were comments saying that the bullet that would go through me was made in China, or things like if they saw me, they would punch me. There was even one that I still recall to this day that said that my mom was dead. I kid you not. I recall having to call my mother to check in on her without frightening her.

Throughout my presidential term, although things slowed down on social media because of the international support I received, I continued to receive occasional threats and dehumanizing and degrading comments until this day. Additionally, prior to COVID-19, students on my campus who threatened to kill and rape me roamed freely around my campus and pointed, stared, followed and took photos of people whom I communicated with. This resulted in friends actually escorting me to the washrooms.

Community members of the allied nations who are subjected to the CCP's colonial violence aren't alien to these tactics. We have witnessed China's interference and influence not just on our university campuses, but also in our communities.

The long-arm tactics of the CCP is also affecting Chinese international students who are paying four to five times more for an education, but are having to become incognito spies for the embassy or who get bullied to follow party lines and protest initiatives that are deemed threatening, instead of focusing on their education. Anonymous Chinese students have written to their student unions saying they're terrified by the presence of organizations like Canadian CSSAs, which are reporting campus activities to the Chinese government.

We've seen this overt influence in our academic institutions, but the threat is widespread. The CCP propaganda is infiltrating our communities and insidiously placing itself in progressive spaces, conflating anti-CCP sentiments to be part of the rise of anti-Asian hatred.

To this day my mother worries way more than required for my well-being because of these threats.

No Canadian on Canadian soil who wishes to serve their community should have to check if they're being followed. No student leader should have to see active groups on their campus self-censoring themselves because of the fear of going through what I had to go through. No mother should have to worry about their child being punched, raped or killed for standing up for something they care about.

Many Canadians, including my parents, were stateless refugees because of the illegal occupation of their countries and they had to move several times to find a safe home for their kids. Eventually, after long years of being transnational families and being displaced, they found a home in Canada, only to be intimidated and subjected to the long-arm tactics of the CCP. Canada is meant to empower youth, not embolden and support, through their silence, the ones who kidnap children and strip them away from their parents.

There's no doubt that the Chinese government ruthlessly tries to crush all dissent. I'd like to encourage the honourable members here today and our government to please listen to your Canadians and follow up with concrete actions.

I can tell you more through a report.

Thank you.

● (1835)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Lhamo.

Mrs. Turdush, please proceed. You have five minutes.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush (Research Director, Uyghur Rights Advocate, Uyghur Research Institute):** Good evening. My name is Rukiye Turdush. I am an ethnic Uighur Canadian and a Canadian citizen. I would like to testify today on my personal experience and my community's experience regarding China's threat in Canada.

On February 11, 2019, I was invited by McMaster University's Muslim Students' Association to give a speech about the ongoing genocide in East Turkestan. During my speech, a few Chinese students tried to disturb me. One of them filmed the whole presentation and verbally assaulted me with foul language.

I later received from someone leaked screen shot evidence of those Chinese students' group conversation during my speech. They discussed how to disturb me and send recorded video to the group. The guy who recorded me said, "I have all the materials if anyone needs them." This was clearly intelligence gathering.

Another one said, "How come there are lots of people in this event? We have been told by the embassy to report this event to the Chinese student association and the school." That means the Chinese embassy informed those Chinese students about the event in advance and instructed them what to do. He also said, "Find out who is her son", so they can look for my son for whatever purpose. I suspect this person could be a Chinese diplomat or a covert agent.

McMaster's Chinese Student's Association and academics published a joint statement on February 13, and the language of the statement exactly echoes the language of the Chinese Communist Party's false propaganda line. The statement also mentioned that they have reported the incident to the Chinese embassy and sent a complaint letter to the school administration. Later, the embassy of China in Ottawa published a statement praising the so-called patriotism of these students who attacked my freedom of speech.

In fact, my speech was about evidence of China's well-planned, organized, ongoing genocide in East Turkestan. What is clear is that the Chinese Communist Party has encouraged a large number of Chinese students who study in our country to export their propaganda and China's autocratic values to our Canadian soil. They actively tried to undermine Canadian democratic values and freedom of expression.

Chinese police also threaten Uighur Canadian students from 5,000 miles away. Those Uighur students are constantly harassed through video calls that ask them for their school address and information about their status in Canada. Some had no choice but to officially disown the parent-child relationship to protect their parents back home.

Chinese cyber espionage was also very active for many years. They used to keep sending me viruses to destroy my computers and email, especially my blog. For many years, Chinese trolls threatened me through Twitter and YouTube, saying “be careful” and “you are looking for your own death”. I used to ignore them and block them.

Since the McMaster incident attracted huge media attention, they have changed their tactics. They have started to claim that I am a CIA agent funded by the NED and creating fake news, despite the fact that I am not getting any funding from any organization.

I am giving this testimony here today not only because of my personal safety or other human rights activists' safety, but also and most importantly because of the tremendous danger that China poses to the democratic world order, to human rights and to Canadian sovereignty. It is about future of our kids.

That's why the Canadian government should charge covert Chinese agents working for the United Front and pushing the Chinese community to manipulate and influence the Canadian democratic system for the benefit of the CCP. Bring them to court and pass new legislation to define their activity as a crime.

The Canadian government should expel the Chinese diplomats who investigate and encourage the Chinese community and Chinese students to gather intelligence.

To block the CCP's influence and espionage activity in Canada as well as to deal with the digital authoritarianism that enables Uighur genocide, the Canadian government should hold hearings that focus on the potential complicity of Canadian universities. Universities should be required to report all co-operation with Chinese research institutes and companies in fields such as artificial intelligence, big data, smart policing and smart cities, biotech and others.

The Canadian government should support Canadian academics, students, journalists and activists. At the same time, it should crack down on China's illegal espionage activity and China's funding of fake Canadian NGOs. It should also crack down on individuals who deny China's Uighur genocide, attack human rights activists and spread fake news and Chinese state party propaganda on Canadian soil.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.

• (1840)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Turdush.

We'll now go to our first round of questions, starting with Mr. Genuis for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank our witnesses for their courageous advocacy and important testimony.

Ms. Lhamo spoke about the serious problem of the conflation of anti-CCP sentiment with anti-Asian racism and the way in which the government of China seeks to co-opt progressive discourse to cover for its own deeply racist and colonial policies.

Last week in question period, in response to legitimate questions raised about national security issues, we saw this kind of conflation between anti-CCP statements and anti-Asian racism advanced by

the Prime Minister himself. We know that this false conflation is itself a serious threat to Asian Canadians. The idea that Asian Canadians are somehow an extension of the CCP is a deeply racist idea, and it also feeds into the Government of China's narrative, which seeks to threaten Asian Canadians to do its bidding.

I'd like to hear from both of the witnesses as to what their response was to the Prime Minister's comments last week, and what we can do, as politicians, to clearly establish the difference between criticizing the CCP and anti-Asian racism.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** I would like to answer this question.

I think our Prime Minister is really confused. I don't think that the CCP and anti-Asian racism have to be considered or seen as together, because the CCP, the Communist Party, is ruling the Chinese people and in many places in the Chinese community in Canada and elsewhere. Chinese people and the CCP are totally different. Most of them are brainwashed. They are manipulated.

If we are against the CCP, that does not mean we're against the Chinese people. It's nothing to do with racism or anti-Asian...or anything. I really didn't get why he said that.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Ms. Lhamo, do you want to follow up?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** Thank you, MP Genuis, for that question.

If you want to tackle anti-Asian racism, the first way to address that is by listening to the Asian voices in your country—your constituents. To folks who claim to be standing up against anti-Asian hatred or racism, please listen to your constituents; listen to the Asian voices.

As an Asian woman, let me tell you, there is a bigger target on my back, and conflating the idea of anti-CCP with anti-Asian is much more or further disrespect to Asian folks. I say this because Asia is much larger than just China. There are 40 other different countries. That is not only just a disservice to other Asian Canadians; it is also a disservice to Chinese Canadians.

There is a serious issue. There has been a huge rise in anti-Asian sentiment. There has been an over 700% rise I think in the Vancouver area. How are we addressing that? Are we going to be getting stuck in the politics of what is anti-Asian or anti-CCP, or are we going to start addressing the actual issues that are being faced by Canadians? It's as simple as that.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you very much. I think that is such important testimony, and I hope it's taken to heart by all members, and by parliamentarians who aren't part of this committee.

I want to ask specifically about what happens when a person is a victim of foreign state-backed interference.

We've talked in the past about motion M-55, which is a private member's motion that I put forward to try to push for greater coordination, supports and a strategy, because we've heard that there often isn't the support there. Who do you call when you experience these kinds of things? What kinds of supports come into play?

Could you both share—and I probably have enough time for 45 seconds for each of you—how you have tried to access support from authorities, what kinds of experiences you had doing that and how we can do better in supporting victims?

• (1845)

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** Thank you.

In my remarks, I didn't refer to some of the concrete actions that folks can take, because I've done multiple testimonies and spoken to various officials, including Global Affairs twice in meetings. We have submitted an official report, with Amnesty, on harassment and intimidation specifically faced by human rights activists speaking against Chinese colonial violence.

To your question, MP Genuis, I've personally spoken to Toronto Police, RCMP, CSIS. Folks, I've just been pointed from one direction to the other.

I've spoken to multiple parliamentarians, and until this day, I can guarantee you that I have not received a single piece of paper that has said, "Here you go, Chemi. These are all the threats you've received. These are all the criminal offences." These are death threats and rape threats, and folks who have personally messaged me and told me, "No, b-i-t-c-h. I am here", when I said, "Oh, are these just online?" These are personal messages.

I don't know how many times I have to tell you this again and again. As a psychology student, let me tell you, these times when I have to tell my story repeatedly are triggering and traumatizing.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you. We're almost out of time.

Ms. Turdush, do you want to quickly chime in on this? We should bring in the Amnesty report as well, because I think that is very important.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, that is all the time, so we'll have to go on.

I'm sorry, Ms. Turdush. Hopefully someone else will ask you that, or Mr. Genuis may get another chance.

We'll now go on to Ms. Zann for six minutes, please.

**Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

First of all, I'd just like to say thank you so much to the witnesses for coming to the committee today.

As a female politician and parliamentarian, I too have been the subject of many threats and death threats, harassment and misogynistic social media posts to the point that it's been very difficult to handle. I know how you must be feeling, and it is not a pleasant thing at all.

I want to acknowledge that nobody should have to go through that. For women, they often use the same threats, believe me, over and over again. It's regurgitated, like bots or something like that. They just say the same thing over and over again.

So, you're not alone. That said, I want to ask you about the threats that families or activists are receiving back home.

Could you both perhaps expand on that a little bit? Chemi, could you go first, and then Ms. Turdush? Thank you.

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** I'll keep it short, so Rukiye can have more time.

Thank you for that question. For me personally, displacement comes with a cost. I personally have never seen Tibet. I am of Tibetan descent but I've never seen Tibet, and getting a visa to even access that country is challenging.

My parents' first cousins—who are my uncles'...—and my first, second and third cousins, I don't know them. I yearn to be able to know them someday.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you.

Ms. Turdush.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** My direct family members are in Canada, but I have close relatives back home in East Turkestan. All of my relatives back home receive threats and are punished terribly back home. I was raised by my grandmother, but I haven't had contact with her since 2009, because the Chinese police officers pressured her and told her, "You have to tell your granddaughter to shut up." If not, she would have trouble.

Once she told me that, I cut the connection with her, but I didn't shut up, of course. I didn't contact my grandmother, and she passed away one year after I stopped contacting her. All of my cousins and friends cut connections with me because of my activism, because the police bothered them whenever I contacted them by phone, even though I didn't talk about any sensitive issues. Most of them were arrested in 2017. Maybe some of them I didn't contact, and so I don't know if they were arrested or not. This is happening to every Uighur Canadian or other Uighurs in the diaspora.

This is exactly the example of China's genocide. The intention is to cut the connection, break the lineage and break the origin.

Thank you.

• (1850)

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** I don't have much time, but I'd like to ask this. I know that CSIS and the RCMP have taken measures to promote their 1-800 numbers to students who are experiencing academic harassment. Have you or any of your colleagues had the opportunity to use any of those numbers? I'm told that ISI is actually better at integrating national security considerations into research partnerships, so what do you advise us to do to try to improve things?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** The simple answer is no.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Is the 1-800 number not working, or you have tried...?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** No, not a single agent has referred me to that number. I recently actually spoke to Global Affairs officials. There were RCMP members who suggested it. However, in terms of what you can do, please refer to page 51 of the harassment and intimidation report of Amnesty....

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you.

Ms. Turdush, have you tried the 1-800 number, or has anybody?

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** No, I didn't. I never thought about it. When the McMaster incidents happened, I just worried about my son too much, because it was disturbing when they looked for my son.

I did a police report, but after that some people suggested that we would have to go to court and I was thinking that this is not a civil issue. This is not the issue between me and the international Chinese students. This is China's influence on Canada, so governments should deal with it; so I didn't go to the court.

I think the Canadian government should give more power to CSIS or other agencies so they can shut all the loopholes where Chinese espionage has infiltrated into Canada.

So, I didn't do anything.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you.

From your testimony, I gather there does need to be better coordination between our public institutions, universities, law enforcement agencies and security agencies on tackling foreign interference. CSIS does have an academic outreach program, which often includes conferences or workshops to tackle these topics.

Their recent outreach to post-secondary institutions is a good example, I think, of how CSIS is trying to connect with important stakeholders to ensure that Canadians remain safe and that our interests are protected from foreign-based threats.

Perhaps, if we have time, you could provide any suggestion that would increase the coordination between the agencies and the universities.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Yes, it will be better when the Canadian intelligence service and the other Canadian agencies and institutions have more power, when they coordinate to extend information.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** To work together.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Yes, to work together to block the Chinese influence.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Ms. Zann.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank Ms. Turdush and Ms. Lhamo very much for being with us tonight.

Ladies, you are an example of strength, especially given the circumstances under which you come to testify before us. I think you should serve as an example to all of us.

My question is about the general involvement of the Chinese Communist Party in the actions against you. We know that students at McMaster University were praised, but some people might believe that the students may have taken some action on their own, organically.

Can you give us any examples that lead you believe that this is coming from the Chinese Communist Party? I would also like you to talk about how it's structured. Do events all happen at the same time, as if someone has initiated the process?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** This is a very good question. I would like to answer it.

I really suspect it was organized by the Chinese embassy or consulate, because I received a screenshot of those Chinese students doing a WeChat group. Somebody took a screenshot and sent it to me. All of them were Chinese student association students, and some people had no names.

When the guy recorded my video speech and sent it to the group chat, somebody asked, how come there are a lot of people in this room? The Chinese embassy already—he said in Chinese, *yijing*—told us to report this event to the Chinese student association and the school. They don't want a lot of people coming to this space. They don't want this event to happen. So the Chinese embassy told those students and instructed them what to do in advance. That's why I heavily suspect they were instructed by the Chinese embassy.

I didn't do anything. I didn't give media.... I didn't do anything. These students, right away, published a statement on February 13. They said that they told the school and sent a letter to the Chinese embassy. They say [*Inaudible—Editor*]. So they have very close contact. They report everything to the Chinese embassy. And the Chinese embassy instructed them in advance of many things—that's very obvious. That's why I think this is not organized by patriotic Chinese students. There is the Chinese embassy's hand in this event.

• (1855)

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** I can give you two short examples.

One, personally, is an account of people within my circle who flipped 180 degrees when it became international news, folks who wanted to actually be part of my slate—I'm sure you folks are aware, with elections—because I was running for president. So there was a 180-degree turn, asking me for actual statements about what my stance was on Tibet. That was my personal experience, knowing that they, themselves, were facing intimidation of their families back home.

Number two, in 2017 I organized an event at the U of T downtown with Lobsang Sangay, who is the former CEO of the Central Tibetan Administration. Overnight we had students show up, protesting against the event. But then when I questioned them and welcomed them inside the event, they chose not to and said they had no information about why they were there. It was as simple as that.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

Since I don't have much time left, I'll ask two questions in one.

You spoke of the Chinese Communist Party's tactics, which can be insidious at times. For example, attempts have been made to discredit you and circulate false information rather than attack or threaten you directly.

What will the consequences be if these tactics become more and more insidious? To combat this, would it be a good idea to have a one-stop shop where complaints could be received? That way, you could get advice. You would also have statistics and you could raise public awareness of what is going on. You could show that the situation is real.

[English]

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Thank you.

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** Thank you for saying that, because that is actually among the recommendations in the report submitted to Global Affairs in March 2020; it's actually an updated report. There is a recommendation for developing a centralized focal point within the government to support, just as a start—and those are the low-hanging fruit.... We haven't even addressed all of the other concerns that talk about independent public investigations into harassment and also looking at the instrumentalization of international students and the ways they are being used.

In terms of those insidious ways, as a Canadian let me tell you that I'm involved in organizing spaces, and police and all these levels of security that you have—the highest of the high—are not able to support me. Instead, I'm teaching them about international geopolitics, which is not something I'm getting paid for. In a personal space, where do I belong? Where do I go, if even within the spaces in which I'm talking about housing justice, people indicate “you're racist” to me because I'm talking out against the Chinese government.

Where do I go? Please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Would keeping statistics on complaints help give you credibility, especially with the Canadian public?

[English]

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Sure. For example, I collected from my community and from my own self a bunch of screen shots from what they say on social media showing how they have changed their tactics.

For example, after the McMaster incident, they changed their tactics because it caused huge media attention. China started to be careful, then they changed their tactics. They're not slurring me in that threatening—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm sorry, Ms. Turdush, but I have to go to the next questioner.

[Translation]

Thank you.

Thank you very much, Ms. Normandin.

[English]

We'll now go on to Mr. Harris for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you both for coming to testify at our committee. It's certainly a brave thing to do, although you've been doing it for some time, so I commend you for your persistence as well.

Let me first ask Ms. Lhamo a question, Chair.

You talked about how you ran for president of the student union at the University of Toronto Scarborough. I was a student politician too. I'm assuming you weren't running on a Tibetan platform, that you were running on a student platform.

Am I right about that, or were there elements of it in part of your program?

• (1900)

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** You're absolutely right, but prior to that I've actually been the Racialized Students' Collective coordinator. I was vice-president, equity. I'm a tri-campus athlete. I've been serving the chemistry society and the pre-med society as well in leadership positions.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** You had, then, a very broad background of leadership that was important to your potential leadership role, and you were elected.

Did this harassment start after you were elected, or was it part of the campaign as well?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** This could actually answer part of Ms. Normandin's question as well.



The night the elections were over, there was some sort of connection to the Chinese embassy, because there was a petition that started overnight at the end of the elections, because they came to find out that there was a so-called pro-Tibet person, or a Tibetan person running. They found out at that time, and then immediately there was a petition, which had 10,000 signatures by the following day. When my results came out the following day, of course my social media accounts were bombarded with threats.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** The petition was signed by 10,000 people. That is an awful lot of people. Is it your belief that those 10,000 individual people actually existed and that they were somehow or other corralled by the Chinese government—the Chinese Communist Party or Chinese agents acting in Canada? Is that your understanding of what happened?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** Sure. I think it was the latter, Jack. You just mentioned that you're a former student politician, so you know how hard it is to get students to go out and vote. I was rallying for three straight days, and actually my Tibetan new year—lunar new year—coincided with it. In my traditional garb I was there saying, let's go out and vote—trying to get people to vote.

We had a turnout of a maximum 2,000 people, and the petition was by 10,000 people who were against me for some reason, saying that they were against my views as a Tibetan person.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Did they have Tibetan names? Were they actually Tibetans? Were they Chinese individuals? You don't know.

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** No, I don't know. Actually, in the activism spaces we say that's the 50 Cent Army, most likely bought folks who are being pressured, actually, by the Chinese embassy to make these comments and threats.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I'm concluding, in a practical sense, that it seems to be a very significant effort by someone to organize such a thing. Were these people who identified themselves by name, or was it just some sort of a pile on? I don't know how social media works with petitions like that, but were there, do you think, that many individuals who were influenced to do that?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** Eventually, the petition was taken down, and the person who started the petition initially wrote out a statement. With regard to the tens of thousands of signatures, I'm not sure. They could be bots, because in terms of Tibetan population, there are about three Tibetans maximum out of the 14,000 individuals on my campus.

On my social media accounts, however, I did have experiences of students who had their U of T cards, their student cards, on their social media pages, and who were sending me death threats. That's exactly how I knew, Jack, that these are actual students on my campus threatening me. Security, at whichever level, even your government's level, did not do anything to protect me from these students who are roaming around freely.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** We're looking to try to find out what protections there are for people in circumstances like yours, and I wonder out loud about the following. I would have expected that the university itself would take such harassment, one student against another, particularly, as you point out, death threats being made by people who are fellow students at the University of Toronto, as a

very serious and significant discipline matter. Was that the case? Were there university authorities involved in any way?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** The university authorities were involved from day one because of my prior involvement as vice-president, equity. I had access to these individuals, which is a privilege in itself. However, when I talked to them.... There are two incidents I recall. In response to one, the head of security said, "This is above my pay grade", when I told him that this is possibly a much bigger issue than they think, than just bullying or cyber-bullying, which I think is already a big issue. Number two, I was given a walkie-talkie, and I was asked to go to campus security to get new batteries for it when it ran out. That was supposed to keep me safe.

I'll leave it at that.

● (1905)

**Mr. Jack Harris:** There was no investigation done by the university. You were talking about campus security, but this seems to me to be something that would very likely be above the pay grade of an individual security officer. The president of the university would probably be very upset if one of his or her students was receiving death threats from another. When I was at university, that would have been a serious matter.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Harris.

We're in the second round now and we'll now go on to Mr. Chiu for five minutes.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for coming.

My first question is for Ms. Turdush.

How much of what you have experienced is evidently actioned by.... I'm just grouping them into three groups of people. The first one is traditional, ethnic Chinese who have been in Canada for, say, multiple decades. The second group is the brainwashed communist Chinese, as I call them. The third one is the CCP United Front Work Department, or consulate-general. From what you have experienced, what do you think of the first, second and third groups?

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** That is a very difficult question, because I don't have any contact with the Chinese ethnic community. I receive most of the threats through social media, and when they threaten me through social media, we don't know what kind of person they are, what their ideology is or what they belong to.

I was thinking most of them are pro-CCP and and loyal to the CCP people. Usually, Chinese democrats and the people not loyal to the CCP.... I have some Chinese friends who do support me, but they don't say I am a funded CIA agent—or they're not going to swear by that. They don't do that; they support me. There are people like that, but I don't know exactly which one is which; but like you say, there are people who do not support the CCP, and there are Chinese people who support the CCP. Most Cantonese people support the Uighurs and what's happening in east Turkestan right now, so it is very clear there.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Thank you.

My second question is for Ms. Lhamo.

With regard to the trolls of the CCP proxies, the 50 Cent Army, that you referenced, do you have any good suggestions? Let's just assume that these are people who live in Canada here. Do you have any good suggestions for government to deal with these people to make them understand the limit of freedom of speech versus criminal actions?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** I think it's to lead by example. When the government takes concrete action by implementing legislation to counter covert Chinese government interferences—and there are examples led by other governments like the U.S. or Australia that you folks can take and implement within the Canadian government—that will have a ripple effect within the Canadian constituents. People will understand the seriousness of the issues, the human rights violations that are happening in China, in Tibet, in East Turkestan, in Hong Kong and wherever else this is happening. With that, I believe Canadians will also learn more about what is actually happening and why we're doing what we're doing. When that happens, we can start creating a space of safer spaces and communal healing where people know what the difference is.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Okay, thank you.

Now my third question—

Go ahead, Ms. Turdush.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** I want to quickly add something.

Also, the Canadian government should educate those communities and the people, too, because they cannot differentiate between crime and freedom of speech. They say, “Okay, you're anti-China and anti-Communist Party, but I support them. That's my speech freedom. That's why I'm attacking you.” So many Canadians, not only Chinese people, not only ethnic Chinese—I saw so many Pakistanis, too—are supporting China's Communist Party, distributing fake news and attacking me through social media. These people are YouTubers, influential people. People have to be educated. Education is important, too.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Thank you.

I was looking at the RCMP's national security awareness page. On there, it lists the 1-800 number for you to call, but it actually prefaces it by saying, “If you suspect you have encountered terrorist planning activities call 1-800-420-5805.”

Let me ask you this: Are you aware of this national security awareness page? If so, have you called that number and under what situation?

Either one of you can answer very quickly for 15 seconds each.

• (1910)

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** I didn't.

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** The answer is no. However, I have met with various RCMP investigators and officials who have never given me that number.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Thank you.

I do have constituents who complain to me that they are being ping-ponged between the RCMP and the CSIS people. One force tells the victims to actually approach the other.

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** That's exactly my case.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Rukiye Turdush:** It doesn't work because—

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chiu.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lightbound, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Let me first echo what Mr. Genus said at the beginning of the meeting. I feel it's very important to dispel or at least not foster the confusion we sometimes see arise between the policies and actions of a country that doesn't care about international law, its people, or its nationals, Asians, for example.

We have seen anti-Asian bias rise in this country, and it should not be happening. We need to work hard to suppress this bias that may well apply to the Chinese regime, but it also applies to all countries that commit acts violating international law, which we sometimes have to criticize from a moral standpoint. So I echo his sentiments, as we all should.

I thank the witnesses for their courage and for testifying before the committee tonight.

Ms. Turdush, my first question is for you, and I am sorry if I'm mispronouncing your name. You have already spoken of the difficulty some Uyghur nationals have experienced being harassed by the Chinese state when they contacted Canadian authorities because they feared retaliation against their family members in China.

Do you have any suggestions as to the best way to report violations or harassment to Canadian authorities without the Chinese authorities finding out?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Those people are all afraid and they cannot tell the Canadian government; they don't want to report to the Canadian government. Many of them have even told me secretly, but they have no courage because their parents were kidnapped as hostages by China. As I said in my statement, some kids have even disowned their child-parent relationship. They went to a lawyer in Canada and they got a certified letter and sent it to China, saying “They are not my parents” so that the Chinese government would erase their name from the residential papers and not bother their parents anymore. They were thinking in that way and that's what they did. Many of them were very scared, and as I just said, they could not report to the government.

It is important that parliamentarians and politicians like you introduce a bill for the protection of Uighur human rights, similar to the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act that the U.S. Congress passed last June. It would mobilize action to stop genocide and stop China's taking of hostages and killing Uighur family members back home, and endorse multiple steps to protect the rights of Uighur Canadians, including investigation and accountability for China's officials involved in the harassment of Uighur Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Lightbound:** Thank you very much for the very straight answer.

My next question is for Ms. Lhamo.

Ms. Lhamo, you said in a recent podcast that prevention is better than cure, and in fact, we should strive for prevention. We should also investigate incidents when they occur, but we should prevent them.

Do you have any suggestions as to the best prevention measures?

You were talking about Australia's foreign interference legislation, among other things.

For the benefit of the committee and so we can include it in our report, could you explain how these measures might help us better combat Chinese foreign interference?

[*English*]

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** Reciprocal access to Tibet is one where we have sanctions that are being placed, expelling diplomats. There are also examples that have been passed in the U.S. administration, the Tibetan Policy and Support Act.

Here, I'm not just speaking on behalf of Tibetan people. There are so many other oppressed people who are being subjected to violence by the Chinese state. We're talking about East Turkestan, the Uighurs, the Hong Kongers, the Taiwanese.

When I think of Hong Kongers, there are 300,000 Hong Konger Canadians who are struggling inside, so we have to think about this on a larger scale.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Lightbound:** Thank you.

I have one last question. The last time you appeared before this committee, you said that people from China or Hong Kong were getting arrested for social media posts.

Do you have more to tell us about it? Do you have any more information about the kinds of arrests? We'd like that information to be in the report.

[*English*]

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** I'm sure you'll get more information in the testimonials following this, by the Hong Kongers, because there have been a lot of arrests of Hong Kongers.

For Tibetans, Tashi Wangchuk is a case that a lot of people have known about. He is a language rights activist. He was actually just a shopkeeper in China, and he was imprisoned for five years simply

because he wanted his niece and nephew to learn Tibetan at their school. As I said in my remarks at the beginning, it's all being erased from Tibetans.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Lightbound:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lightbound.

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Ladies, once again, thank you very much for your answers.

In your opinion, which of the following two scenarios best describes reality?

People of Tibetan or Uyghur origin living in Canada can be left alone, have a nice life and not worry about anything if they don't say anything against the Chinese Communist Party.

Everyone is under surveillance, which can increase and intensify. For example, the closer national get to a place of power and become prominent, regardless of whether they talk about the Chinese Communist Party, the more surveillance increases, and they may be subject to harassment and threats.

Which of the two scenarios applies most?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** I understand those two scenarios, but applicable to where?

I'm sorry. I didn't get your question.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** For example, are Tibetan or Uyghur nationals who are in Canada and who say nothing against the Communist Party left alone?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Yes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Or is everyone being watched, and the closer people get to places of power—

[*English*]

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Everyone is subject to surveillance. It's not as if I am the only one under surveillance because I am a human rights activist. All of the Uighurs are under surveillance. Maybe ASPI or the Australian...have reported.... They may have stolen something from China. Actually, there is a list of 10,000 names. Of these 10,000 names on the list, there are the names of more than 7,000 Uighurs, including many Canadian Uighurs. Of those Canadian Uighurs, most of them are not activists. They were scared of China. They have family members. They were very quiet, but they were still under surveillance. They didn't do anything.

This March, Reuters wrote that Facebook told them that Chinese hackers were stealing the information of no fewer than 500 Uighur activists on Facebook. We don't have 500 Uighur activists on Facebook. There are a few of them, but most of them are not activists, though they are still under surveillance and the Chinese government is stealing their information.

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** I would just like to quickly add—number two, for sure. In order to survive or thrive in the society, you're being targeted, so even if you're silent, you're still going to be affected when you start to become more successful in life.

Madam MP, if I were to say, “You can't bring your Québécois identity to the table,” that's not fair, but that's happening to us.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Pardon me.

We'll now go to Mr. Harris, for two and a half minutes, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you, Chair.

I want to ask both of you this question. I'll let Mrs. Turdush go first because I didn't get to her last time.

You both have been persistent, open and brave. You've been commended for that, and you're doing what needs to be done. Can I ask you whether or not you feel any more heartened by the activities of the last year or two, the exposure of some of these questions, the work that this committee is doing to bring the matter to the forefront, the attempts to convince the government to make things...and perhaps a report that we might be able to make to urge changes? Do you feel heartened by that at all?

I'll let you answer first, Mrs. Turdush, then Ms. Lhamo.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** I did not, but I feel very [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] that our government going very slow in response to these acts, and not fast. China has a huge influence, and China goes very fast, but our government.... I don't know. Maybe it's the gathering of information. They don't have enough information or evidence maybe. I don't know if that's why it's very slow, but I'm still happy.

• (1920)

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** I want to echo those sentiments.

Yes, it's heartening. However, at what cost is it? Today, if there is another student who goes through the violence I had to go through, are they still going to be just given another walkie-talkie and be expected to stay safe? The reason I'm speaking out and becoming a bigger target—perhaps I will never be able to go back home if I want to, for speaking out—is in the hope that someone else will not have to go through this. No other Canadian should ever have to go through that.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Because our government response is slower, is our action going to be heartening? That's what I want I wanted to say.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I'll leave this as a comment because I only have a few seconds left in my intervention.

I guess the responsibility then is for us on this committee, and for the Government of Canada, to respond to these circumstances in the best way we can, and hope that we can improve things so that both of you, people in your circumstances and all of your people

don't have to go through this, and we can hopefully affect some change.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Harris.

We'll now go on to Mr. Williamson, for five minutes.

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Lhamo, there are a couple of things you said that I'm really curious about. You said you had photos with student IDs of those making death threats against you. Is that correct? Was there no follow up from the police or any national oversight police body in this country?

You're nodding, but can you just say something on the record? I want to get that because that is astounding.

We had the RCMP commissioner here some weeks ago, and the best she could say was that more needs to be done. You're saying that you had actual students' on-campus IDs with these statements and that nothing was done. Is that correct?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** I could give you more concrete results if any of the reports or investigations done by various levels of security were actually given to me or if I had access to them. To this day, I don't have any piece of paper that shows them. However, friends have sent me screenshots of folks liking those comments of death threats on my social media posts that are probably still up and to this day publicly available, where they actually have their student IDs on their social media pages—so yes, in short.

**Mr. John Williamson:** All right.

There was something else that Mr. Harris said, and you didn't quite have time to follow up. It was his question regarding why the university president or some senior administrative official didn't do anything. Your comment was “international”—I didn't know if you were going to say “international students”. Are you suggesting that this is the almighty renminbi, or what?

What was your comment? Could you maybe finish your answer to Mr. Harris's question?

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** Thank you. I appreciate the time.

To Mr. Harris, there were some investigations. However, what is the purpose of investigations if there is no impact?

International students have a huge say in how the academic institutions perform. I could go on about a national education strategy and what the government should do for post-secondary education, but this is not my space. However, you can see that international students are now becoming cash cows, instead of our actually providing a free and good education for our young leaders who will be leaders of tomorrow and today.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Right.

You both raised some interesting solutions.

One I'd like to address, though, is that it seems to me that the CCP has managed to effectively use our institutions and our democratic freedoms against students in this country. When you have a coordinated campaign like that, is one solution not for the Canadian government to begin to say no to more Chinese embassy officials coming to this country who, even if they are nabbed by the police, in many cases can't be charged or can claim diplomatic immunity?

What's the solution here? Is it to have fewer embassy officials who are able to coordinate students in this manner and then have officials focus more on the affairs of state? What are your thoughts on that?

That's to both of you please, and maybe keep your comments to about 40 to 45 seconds each.

• (1925)

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** It's as simple as reciprocity.

**Mr. John Williamson:** I take it that's affirmative, yes?

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** I agree.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Ms. Turdush, I believe I read that after your harassment...did your university sanction or did they close the Chinese student association?

Is that correct? Can you talk about why that happened and how that went down?

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Yes. I think other students associations and the school gave probation to the Chinese student association and said that they could no longer organize and do those kinds of activities anymore.

I think the probation was for one year. I don't remember right now. I didn't participate in the probation. The school did that to those Chinese student associations. They opened the hearing—they opened the court—and they decided...

**Mr. John Williamson:** Could you give us the background? Was that because they were deemed to have engaged in activities that weren't becoming in an academic environment?

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** Yes. The Chinese academics and the Chinese student association at McMaster...like I said, we had a screenshot evidence of what they did, how they connected with the Chinese embassy. They proved it with their own statement, and they tried to stop the Hong Kong students too, afterwards, so they were very actively involved with these kinds of issues. That's why.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Williamson.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dubourg, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's now my turn to commend you, Ms. Lhamo and Ms. Turdush, for your courage and for all that you do for freedom and democracy. It is really very brave of you.

The first question that comes to mind is this. You are very involved in the academic field. You spoke eloquently about the threats that you and your families were facing.

Because you are appearing before our committee tonight, do you believe that the people threatening you are aware and watching you, sitting in front of their television sets, and they intend to continue to make these kinds of threats against you?

Do you think that could be happening, or is it rather insignificant?

[*English*]

Go ahead, Ms. Turdush.

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** I was thinking they don't have to directly show up in front of you. For example, they secretly say it in their group chat to look for my son. When they say that, I think right away about what Saudi Arabia did to Khashoggi.

Those kinds of governments can do any kind of dirty game. That's disturbing me a lot. We are not one of their provinces, so they're not going to openly do something here, but in the long term they can do something very harmful. That's disturbing.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you.

Ms. Lhamo, did you want to add anything?

[*English*]

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** I just wanted to echo those sentiments and also just add to that. The mere fact that I have no access to my own family members and that my generation of Tibetans do not know how to speak their own mother tongue is in itself a sign of violence and the aftermath of what they're doing.

A direct threat at this point is manageable for me, which is unfortunate to say even in a society like this.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you.

Ms. Turdush, you mentioned your son. I don't know how old he is, but you seem very concerned about him.

Is he safe at school? Does he report any of his friends' actions at school to you?

[English]

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** He was accepted into McMaster before, but at that time he was working in Boston. When the event happened, he came back. Right now he's a master's student at the University of Toronto at the downtown campus. On the downtown campus of the University of Toronto there are a lot of Chinese people. I don't want to say all Chinese people are dangerous or...Chinese espionage, but I still worry and I am tell my son not to be friends with the Chinese people sometimes. He says things like, "Are you crazy? Why does the country 5,000 miles away have to control me? I am Canadian. Why do they have to control our soil? This is crazy. You are crazy".

He doesn't believe that. I'm worrying because he was thinking about some country 5,000 miles away and they have to control him. That's why I'm just very worried about him.

It's not only about my son. If they expand their influence like that, it's every kid. What's going to happen to the future of our kids? Right now they are intensely developing their AI technology. They're controlling everybody's brain and manipulating everyone in Canada and the globe.

• (1930)

[Translation]

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you.

I have one last short question.

You are very involved in the academic field, in Toronto, for example, and at McMaster University.

How do you feel about the role that Confucius Institutes play in those educational institutions? Can you tell us more about how that relates to these threats?

[English]

**Mrs. Rukiye Turdush:** As I said in my statement, the government should ask every university to report their co-operation with the Chinese institutions and the Chinese universities. In what area do they have co-operation and in what kind of research? This is not only about the students' safety. This is about the Canadian information and how they are stealing our information. They have to... Okay.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you.

**Ms. Chemi Lhamo:** I'd say put your money where your mouth is in your diversity and inclusion statements.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Dubourg.

[English]

I would like to thank our panellists, Ms. Lhamo and Ms. Turdush, very much for their appearance here today. I think you saw how much members of the committee appreciated your coming.

Now we will suspend while we connect the next panellists. Thank you so much.

We'll suspend for two minutes.

• (1930)

(Pause)

• (1935)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting back to order.

For our second panel this evening, we have Cherie Wong, executive director at Alliance Canada Hong Kong, as well as Kyle Matthews, executive director at the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies.

Thank you both for being here.

Let's start with Ms. Wong. For opening remarks, you have five minutes.

**Ms. Cherie Wong (Executive Director, Alliance Canada Hong Kong):** Thank you for inviting me again to speak to the committee.

Before I start, I want to make clear that the diasporic communities are not a monolithic group. With heightened geopolitical tensions, we need to prioritize the protection of the diaspora and dissident communities from CCP surveillance and intimidation and to be critical while not fanning xenophobia.

I was asked to speak about harassment and intimidation today, but what I'm about to tell you may not be what you're expecting.

Dissidents are not safe—not in their own homes, not in civil societies, not at work, and not in Canada. This is because threats, censorship and intimidation will continue as long as companies, non-profits, academia, politicians, media and other institutions with vested interests are fearful of angering Beijing and are doing its bidding.

Beijing is effectively exporting its authoritarianism overseas. From previous meetings, witnesses from Canada's intelligence and enforcement agencies have assured the committee of their collective effort in combatting foreign interference. With my lived experiences, I can tell you that the existing institutions and legislation are not working. Beijing's foreign influence cannot be addressed with blanket policies, as the CCP operates across sectors and often within legal grey areas, making bans or criminalization largely ineffective.

Last time I spoke about Beijing's global expansionist authoritarianism, their blatant disregard for international rules-based order, their influence and interference operations in Canada, and I included my own experience of surveillance and intimidation. Beijing's capabilities, capacities and ambitions already pose a dangerous threat, but few countries fully see their global strategy of influence. The CCP has been testing the tolerance of liberal democracies with their authoritarian over-reach as international norms are being rewritten.

The current approach to China lacks the comprehensive view from the diasporic communities that speak the language and understand its history, culture and intentions. Activists have witnessed these influence efforts since the 1990s. It's not new, but only newly realized.

In ACHK's most recent report and recommendations, we covered service-level examinations of seven aspects of the CCP's foreign interference in Canada: political influence; elite capture; surveillance and intimidation; information and narrative discursion warfare; academic influence and vulnerability of intellectual property; national security; and the United Front Work Department. We found similar tactics, strategies and operations throughout the various sectors.

We need a whole-of-government approach to how Canada engages with foreign authoritarian powers such as China. We need to invest in the proper tools, infrastructures and resources to protect Canadians and our national interests. Canada has an important role to play on the international stage, as multilateral actions are an effective way to confront Beijing collaboratively, but it is imperative to expand Canada's foreign and domestic policy toolbox to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Our recommendations are as follows.

Create legislation for foreign influence transparency schemes, a public registry of individuals, of organizations and representatives who are acting on behalf of foreign states in Canada. The transparency scheme should be paired with a public commission with investigative and enforcement powers, serving as a centralized point to coordinate the different levels of government and Canadian institutions, public agencies and the general public.

Support Canadian research and intellectual property with a cohesive federal policy to regulate research collaborations with foreign actors, while increasing funding for Canadian innovation.

Invest in resources and infrastructures for ethnic communities in Canada.

Protect Canadians by placing restrictions on foreign actors from the collection, purchase or export of Canadian personal information and data.

Harassment and intimidation of Canadians need to be understood from the perspective of dissidents. We need an approach to foreign interference that centres the community's needs while addressing the issue holistically and strategically.

Thank you again for having me. I am happy to answer your questions.

● (1940)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Wong.

We'll now go to Mr. Matthews for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Kyle Matthews (Executive Director, Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies):** Thank you very much.

I'm pleased to join you this evening. I will do my presentation in English, but afterwards I will be able to speak both languages.

[*English*]

Dear esteemed members of Parliament, thank you for the invitation to give testimony to the Special Committee on Canada-China relations. I lead the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University. I applaud the committee for

studying issues related to the national security dimension of the Canada-China relationship, including cyber-enabled influence operations, espionage, cybersecurity, foreign interference and harassment. I think many democracies around the world are dealing with this right now and no one quite has an answer.

The rise of authoritarian China poses an existential threat to Canada's values and interests, including the respect for human rights, the rule of law and the future of democracy. That can't be said enough. In March 2019, my institute hosted Dolkun Isa, leader of the World Uyghur Congress. The Chinese consul general contacted me by email the day before the event, seeking to urgently discuss the event. I ignored his email only to find out that the next day the Chinese consulate in Montreal had put pressure on the mayor of Montreal to have our event cancelled. Thankfully, no one succumbed to this foreign interference. I had follow-up with Canadian officials, Global Affairs Canada and CSIS, and the event was covered by the U.S. State Department in its annual reports on human rights in China.

That incident that happened to me and my colleagues follows other examples in Canada and around the world where the Chinese government has purposefully attempted to curtail academic freedom, while simultaneously stomping upon our fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of opinion, and privacy, to name just a few of those human rights.

Since 2019, Canadians have seen two of our citizens locked up for over 900 days, a deadly pandemic killing over three million people across the planet, disinformation campaigns targeting democracies in an attempt to foster mistrust in our own democratic institutions in the media, as well as to sow distrust about western-developed COVID-19 vaccines. We've also seen economic warfare against our ally, Australia, for having the audacity to call for international investigation into the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have seen similar blowback and retribution against Canadian politicians and U.S. and European officials, for labelling abuses against Uighurs as genocide. We see a very aggressive China that we haven't seen four or five years ago. These actions by China—I don't mean the people, but the CCP—reveal that the government there is a hostile actor with far-reaching implications for Canada and our allies.

While this committee is tasked with the immense challenge of what Canada should do about China, let me offer a few insights. China is trying to win the global competition to be a tech leader and is exporting these technologies across the planet, as well as to Canada. It is imperative that a more robust response be taken to limit the export of Canadian technologies to China and for us to work with our democratic allies to counter digital authoritarianism. We must not allow Huawei to establish Canada's 5G network. Both the Czech Republic and the Netherlands are examples that we cannot ignore of where privacy cannot be guaranteed.

I'd like to talk about genocide and surveillance. All Chinese companies that have been found to have assisted Beijing in the surveillance and persecution of the Uighur Muslim minority should not be allowed into the Canadian market or to provide financing and co-operate with Canadian universities. Tencent, Hikvision Huawei and iFlytek are all documented as having offered their services to Beijing's genocide and are complicit in these crimes. This past weekend, the Globe and Mail reported that iFlyTek is funding projects at Queen's University and York University. This is unacceptable. The same concept should be applied to the Canada pension plan contributions that are being invested in companies involved in Uighur genocide. This is not a good look for us.

Last but not least, Facebook recently announced that it had taken down a coordinated cyber harassment campaign targeting Uighurs living in numerous western countries, including Canada. We must develop operational capabilities to protect Canadian citizens from surveillance and online harassment and to expose who is behind these actions.

Thank you for having me today.

• (1945)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Matthews.

We'll now go to our first round of questions and begin with Mr. Williamson for six minutes, please.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Thank you very much and thank you to both our witnesses for coming forward today.

Ms. Wong, could I ask you to talk about your personal experience of being harassed and threatened by other individuals. Could you just talk about that a little bit? It's important for us to hear your stories so we can understand more than just the statistics, but what individuals who are speaking out face in Canada.

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Long before I was executive director of ACHK, I was a local organizer in Ottawa, where I organized a couple of protests, and we were invited to speak to the press. I found that soon after I had spoken to the media, I would get hundreds of messages on my social media. These were very explicit messages, anywhere from calling me "democracy" a pun on democracy—to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to rape me and my mother like pigs and slaughter us in our sleep. It's been very tough being an activist and speaking about Hong Kong issues when these are the kinds of threats I face online. Despite this, online harassment, as we know, is not widely addressed by the police agencies.

The last time I was at committee, I also spoke about when I travelled to Vancouver, where a teammate had booked my hotel room. However, two days after we had done the launch of Alliance

Canada Hong Kong, a strange man called my hotel room, identified me by name, identified me by my room number and said they were "coming to get" me. Those were the exact words being repeated. I did what I was supposed to do. I called the Vancouver police and said, "I feel in danger, and I don't feel safe." They said that they would send officers to my location. They did. I never met the officers. They were dismissed at the hotel lobby because it was not a real threat; it was not an issue they would address because it was not criminal. I called again, and there was no follow-up.

Even today, I cannot forget those words that were said to me on the phone: "We are coming to get you." It was very explicitly a form of intimidation, but it was very carefully crafted because it was not criminal in intent, and that is how they're able to get away with it.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Thank you.

I can tell that that's difficult and not a pleasant experience, but I appreciate your sharing it again in parts with us.

What are your feelings when you hear senior law enforcement in this country talking about the need to do more, but then nothing happens? You saw the commissioner of the RCMP here a few weeks ago, for example, who admitted that more needs to be done, but that seemed to be it. Meanwhile, we are hearing more and more stories like yours, and people don't know where to turn for help or for support.

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Like I said, these kinds of harassment attempts are very carefully crafted. Despite the fact that there have been very real death threats against dissidents, the police have also said that there is nothing they can do, and there are no first steps to do to protect these individuals. We know that policing doesn't work, and this is why we recommended a foreign transparency scheme paired with the commission because this type of information cannot really... We can't let it go. We can't let these stories go, and we can't let this kind of valuable information go without sharing it with the public. The public should know how many Canadians feel unsafe and feel that they're being harassed.

The CCP is only one regime. We know that other governments are also doing these types of behaviours, and we need federal data collection on these types of issues.

• (1950)

**Mr. John Williamson:** Thank you very much.



Mr. Matthews, I assume it's probably Professor Matthews.

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** No.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Okay. I'm glad I corrected myself.

Mr. Matthews, you mentioned in your opening remarks that there is an existential threat toward Canadian values. Can you explain what you mean by that a little bit? That suggests a near and present danger in terms of our way of life and the freedoms that we take for granted far too often.

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** I think if we look outside of our borders, we're seeing a rise of authoritarian countries and a decline of democracy. There are several powerful authoritarian states. Russia is one, but China is predominantly the most powerful right now. It has deep pockets. It's buying off other countries, and it's actually gaining a lot of influence with the United Nations. We see how it's held up any investigation of the COVID outbreak at the WHO, or how it took a year for the WHO team to arrive in China. We've seen some things going on at the Human Rights Council.

I'm saying that when an authoritarian state clearly doesn't believe in human rights—what's going on with the Uighurs, what's going on in Hong Kong and with other minorities—and is exporting those values with other authoritarian states, that's a big problem.

That's why President Biden recently said that we're going to see that democracies versus autocracies is going to be the fight of the century, and we're seeing more and more countries waking up and realizing that the power of China is so immense that it picks individual countries and just targets them. In the case of Australia, it's banning Australian wine imports and beef. Now they're going after iron ore, Australia's biggest export. It's using targeted economic measures, as well as arresting citizens, to get its way.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much—

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** To me, that's a threat.

**The Chair:** —and thank you, Mr. Williamson.

We'll now go to Ms. Yip for six minutes, please.

**Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Thank you to both of the witnesses for coming this evening, especially for the small sacrifices of a hockey game and a soft couch.

I'll direct my question to Ms. Wong.

In your opening statement, you mentioned that dissidents are not safe, not in Canada, and you have just told Mr. Williamson about your personal experience. Are their experiences similar?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Yes. We have some threats being made against [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and also [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] humanitarian crisis in Hong Kong.

Recently, a Toronto Star article featured an individual who faced that death threats and reported it to the RCMP, and no action was taken.

These are very real harassment and intimidation tactics, but there are also intimidation tactics that are a little more subtle. For example, if someone went to a protest, their boss would ask them why they went to the protest, saying that if they went again, the boss might have to fire them.

It's not necessarily the boss being a Chinese state agent, but they're afraid that, in association, their employee who chose to side with Hong Kongers might anger Beijing and might threaten their business relations.

That is why I said that it is not safe for them at work and in civil societies, in academia and so many various sectors, because this kind of harassment and intimidation happens not only through explicit threats but also implicit and lateral surveillance and policing.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** Recently the RCMP came to our committee and talked extensively about a 1-800 tip line.

Have you or the other dissidents had an opportunity to use that? Is that tip line even known?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** As I do a lot of research into the sector, this tip line is known to me. However, no, our average community members do not know about this tip line, and many of them do not trust the tip line either.

Many of us have been sent from department to department. For example, I was sent from the Vancouver Police Department to the RCMP, to CSIS, back to Vancouver and all over again. Our community doesn't have trust in the policing agencies, because so many times we have reached out for help and they have let us down every single time.

We know that policing won't work on incidents such as your boss threatening to fire you in fear of Beijing, though that is foreign influence. That is not a criminal offence that could be charged by the RCMP or any policing department.

● (1955)

**Ms. Jean Yip:** I'm very sorry to hear about your experience, as well as the experiences of your other co-dissidents.

At the committee, they also mentioned that there are increasing reports of investigations into foreign interference. Do you think there are more cases, or do you think the threat has always been present but now more people are more competently able to come forward because of maybe media attention?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Foreign influence from China has explicitly been happening since the nineties. Soon after the Tiananmen Square massacre, they realized that they needed to control overseas dissidents to ensure that there would be less resistance to the Beijing regime.

This has been happening for a very long time. It has increased in power since Xi Jinping has taken over, but it is deeply embedded in various sectors in Canada. It has to be looked at as a holistic issue and not an individual policy issue.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** Where you find that the community cannot go to the police, I acknowledge that there is more work to be done, for sure. Would you consider that part of the grey area you mentioned in your report?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Absolutely. There are a lot of incidents of harassment where it doesn't qualify as a criminal offence. This is why we need external tracking and an external commission to deal with these types of grey-zone issues.

Foreign investment is not illegal either, but when a foreign actor is buying up large amounts of Canadian data, that is something we need to look at. We need someone who is not law enforcement, because they look at it from a black and white perspective. We need someone who is able to navigate the nuances and look at individual cases rather than a systemic issue.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** These behaviours are not covered by Canada's Criminal Code or any other legislation. Is that right?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Many of the activities are, but as the previous panel said, there are explicit death threats—and with the policing, nothing—so criminalizing these events obviously does not work. There are many activities that are outside of what would be considered a crime under the Criminal Code. For example, my family may get harassed after I have appeared here at committee, but that is not a criminal offence.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** Do I have any more time left?

**The Chair:** You only have 15 seconds.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** Thank you very much for your answer, and I hope to hear more recommendations from you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Yip.

[Translation]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank our two witnesses, who I am glad to see again.

Ms. Wong, we met at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

My questions are for both of you, and I invite you to jump in whenever you want.

First, in general, I'd like to hear from you about how organized the response is to your activities and activism.

What makes you think that it can't be something organic coming from small groups in civil society, but that the response is really organized by the state?

[English]

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** These operations are very well coordinated. In one of my previous submissions to CACN, we recorded a weekend of events that happened globally. Hong Kongers call for a globalized event. On August 6, we called for a globalized solidarity

event, and from August 13 to 16, the days the event was held, people in over 10 countries were harassed. All of these protests were surrounded by pro-Beijing crowds who have almost the same slogans and almost the same posters. For some events, they even came with rubber pads ready for a physical altercation with the Hong Kong protesters.

I understand that we could say that they are exercising their rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I am only able to tell you what I can see, which is on the surface, but there are very large coordination efforts behind these operations, because you see them very prepared. We see businesses offering free meals for these protests. We also know that organizations such as the Chinese Students and Scholars Association and other United Front-associated groups would threaten individuals who did not show up or threaten individuals who dared to go and support the pro-democracy movement. It is a very coordinated effort. It's difficult to see, because a lot of these operations happen in Chinese, and it's through Chinese social media on WeChat and Weibo, so they are difficult to spot.

● (2000)

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin :** Thank you.

Since we're dealing with something organized by the state and they are state tactics, would a state response on our part be warranted?

Civilian groups here organizing against the Chinese Communist Party may not have the structure, the strength, or the resources to respond to the threats being made.

[English]

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** I think we do need a federal response, because we see this co-ordination not only happening in Canada; it's happening in our ally countries. We should create a multilateral response for this kind of question.

I think first and foremost we need to centre the needs around the community. Many individuals are coerced into participating in these pro-Beijing rallies as well. If they don't show up, their families will be threatened. If they don't show up, their scholarships will be pulled. I want to present that very human side, that CSSAs are mobilizing these activities. There are other United Front groups mobilizing these activities, but not all participants are really supporters of the regime; they are forced.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

Ms. Wong, I believe you listened to the previous panel and heard me talk about collecting statistics.

I'd like your opinion on the importance of having a one-stop shop to receive complaints, even if they are not under federal jurisdiction. It would be nice to at least have something structured so that we can keep statistics and the public understands the extent of the phenomenon.

[English]

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Absolutely. One of the proposed recommendations we have is a public commission on foreign influence paired with the transparency scheme so that it would act as a registry body for foreign actors to sign up to ensure that their activities are recorded here in Canada, but that commission could also double as a community support.

Community groups like ours that have faced extensive violence from the CCP and their affiliates would have a place to report these issues and ensure that they are kept on record, despite these not being criminal offences. That kind of data would help inform Canada to make better decisions that improve our national security.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

Mr. Matthews, I have a question for you. The Chinese Communist Party is successfully curtailing freedom of speech here, especially for Tibetan, Hong Kong and Uyghur nationals.

Are you concerned that this curtailing of freedom of expression will extend to the average person in Canada and that it will involve more and more subjects?

[English]

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** I saw a finger being held up there, so I'm not sure whether I'm allowed to talk or not.

**The Chair:** It means we have one minute.

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** One minute?

Listen, this is playing out on the Internet across the globe, but today I read that the Jamestown Foundation shows that the Chinese government has two million paid Internet commentators and 20 million part-time volunteers to engage in Internet trolling. When people express something online—or even make a comment—in a Canadian Internet sphere, there are people swarming them, trying to stop them from speaking. The harassment becomes so bad that they just no longer comment on it.

It is, then, about freedom of expression. You can weaponize social media—bots and real people—to silence others. This is also a big problem, and there are discussions about why the Chinese authorities get to use social media platforms that their own citizens aren't allowed to use.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Normandin.

[English]

Now, we'll go to Ms. Kwan for six minutes, please.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and the witnesses.

My first question is for Ms. Wong. I'm very sorry, first off, to hear about your experiences of threats that you've encountered both to you yourself and to your family.

We have a situation similar to that in Vancouver, in the sense that a concerned group came out to criticize and call for the resignation of a former judge, who happened to be an adviser to the premier, a genocide denier for the Uyghur people.

After that group came out and spoke publicly, one of the members received death threats; in fact, at least two death threats. They reported this to the RCMP, and there seemed to be very little follow-up with respect to it. The RCMP, of course, did not deem the threats to be of a sufficient level to require follow-up, even though the group wanted the RCMP to look further into the background of the person who made at least two threats. That request was never responded to.

I wonder, then, Ms. Wong, what your thoughts are about that. What role should the federal government play, if any, in those situations? Those who are elected will say, don't talk to me; go talk to the RCMP. The RCMP, though, is not following up.

What should be done?

• (2005)

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** We need strong advocacy for dissidents who are facing these difficult situations. I can speak from experience: the individuals who are facing these threats have never felt more alone. We have nowhere to go. We are talking to you today, but tomorrow we would be talking to the RCMP and asking and begging for help and be denied it.

We need a federal strategy on foreign influence, because harassment is only one corner of this massive iceberg. It's a threat that you face at work: being overlooked for a promotion because you didn't go to this pro-Asian protest. It's death threats that are overlooked and deemed irrelevant.

The community is hurting, and I just hope the government might look at the recommendations that not just I myself and my organization are putting forward but also the various witnesses who came before you who survive this violence. We need your support and we need it now. We can't any longer wait until someone really gets hurt.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

The House of Commons, as you know, voted on the motion to declare that there is genocide taking place of the Uighurs in China. A number of MPs refrained from voting. In particular, I note that some of my colleagues from the Chinese-Canadian community did not vote for this.

I wonder what your thoughts are on that? Do you think that there are any potential implications from the pressure they may feel from the Chinese government?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** I'll preface this answer by saying that this happens to every single party. There is not a single party not vulnerable to the CCP's influence; every single party is. From my report, I can tell you that we have recorded various incidents of political influence, at the federal, provincial and municipal levels down to the school board level.

When I see that many of your colleagues did not vote in favour of denouncing of the Uighur genocide, I see it as some form of pressure that they have felt. It may be through political donations that they would receive in a campaign period; it may be from volunteers that the United Front activities are able to mobilize.

It also may be just that they have a job lined up after their career as an MP and they don't want to piss off the investor. There is a range of answers to your question, but it is a trend that we have observed, not only in the House of Commons but also in the Senate.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** What would your proposed action be to address those kinds of pressures on elected officials?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** I believe we need a federal policy in a centralized place to address all forms of foreign influence. These actors are often the same and coming from the same organizations or the same network. A foreign-influence transparency scheme and a public commission paired with it would be able to enforce these registrations. If an individual organization or an actor is associated with a foreign state, they need to register. If they don't register, there should be enforceable and punishable offences—maybe a fine, maybe revoking their charitable status.

These kinds of issues cannot be buried under bureaucracy. Instead, we need to bring them to the light. Everyone in Canada should know who is doing these kinds of influence operations against their political officials.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

Mr. Matthews, do you have anything else to add to what Ms. Wong has said?

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** Yes, I think we need to see a serious investment by Canada. We've seen some interesting money coming to Heritage Canada to deal with online disinformation, misinformation and to build citizens' capacity. What we're dealing with here is something different. We don't have any program that's helping any Canadian NGOs, any think tanks, or anyone to really look into this, dig deep and try to map out who's doing what. I would point that out. Public Safety Canada had something for counterterrorism, to help people study and understand it and to be action-oriented. We're not seeing anything yet. Hopefully that might come about.

• (2010)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Matthews.

Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

We'll now go on to the second round, starting with Mr. Chiu for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for coming.

My first question is for Ms. Wong. Ms. Wong, your organization, the Alliance Canada Hong Kong, had published a report, "In Plain Sight: Beijing's unrestricted network of foreign influence in Canada". I wonder if you could table a copy for the committee's record.

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** It has been tabled. It's just waiting for translation.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Wonderful. Thank you.

In the section named "Information & Narrative Discursion Warfare", which is around page 13, your organization covers the diaspora media, the ethnic Chinese media, in Canada.

I happen to understand that June 4 is coming, the anniversary of what happened 32 years ago, in 1989. A few years ago in Vancouver, one of the two radio stations broadcasting in Cantonese and Mandarin started to refuse promotion activities for commemorating June 4. For example, last year's newspapers have turned down advertisement countering support for Hong Kong's national security law. What's your view on that?

Your report had only one very small section on it. Have you heard about that, and what does your organization think? Perhaps after you answer, Mr. Williams can respond too.

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Yes, thank you for the question.

Yes, unfortunately, it was a very small blurb, but there are a lot of ways that the information and narrative discursion warfare is being conducted here in Canada and other western liberal democracies.

To answer your question, I notice the same kinds of issues, where the Chinese language media here in Canada—whether in Cantonese or Mandarin—have been refraining from covering certain topics. It is part of the larger warfare against Canadian media, not only through harassment and intimidation of certain journalists who carry out these stories, but also systemically buying up Chinese ethnic media as a way to silence the information that is going out to the community.

It is a systemic problem. It's not only for June 4, but it is an ongoing concern of the community to see that the only access we have to Chinese language media is now in danger because it has been bought up by CCP affiliates.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Thank you.

Mr. Matthews.

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** I can just make general comments about this. I think there needs to be a lot of attention to what's happening in minority-language media in Canada. It falls off the radar. Most people who are native English or French speakers aren't following it, so we really need to have attention and focus on that to see what's going on, to see the ownership and what global narratives are trying to be framed or controlled. I think there's some work starting to be done by Heritage Canada on this, but I haven't seen enough besides by just a few university researchers.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** In your view, is this CCP propaganda running in Chinese communities in Canada effective? What effects would prolonged exposure to CCP propaganda have on Chinese communities or Canadians in general?

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** Are you asking me that question?

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** Yes.

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** I'm not studying the Chinese Canadian media, but the only thing that you can see is that it creates a gulf in how the Chinese Canadian community might see reality and how everyone else would. That is also not good for social cohesion where you might have more polarization, so we have to be very careful about that.

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** I asked you that because there are some legislators who are proposing Canadian governments ban not just CGTN, a mouthpiece like that, but also WeChat.

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** There's a wider discussion about reciprocity that social media platforms or media is not open in China and that as open societies, we're being exploited. There are those debates going on. I don't know where I stand on that. I think—

• (2015)

**Mr. Kenny Chiu:** That's fine. Thank you.

Ms. Wong, in the remaining 15 seconds, there's foreign influence and infiltration, and there's another section there about elite capture, etc. They are not limited to Chinese diaspora or ethnic Han Chinese only. Is that correct? In other words, it's colour-blind. They will welcome any infiltration. Am I correct?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** The wine and dine happens with Canadian and Chinese communities alike.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chiu.

[Translation]

Mr. Dubourg, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good evening, Ms. Wong and Mr. Matthews. Thank you for being with us tonight and for contributing to our committee's work.

Mr. Matthews, you spoke about the incident where you had invited the president of the World Uyghur Congress and the consulate interfered.

Since that interference, have you experienced any other types of intimidation from Chinese nationals or leaders?

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** No, we haven't.

After that event, a *La Presse* reporter was sent to interview the consul general. He really kowtowed to him. He did something truly ridiculous and it was picked up by the French- and English-language media across Canada.

We were allowed to proceed, and we invited Dolkun Isa to our institute again.

However, we started to have problems with people connected to extreme left Marxist-Leninist groups. I can't say if an alliance exists, but a lot of people criticize us online. When we talk about the Uyghurs, we are heavily criticized. When we get that, we suffer the psychological consequences. However, we haven't experienced the same pressure from the consul general.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** I assume you are aware of the threats that Ms. Wong and other witnesses received.

You have often spoken of a coordinated response to impose sanctions on China and to take action against it. In particular, you have talked about sanctions related to hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Keeping in mind the situation of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, who are still being arbitrarily detained, do you think that would carry much weight or significance?

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** On the one hand, I am against genocide and I support the Uyghurs. On the other, I support the two Michaels. They are two separate things, but I understand why the Canadian government is really in a tight spot right now. They want to protect our two Canadians.

If we send athletes to the Beijing Olympics, it sends a horrible message. How can we live with what is happening in Hong Kong and the Uyghurs' situation?

We know that the Beijing government is seeking glory on the international stage. Each time people criticize them, as Canadian and British members of Parliament have done, they get very angry. They are interested in what people think of them. I agree with Irwin Cotler and his team that the Olympics should be boycotted.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you.

So they are very attentive to gestures we make here.

I won't have time to ask Ms. Wong a question, but I would like to ask you one last brief question, Mr. Matthews.

You talk a lot about China's digital authoritarianism. Earlier, you alluded to the company Huawei and the 5G network.

Are any other Chinese companies in Canada engaging in inappropriate data gathering practices that we should be concerned about?

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** In my opinion, the Huawei company is the most concerning, because it will be able to take all the data on our telephones and we will no longer have our privacy. There's also the company Tencent, which is looking to expand its business. The United Nations had to exclude it from its 75th anniversary, because the company is involved in persecuting Uyghurs.

In addition, a lot of people work for new artificial intelligence companies setting up shop in Canada, in Montreal and in Quebec, among other places. We really need to keep an eye on that.

I believe Huawei is the most dangerous company right now, but there are many others.

● (2020)

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Dubourg.

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

The average person may not be aware of the Uyghur genocide issue and all the human rights stuff going on. If I tell my family at Christmas, they won't necessarily know about it.

Due to social media, China's tentacles will be spreading further and further, and its ability to act swiftly has probably improved since the 90s. This may affect more and more issues. Consider scientific freedom and environmental issues, for example. China remains quite a big polluter. It may want to change the international discourse. I'd like to get your perspective on that.

Do you feel the average person knows enough about everything going on in China?

Do we have a lack of social awareness or education about this?

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** All around the world, even in Canada, you can see that most people don't look favourably on China anymore.

[English]

Public polling of companies and citizens across the world, Canada included, shows that populations have totally unfavourable views of the Chinese government. It's partly COVID. It's partly the Uighur genocide, where concerns about it have really exploded, including as a result of campaigns against the fashion industry using slave labour.

There's a combination of factors, and you see this everywhere—in Western Europe, in Asia. It's a dangerous time for the Chinese authorities because they've been acting in a way that's very authoritarian, and they're making many enemies, not just among governments but among individual citizens.

On the issue of genocide, I'm not sure if the average Canadian knows the details of everything that's going on, but it's pierced people's conscience, and the attack against journalists and politicians is not a good look for Beijing.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Ms. Wong, did you want to comment?

[English]

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Social media has always been a tool of authoritarian regimes. They're able to use bots to create misinformation. This is where, as you said, we should be doing this kind of education because everyday Canadians are individuals who can choose between a slave-labour-made product and a non-slave-labour-made product. They are the people who are going to be investing in foreign actors, and they should know whether or not they're associated.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt, but I have to go on to the next member.

Ms. Kwan, you have two and a half minutes please.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

I'd like to ask Ms. Wong about self-censorship on the part of the local Chinese media. Does she see that happening, especially on the reporting of issues that may be critical of the Chinese government?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** Absolutely. Self-censorship has been widespread in the Chinese ethnic media because many journalists have families or friends who are still in China and PRC-controlled regions. They're afraid that if they speak up, their family and friends could be endangered.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

From that perspective, how can we address that issue? Is there any way that could be addressed in such a way that we could ensure that freedom of democracy and press is actually respected here in Canada?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** There's a very simple solution to this very complicated problem: fund ethnic media.

The reason it has been so infiltrated by the CCP is that they have been bringing in the resources that the Canadian government and Canadian local communities have been unable to provide. We need to build community resilience against this kind of misinformation and selective reporting. Providing more funding and providing support on the basis of this larger issue of foreign influence will also help address the issue.

I can't stress this enough. We need to put money into ethnic communities, especially right now as we talk about how the CCP has really hurt dissident communities.

● (2025)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** This is a particularly important issue, because many of the Chinese Canadians who read the local press will only just see what is reported, and if there's self-censorship taking place, then that information and what is taking place and concerns about China is not getting out to the larger public. Sometimes it could even be skewed.

Have you observed that some of the reporting is, in fact, skewed in favour of China?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** I'm hesitant to say “skewed”, because I have a very strong perspective, so I may not come across as a very impartial examiner, but I can tell you that many members of my community have had very violent confrontations with Chinese language media journalists who are pushing the limits. They were asked not to film their faces, but the journalists shoved the cameras into their face. That type of behaviour is also observed.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

We'll now go on to Ms. Stubbs for five minutes, please.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Thanks, Chair. I appreciate it.

Thank you to both of the witnesses for being here. It's overwhelming, isn't it? One hardly even knows where to start with questions.

Cherie, I'm struck by your repeated point, and, Kyle, by yours too, that this state infiltration by China's communist regime is not new and has been going on since the 1990s—the intimidation and threatening of people in China and around the world. It must feel like authorities and governments don't grasp the seriousness of this when, as individuals, you're sent between the variety of law enforcement agencies and different offices and offered a tip line. You see events like in the U.S. where they've made arrests under Operation Fox Hunt, and our government says that it needs to do more, but it's hard to identify if those things are happening.

Cherie, can I ask you a question about the discussion of all of this? Like others have said here, I think this is really new to a lot of Canadians—and shamefully, maybe for all of us—but I think it's really our obligation as members of Parliament to be asking hard questions about this and getting to solutions like you have proposed.

Do you have any comments about what could be the conflation of legitimate questions about the safety and security of individuals and national security threats posed by the communist regime with anti-Asian racism? Do you have any views on what that does to the conversation or to efforts to try to get at the facts and to solutions?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** As someone who is Asian, who is a dissident of the CCP and who is a Canadian, I have often been asked to choose sides and told that I can only do one and not the other.

I think, first and foremost, that we need to draw a difference between the Chinese communities, the ethnic Chinese communities, versus Hong Kongers, Tibetans, Uighurs and so on. They have often been conflated as one, and it's really harmful.

Put a difference between these communities and the CCP. In fact, the Chinese people are victims of the CCP regime. We are living such a horror because of the CCP, so holding the CCP accountable needs to be a separate discussion from conflating it as an anti-Asian racism issue.

This geopolitical tension has definitely triggered a rise in anti-Asian racism, and this why we have to be very careful in the terminologies that we use and the intentions, but also know that intention is not everything. Sometimes the action itself will be enough to hurt the community, and that's why always [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] centre the communities' needs, centre the dissident communi-

ties' needs in all of your policy decision-making, because we're the ones who have been bearing the brunt of these kinds of attacks, harassment and influence.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Thanks for that answer.

You outlined a number of possible solutions for policy-makers to take in your opening comments. I wonder if you might want to expand on what the benefit would be of a national registry for foreign agents. What would a “transparency scheme”, as you called it, actually look like? How would it work? How would it benefit people's safety and security?

**Ms. Cherie Wong:** I think one of the members previously mentioned that Canadians don't really understand foreign state actors and don't really know who they are. This is why we need a transparency scheme: to point out who they are, to point out these organizations who are receiving funding from state actors. After knowing that information, Canadians can make informed decisions. This means municipal actors, school boards and federal MPs like yourselves. During an election campaign, you don't know who's coming to volunteer, but having that public access to a list will help you identify the foreign actors. This could be expanded to, say, making a registry, a list, of known human rights abusers, of military actors, and encouraging the innovation in Canada to not collaborate with these actors. But we need public information in order to take real action.

• (2030)

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Chair, do we have any more time?

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** I was just going to ask Kyle if he wanted to expand on other solutions.

**The Chair:** In 15 seconds.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Yes.

Sorry about that.

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** Just look at the case of York University and Queen's. They got in bed with a Chinese company, an AI company that's repressing Uighurs.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Next is Mr. Fragiskatos for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll ask questions of Mr. Matthews. Before I do, though, I didn't think I'd need to put this on the record, and perhaps I don't as it should go without saying, but I will put it on the record.

Every MP I've had the privilege to work with over the years is loyal to this country. That, of course, includes MPs of Chinese heritage. I think it's a privilege to work in this place, Mr. Chair. I defend colleagues across the aisle. This isn't only about Liberal colleagues I have the chance to work with; it's about all MPs and all parties. We hold a loyalty to Canada and everything we do is for our constituents. I put that on the record this evening, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Matthews, thank you very much for your very interesting presentation. You used the term “digital authoritarianism”. I don't think you're the first to use it, but it's still something that piques my interest. Can you expand on what you mean by that when you say that China is pursuing exactly that type of an agenda?

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** It's a new term that has arisen in the last year and a half, but it's basically the authoritarian use of emerging technologies—AI, facial recognition, algorithms, looking at machine-driven communications—that really is authoritarian in every sense of the word. It's going to control. You have no privacy. Everyone is being surveilled. It's being rolled out. It's being tested on the Uighurs. Human Rights Watch did a massive report on algorithms imposed on apps to capture the facial images of Uighurs. We're seeing emotional technology to read emotions. It's this whole set of emerging technologies. It's hard to abuse those in democracies because we have civil society and journalists and opposition parties, but in a one-party state, the government can tell engineers or whoever designs these to do exactly that, and there's no ethical rollout or any consideration.

That's what's happening. I wrote a piece for opencanada.org about this and what Canada should do. I'd be happy to share it with the group. It's an emerging issue. My institute is doing more and more work on this. I know Global Affairs Canada is starting to get involved in it as well.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** I'll be happy to look up the piece on Open Canada, but perhaps in two and a half minutes you could summarize the main essence of the thesis in that piece.

What should Canada do to counter exactly that? Are there efforts being carried out by China to have Canadian firms, perhaps universities as well, assist in its effort to bring about a digital authoritarian approach?

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** There's definitely a lot of interest to capture research at Canadian universities, as well as American universities, on certain technologies that are going to be used for military purposes or for controlling populations. I put on a conference three years ago with the AI community and had an AI firm in Kitchener-Waterloo that was aggressively approached to sell stuff to China on facial recognition. They decided not to. They thought it would be misused, that none of the safeguards were....

There needs to be some kind of democratic consensus and alignment to stop the use of these technologies for nefarious purposes. We need to have export controls in Canada so that our technology is not misused for this. I think we need norms and regulations. There's a whole lot of talk about having a digital Geneva convention to limit the use of AI-powered drones and killer robots in war fields. It spans from privacy surveillance to automated weapons.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** I think I have just over a minute remaining.

In your opening testimony, you pointed to firms that have been involved in producing some of the technologies that are now being used in the persecution of the Uighur minority and the genocide of the Uighur minority. Could you elaborate on that? Do they have a presence in Canada?

● (2035)

**Mr. Kyle Matthews:** Huawei has been found guilty of surveillance of Uighurs. Tencent has been found guilty. The UN had to push them out of the 75th UN anniversary because of that. Human rights groups raised concerns. The i5 Tech is also involved in Canadian universities, including Queen's and York. So is Hikvision, a facial recognition technology company, that got a major deal with the European Parliament to put in facial recognition cameras to detect COVID heat from people's bodies. It turns out they were involved. The EU had to cancel that program and that budget because the company was involved in monitoring the Uighurs as well. It's pretty expansive.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Fragiskatos.

Let me thank the witnesses very much for their appearance this evening. It's deeply appreciated.

I'm now going to suspend for five minutes for the clerk to connect the next panellists, and also for a five-minute health break. If you can get back sooner, that's even better.

I should tell you the clerk is advising me that we have to stop at 9:30. We have a hard stop at 9:30. I'll see you in five minutes or less.

● (2035)

(Pause)

● (2040)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting back to order.

[*Translation*]

We are continuing the meeting.

I would like to welcome the last panel of witnesses.

We have the Honourable David McGuinty, Chair of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, and Sean Jorgensen, Director of Operations at the Secretariat of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians.

[*English*]

I thank you both very much for being here.

Mr. McGuinty, you may now proceed with your opening remarks. You have up to seven minutes.



**Hon. David McGuinty (Chair, National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and honourable members of the committee. Thank you for your invitation for me to appear this evening.

[*Translation*]

It is my pleasure to tell you about the work of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP).

[*English*]

In English, it's known as NSICOP.

As this is my first time before your committee, I will provide a brief overview of NSICOP and proceed with outlining our 2020 annual report, as well as our 2019 review of foreign interference. I will also touch upon the recommendations we made about ensuring the integrity of our elections.

As you know, NSICOP was established in 2017 and is composed of parliamentarians from both houses. All members hold a top-secret security clearance and are permanently bound to secrecy under the Security of Information Act. We cannot, under any circumstance, claim parliamentary privilege in a case of unauthorized disclosure of classified information.

[*Translation*]

The primary responsibility of the NSICOP is to conduct reviews of the national security and intelligence community and its constituent agencies. NSICOP reports are unanimous and non-partisan.

Our 2020 annual report focused primarily on threats to our national security, including an attempt to answer the following two questions. What has changed in recent years? How has the pandemic contributed to these threats?

[*English*]

Security and intelligence organizations described five main threats to Canada's national security when the committee began its work in 2018. They were terrorism; espionage and foreign interference; cyber-threats; organized crime; and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

I will focus on espionage and foreign interference, and cyber-threats, as likely being of most interest to this committee, but I encourage you to consult the full report.

Espionage involves the theft of information, while foreign interference involves the use of clandestine means, or threats to promote a certain objective. However, the perpetrators often pursue them in tandem.

The committee conducted a review of foreign interference in Canada in 2019. It found that foreign interference posed a significant threat to the security of Canada, and that continues to be the case today. The pandemic has also created opportunities for foreign states to target Canada's health sector, most notably in the area of vaccine development.

Turning to malicious cyber-activities, there are a wide array of threats facing Canada. I note that the committee is currently conducting a review of the government's cyber-defence. Russia and China remain the most significant, sophisticated and state-spon-

sored threats, targeting government and non-government systems. State actors also conduct online disinformation campaigns in Canada and among our allies.

Let me now turn to our review examining the threat of foreign interference in Canada and the government's response to that threat, presented in 2019.

The committee agreed to focus its efforts on traditional, person-to-person foreign interference. Of particular interest, we highlighted China's Operation Fox Hunt. It involves clandestine and coercive repatriation activities targeting apparent economic fugitives and corrupt officials, including in Canada. Chinese security officials carry out the campaign in a number of ways, including police and prosecutors working with the RCMP to arrange to meet fugitives to purportedly gather evidence and discuss their cases.

In response to Fox Hunt activities, Global Affairs Canada established an interdepartmental working group that met regularly to discuss the campaign. The RCMP imposed increasingly stringent criteria on PRC investigators, yet activities continued.

● (2045)

[*Translation*]

We found that the government's response to the threat of foreign interference, which is significant and sustained, was ad hoc and that our engagement with other levels of government and the Canadian public was limited. The NSICOP recommended that the government develop a comprehensive strategy to counter foreign interference and build institutional and public resiliency, which is described in paragraph 297.

With specific reference to the risk of foreign interference in our democratic processes, let me turn to the report of James Judd, prepared pursuant to the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol.

States that attempt to interfere with Canada's electoral processes use a number of methods, including attempts to influence constituency nominations and to promote one candidate or undermine another. They may also include efforts to spread hate or inflame partisan differences.

[*English*]

Mr. Chair, this happens to all parties, across all orders of government.

The committee supported recommendations to re-establish the public protocol well in advance of the next federal election and to extend this mandate to the pre-writ period.

The committee also believed that the government should consider ensuring that the mandate of the protocol include all forms of foreign interference, consider including prominent Canadians as members of the panel, ensure that all parties understand the purpose of the protocol and the process for raising a potential issue, and consider how the panel would inform Canadians about an incident of foreign interference.

Mr. Chair, to conclude, threats to the security of Canada are fluid. They change. These are all things that we, parliamentarians from across the political spectrum, should continue to pay attention to and seek ways to address through our hearings, our work, our work on legislation and our engagement with Canadians.

Finally, Mr. Chair, before going forward, hopefully to questions, I want to remind you and members that these reports, both hard copies that were sent to the members, are 230 pages in length. They comprise 456 paragraphs in one report and 125 paragraphs in another, and all of this work is predicated on 28,000 pages of documentation and dozens of witnesses and experts.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. McGuinty.

[*Translation*]

We will now proceed to the first round of questions.

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good evening, Mr. McGuinty. Thank you for joining us today.

The report is quite clear. Also, the public report clearly does not contain the highly secret information. To help you shed some light on this for us, I would like to draw a parallel with what happened in Australia, since you mention it in your report.

The Australian Parliament and political parties were victims of cyber attacks. In addition, a paragraph in your report states that there was a large-scale direct attack, in the middle of the pandemic, in June 2020, against companies, hospitals, schools, and even government officials.

Can we draw a parallel with Canada? Can Canada respond to what happened in Australia?

Could we be exposed to exactly the same sorts of attacks?

• (2050)

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Thank you very much for the question.

The simple answer is yes. Anything is possible in Canada. In the main recommendation to the government in 2019, we cited the example of what Australia has done to create a more centralized system and provide coordinated leadership to deal with the whole issue of foreign interference. We brought that model to the attention of the government.

I think Minister Blair circulated a 20-page document in December outlining what the government has done since that report was released. However, based on what we have seen, the simple answer is that anything is possible.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Right now, in Canada, when I look at everything that is happening with National Defence and various departments, I believe that there is an urgent need to consolidate our actions, because we work a lot in silos. Bill C-59 was passed two or three years ago to try to improve the situation, but perhaps the Canadian way of doing things is causing us problems. We often seem to think that we are nobody's enemy, but your report clearly shows that we are also under attack, not only from China, since we are here today to talk about China, but also from Russia.

The report also mentions that the possibility of attacks is linked to armed conflicts between states. Yet in the United States, pipelines have been directly attacked when there was no open conflict.

In Canada, could our oil and gas system be the target of this type of attack, even if there is no armed conflict?

[*English*]

**Hon. David McGuinty:** The 2020 report sets out the risks inherent to Canada's critical infrastructure. It highlights what has taken place in other jurisdictions. It even highlights the fact that our Communications Security Establishment played a critical role in detecting threats to American critical infrastructure and shared them with the United States.

In the report, yes, we lay out very clearly the magnitude of some of these threats. We also, of course, have a number of prescriptions in our 2019 report on how to deal with these. Chief amongst these—to go back to what I said earlier, sir—is that we need a central, coordinated, pan-Canadian approach to dealing with the question of foreign interference and we need to get it now.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Let's talk about electoral interference. You mentioned the interference at different levels of government. We are focusing primarily on the federal government, but in Canada, our provinces are actually quite independent. I've had discussions with some people, and I think there are huge concerns from provincial governments, because they are also victims of cyber attacks and of interference on their territory.

In your recommendations, did you indicate a way that would help our provinces?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** In 2019, we clearly outlined the challenges for the federal government, including communicating risks to other levels of government in Canada and to the Canadian public. In response to the Judd report, we also made recommendations to improve the make-up and mandate of the group that was created to receive complaints or information in the event of a problem, cyber or otherwise, during a federal election.

However, we have a great deal of progress to make. We have clearly seen in the report that foreign interference in our elections affects all political parties in the House of Commons and all levels of government.

• (2055)

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** In your report, you don't talk specifically about the People's Liberation Army in China, but do you consider them to be a significant player in cyber attacks?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask Mr. Jorgensen to answer that question. I think he has more to say on that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Actually, I'm sorry, we're at the end of Mr. Paul-Hus' time. Perhaps we'll have another opportunity for that. I regret it. We're just over the six-minute point, so I have to go on. I'm happy to do so, of course, but I regret leaving Mr. Paul-Hus.

We'll go on to Mr. Fragiskatos for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I didn't hear any regret in your voice, so we're all good there.

Mr. McGuinty, thank you very much for being here tonight, and to Mr. Jorgensen, as well. I really appreciate your time.

Mr. McGuinty, what can you share with the committee about Canada's election integrity? You mentioned that at the outset of your remarks, but we'd like to hear more on that, if possible.

**Hon. David McGuinty:** If we turn to the 2020 annual report, starting at paragraph 12, Canadians and members can see a description of the critical election incident public protocol that was put in place. It's a big name, but it basically creates a panel of five persons chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council to be on guard for Canadians during the federal election process.

When it was originally constituted, it was all about receiving information about cyber interference activities during a federal election. A report was then prepared by Jim Judd, the former head of CSIS. That report, under the cabinet decree, was sent to NSICOP for review.

As a result of deliberations, the committee made a number of recommendations to the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada to improve that panel. We illustrated as well, of course—as Mr. Paul-Hus just referred to and if you look at paragraph 70 of our report—the fact that China likely launched cyber attacks on the Australian Parliament and three largest political parties before its last general election. We cite, of course, Russian activities in the U.S. 2016 presidential election.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Thank you very much for that.

I do want to ask you a general question about three specific things, which are espionage, foreign interference and cyber attacks.

To what extent is Canada actively working in concert with other countries—middle powers in particular—to counter any impact of those on our democracy? What can you share with us on that?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** I think it's fair to say that in our 2019 foreign interference review, we indicated that we have a lot of work to do on improving co-operation between the federal, provincial and municipal orders of government on this front. As one of the

speakers on your other panel said earlier, we also have a lot of work to do to enhance Canadians' understanding of the threats.

One of the things that we did do was to join with the G7 to create a rapid response mechanism in 2018 and a summit in June 2018. We're now co-operating amongst the G7 to have a rapid response mechanism to follow and get informed about things that might be occurring in each of our respective jurisdictions. There's a significant amount of co-operation going on.

We believe there's much more progress to make from a whole-of-government perspective in the Canadian context.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Thank you very much.

For my final question here, you did mention that a focus of the committee has been terrorism. On the rise of the incel subculture specifically, I wanted to ask if you have any thoughts you can share on that. The public reports that have been issued by the committee have come up and I think it speaks to the fact that the nature of national security is changing. The nature of terrorism, in fact, is changing.

Could you elaborate on that and any overlap that exists between incel subculture and white supremacist movements, if there's a connection between those two? Some have made that observation in the past.

• (2100)

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Time being of the essence, Mr. Chair, I would recommend that members take a look at paragraphs 31 and forward in our 2020 annual report. We clearly lay out the rise of IMVE, which is ideologically motivated violent extremism movement. It is spreading quickly. Canada has a very large per capita participation. It's up to 6,600 identified right-wing extremist channels, pages, groups and accounts. There are many different actors. At least a hundred white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups existed in Canada, but now we believe that's up to about 300.

The growth has been exponential. It's a serious risk to Canada's national security. We've laid it out in a very clear form with all of the information that we could provide Canadians.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** It looks as though I have around 45 seconds left.

When you say, Mr. McGuinty, that on a per capita basis the numbers are very high, can you elaborate on that? In comparison with other democracies, are we singled out in that sense?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** What we talk about and point to in the report is that one prominent message board [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] alone, for example, on which Canadians are more much more active than American and British users...

The point about this is that extremist dialogue is not necessarily criminal, but Canada is providing a large base from which to recruit or to become radicalized, from within and from without the country, and that is one of the trends that's most worrisome—one of the biggest changes in our 2020 annual report compared with what we saw in 2018 in the same area.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Fragiskatos.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Good evening, Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Jorgensen.

I had a short but very pleasant stay with your committee, and it is with some regret that I had to leave you.

This brings me to my next question. Someone on the committee is very keen to take over, and that someone is Mr. Bergeron, whom I am replacing here tonight. I would like to ask the question on his behalf.

Your committee produces non-partisan and unanimous reports, but one voice is missing right now. Can we have an update on the status of Mr. Bergeron's application?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Good evening, Ms. Normandin.

I'm sorry to have lost you as a member of our committee. I'm also sorry that I'm not able to tell you what is happening in the Prime Minister's Office and in the Privy Council Office.

Our committee is missing a few members. We have lost two members from the Liberal Party, and there have been changes proposed to the Conservative Party. I think the Prime Minister and his staff are reviewing it all.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much for the update.

In your opening remarks, you talked about the importance of institutional and public resiliency. At one of our committee's recent meetings, Mr. Juneau-Katsuya appeared and talked about the role of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) in educating private companies. Your committee has slightly changed the discourse by saying that CSIS made a mistake, which Mr. Juneau-Katsuya denied, pointing out that CSIS did the right thing in that context.

Could you comment on that and on whether the position of the NSICOP will change in the future?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** One of the challenges that we have identified in our analysis of foreign interference is that people in many areas of Canada are not allowed to see or receive classified briefings because they do not have the necessary secret or top secret security clearance.

Today, we are seeing exactly the same situation with respect to our universities. Measures have recently been announced in Alberta and many administrators, academics and university presidents are scratching their heads wondering what exactly is going on.

Our government needs to address this challenge, and we have determined that it requires a whole-of-government approach. I think we will have to be a little open now. But it's up to CSIS to determine how to do so and who to do it with.

Municipal police officers also have this challenge. More and more officers do not understand what foreign interference means. A lot of progress needs to be made in this area and a lot of information needs to be shared.

• (2105)

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

My next question is about the role of international allies. Ms. Brady recently appeared before our committee and we talked about the situation in Australia.

Could you tell us what you think about the situation in the United Kingdom, which has just released a very robust report entitled the "Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy"? Nothing like it has been done since the Cold War. The report seems to be very interested in the resilience of national infrastructures.

As we know, among the Five Eyes, only Canada has been perhaps a little more lax on the Huawei issue. The U.K. seems to be perhaps a little more concerned about who owns some of the technologies used by the government.

Is this something that the NSICOP is concerned about, or are they concerned enough to do a study on it?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** First, the NSICOP has not studied the issue of Huawei and the use of that technology.

Second, the comprehensive study done by the U.K. is quite extraordinary. It's something that hasn't been done in Canada for decades. How does it all tie together and get managed? Is it effective and are we getting value for our money?

A lot of progress needs to be made. There has been some discussion at the NSICOP, but we haven't had time to address it yet because we are so busy with other studies on cyber security, foreign affairs, the department and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

It's an excellent suggestion that could inform our work.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

Speaking of technology, could the NSICOP have a role to play in a T-12 group to fight the illiberal use of technology by China? Could that be a worthwhile topic?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** It might be worthwhile, but again, it's not a topic that has been discussed at the NSICOP. We are very disciplined in that regard, and our reports only deal with topics that the NSICOP has addressed.

Having said that, thank you for these excellent suggestions.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Normandin.

[English]

Now we'll continue with Mr. Harris for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, Mr. McGuinty, for coming to us tonight. I appreciate your work on NSICOP.

I'd like to talk a little bit about foreign influence in Canada with respect to criminal activity, particularly things like money laundering as it affects the activities in Canada of criminalized gangs, some of them with foreign influence connections. The estimates that you quote in your report indicate that there's an upper estimate of \$100 billion of investment in Canada through money laundering. I would call it "investment" using the term loosely. It's most prominent in real estate and casinos.

These are the most publicly discussed domestic examples, but it's also been looked at by CSIS and the RCMP, and referenced of course in your 2018 and 2019 reports regarding a project called "Sidewinder" that was referenced in the paper that was produced by Anne-Marie Brady, who has appeared before us. She relied on the 1997 draft report between CSIS and the RCMP with the code name "Project Sidewinder", which aimed to gather and analyze intelligence about efforts by the Chinese government and Asian criminal gangs to influence Canadian business and politics. That's a very serious subject, of course.

This leaked report, a 1997 draft, was in fact discredited by SIRC itself in 1999 and 2000, which said it didn't really meet the standards of professional and analytic rigour. They also noted that they revised the report, and a finalized version was issued in January 1999. For some reason, NSICOP in 2018 or 2019 doesn't refer to the finalized Sidewinder reports. Is that report available to NSICOP for its review? Was it aware of it? Did it ask for it?

• (2110)

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Mr. Chair, could I ask my director of operations and research to take a stab at that question? I don't want to get this wrong. That's a very pointed question about a single document.

**Mr. Sean Jorgensen (Director of Operations, Secretariat of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The only thing I would say about that is that we didn't ask for that specific report. If we were to do so, I believe it would be available to us. There would be nothing preventing our getting it, but we didn't ask for it.

With respect to Ms. Brady, I understand that she did reference it, but when we referenced Ms. Brady's reports, it was in a much broader context and on the basis of much wider research and an analytic review that she conducted.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** My concern, though, is that the idea of this money laundering and the criminal gang activity occurring in Canada to the extent that has been noted was identified as being related to foreign interference and the connection of foreign interfer-

ence. Your report in 2020 doesn't even talk about it in terms of foreign interference. It talks about having some commercial influence and about perhaps inflating housing prices and putting houses out of reach of large segments of the population.

The only mention of potential trouble is a footnote to paragraph 90 that cites an article that says how Chinese gangs are laundering drug money through Vancouver real estate. However, there is no mention at all in your 2020 report about this having some Chinese government influence, which is the subject of the Sidewinder report in its revised form.

I'm wondering why it is that this would be missed by NSICOP in its reporting in 2020 when it made reference to it in 2018 and 2019.

**Hon. David McGuinty:** That's an omission I cannot address for you, Mr. Harris. I could certainly find out and get back to you.

I think the report, though, does talk about the resurgence of groups, how many of those are considered to be national security threats, and to what extent some of these groups are transnational. We talk about the fact that the RCMP is conducting a number of priority investigations related to transnational, serious organized crime. We talk about the limitations of FINTRAC's ability to track international monies that are coming into Canada for laundering.

I think we have tried to capture it as best we can, but on that particular point, unless Mr. Jorgensen has more information, I will definitely get back to you.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Yes. I only have a short time left, so perhaps I should ask a question.

Would NSICOP be interested in knowing the extent of whether or not there is government influence—Chinese government influence—in this, and whether this is actually being studied and has been studied for decades by the various security agencies? There seems to be a bit of a lack of thorough review of that. Would that be of interest to NSICOP for the future?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** I think it would be. I'm not so certain that it's a lack of thoroughness. We did tackle 29,000 pages of documents, so we did the best we could, but we certainly will come back to you. I will check with my team.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Harris.

I will now go to the second round, which will have to be a little bit abbreviated as we finish at 9:30 p.m.

We will start with Ms. Stubbs for five minutes, please.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Hi, Mr. McGuinty. It's nice to see you again on this committee now.

Certainly, as you have pointed out in your comments today, as well as in the the 2020 NSICOP report, “[t]he threat from espionage and foreign interference is significant and continues to grow” and “China and Russia remain the primary culprits” and “the most significant long-term threats to Canada's sovereignty and prosperity.”

I guess I noted, though, that the 2018 NSICOP annual report also said:

China is known globally for its efforts to influence Chinese communities and the politics of other countries. The Chinese government has a number of official organizations that try to influence Chinese communities and politicians to adopt pro-China positions....

It cites wealthy Chinese businessmen, Chinese students, mobilized diaspora populations, political donations, demonstrations, and influencing Chinese language media. Certainly, Canadians are hearing more and more about the implicit, explicit and multi-layered threats to academia, to the political sphere, to research and technology, to science and to the scientific sectors.

I guess it's fair, I think you would say, for us to draw a conclusion that it's evident that threats to Canadians from China's Communist regime have continued to grow and to evolve.

Could you, for all of us, just highlight the highest priority measures that the government should implement to combat foreign interference from China and to protect the safety and security of Canadians? Even on the example of Operation Fox Hunt, you probably know that I have asked multiple questions about this issue. The United States has made several arrests, yet still in Canada, neither officials nor Canadian elected representatives can say that any of that is happening.

What are the highest priority things that the government should implement right now to protect Canadians?

• (2115)

**Hon. David McGuinty:** That's an excellent question, Ms. Stubbs. Thank you for that.

In the report in 2019 we lay out each of those really core areas—media influence, academic circles influence, political campaigns and politics influence. We've tried to break it down by sector, almost as you've enumerated, but we've also kept the number of recommendations in our 2019 report's review on foreign interference to a very small number—in fact, really two.

The recommendation is about this comprehensive strategy to counter foreign interference and build institutional and public resiliency. On page 109, in paragraph 297 of the 2019 report, we break it down. We talk about what has to be dealt with, sector by sector by sector: how it might be dealt with, including what the short- and long-term risks to Canadian institutions and the rights and freedoms posed by foreign interference are, and what the range of institutional vulnerabilities targeted by hostile foreign states is. It goes on to give a bit of a work plan for this pan-Canadian approach, which would be core to upping our game in this area.

The second major recommendation that I want to come to, with your forbearance or patience, is a recommendation that we've made twice in a row now to the government and the Prime Minister. That is that members of Parliament and senators should be briefed in de-

tail on foreign interference activities to which they may be subject, immediately upon their swearing in and regularly thereafter. This is because, as one of your witnesses said in an earlier panel, many of us in elected public service life don't always understand what might be happening around us.

We've kept the recommendations down to two, and recommendation number 5, as it's called, is really a key breakdown, sector by sector.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Thank you.

Given that Australia has passed a rather multi-pronged, concrete policy approach to this issue, I'm wondering, and I don't know whether you can comment, whether you have any insight as to what the holdup is for Canada. Why is this taking, it seems, an extraordinarily long time, given that this has been going on since the nineties?

Also, in your work, for the people who say, as we've heard and you've said, that they feel they have no place to go—they go to the police, and they refer them to CSIS, and they go back and forth—do you have any insight into what exactly the barriers are and what the specific solutions are?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** On the first question, of speaking for the government, I'm really not in a position to do so, except to reference Minister Blair's 18-page document sent out to all MPs in December.

**The Chair:** Mr. McGuinty, I'm sorry; Ms. Stubbs' turn is up. I regret and am sorry about that.

Now I have to go on to Ms. Yip, for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** It's nice to see you here, Mr. McGuinty.

This is your third annual report, and this year's version isn't the first to highlight threats posed by foreign interference. Over the past year, Canadians have been seeing and hearing more from CSIS about this issue than ever before.

We've heard recently that while a former CSIS director in 2010 sounded the alarm on foreign interference by the Government of China, the public safety minister called the decision regrettable and the PMO admonished the CSIS director for doing his job. Last year, CSIS contacted more than 225 entities across Canada and briefed at least 2,000 Canadian stakeholders.

In your opinion, what do recent efforts by CSIS to raise awareness say about the level of seriousness granted to this issue?

• (2120)

**Hon. David McGuinty:** I think the committee would say that it's encouraging that CSIS and its director are reaching out to engage more openly—giving keynote speeches, explaining the landscape, explaining the risks, and the magnitude of some of these threats and the magnitude of the opportunity to get it better for Canadians: protecting their rights, for example.

In our 2019 report, however, we also are very open and very transparent and objective. The committee insisted on putting in the areas where we're falling short in engaging with Canadians and where we're falling short in engaging with provinces, universities and institutions to give them more information about what is happening. That is rife, at the back end of our foreign interference review chapter in the 2019 report, a copy of which I hope you have. I think we've been very transparent and objective in pointing this out.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** Where have we been given more information for the universities?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** My understanding—and we've documented this in the report—is that CSIS regularly meets with university administrators to walk them through some of the risks. I would say that there's work to be done in this area. I think, as I said earlier, that with the decision by the Province of Alberta to cease all of its scientific research relationship with China, if I understand the announcement correctly, the administrators and the academics there are trying to figure out the best way forward to deal with this. They're certainly going to need some assistance and help as they wrestle it to the ground.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** In your report, you also noted that there are many threats to our national security, that the landscape is changing, and you devote significant attention to right-wing extremism. You note that actors are active online with 6,600 channels, pages, groups and accounts; and Canadians are sometimes more active than their U.S. or U.K. counterparts. How serious is this threat, and what can be better done to address it?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** I would say, Ms. Yip, that the committee concluded that between 2018 and 2020 this was the single greatest difference in the survey, in the compendium of threats that we produced for Canadians. This new process we started was the only publicly produced, publicly available overview of the main national security threats produced by the Government of Canada. The biggest change we've seen from 2018-20 is this growth in IMVEs and in this incel, this involuntary celibate movement. It is very worrisome. We've seen, for example, serious increases in neo-Nazi groups. They are active and growing. Of course, a number of them have since been listed by the Government of Canada as terrorist entities. In fact, four IMVE groups have been included by the government, which is a good start. We've tried to lay this out so people understand.

Of course, Mr. Chair, through you, we've also indicated to Canadians that the pandemic has had a profound influence on driving more of this activity underground. It's led to an uptick in this activity, probably because so many of us are home-based, or our ability to move about and take on more active lives has been constrained.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** The listing of those organizations, is that part of the terror code listings process? Could you just talk a bit about that?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** It is, and the government on February 3, I think it was—in February 2021—listed 13 new groups as terrorist entities and reviewed seven others. I know, through that process, that four groups—the Atomwaffen Division, The Base, the Proud Boys and the Russian Imperial Movement—have been now classified as terrorist entities.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Yip.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

Members of the opposition parties sometimes joke that governments are better at building shelves to store reports than they are at following the recommendations in the reports.

Considering that the NSICOP produced a report in 2019 that included recommendations on foreign interference, are you able to tell us what efforts the government has made since then to actually follow those recommendations?

● (2125)

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

Minister Blair has partially responded to our report and to the opposition motion in the House of Commons. He produced a document of some 20 pages, which has been distributed to all members of the House. It shows what the government is doing, what it is trying to do and what it will be doing. The important question is: how will the government respond to our recommendations? The NSICOP believes that there is a lot of work to be done and that progress can be made.

We have already completed seven reviews and three annual reports, and have made 22 recommendations. We spend a lot of time on these reports and recommendations. Because the recommendations are unanimous and non-partisan and based on the bicameral principle, we believe they are easier to follow.

We expect the government to make a greater effort to respond to our recommendations.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** In this context, would it be appropriate to find a new way of doing things?

When you start a study, would it be appropriate to automatically review previous recommendations that are similar to the ones you are thinking about presenting, and to look at how the government has responded to them?

**Hon. David McGuinty:** That is exactly NSICOP's approach.

We have discussed this issue at length and we believe that the recommendations that have been made, including the one about mandatory briefings for members of Parliament and senators, as I mentioned earlier, should be carried forward from one report to the next.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Normandin.

[*English*]

Now we'll go to Mr. Harris for the last two and a half minutes.

Mr. Harris, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you very much.

If I may, I'll follow up on what Ms. Normandin was speaking about just now. You just outlined that you made 22 recommendations that were fully unanimous, fully non-partisan to the government. Do you have any plans to review those recommendations and do a report on to what extent you see the government has followed them? If they're that unanimous and that clear, then they deserve respect.

I think you're being very diplomatic, shall we say, when you say there's more work to be done to fulfill the recommendations. That's a nice way of saying that they haven't been followed. I wonder if you can tell us if your committee is likely to do a special report to say, "This is where we are with the three sets of recommendations that we've made; here's what we see happening, and here's what we see missing as a priority for government."

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Mr. Harris, that's an excellent question and it's something the committee is really seized with.

I don't want to be diplomatic. I want to be forthright. It's a huge amount of work to come to ground in a non-partisan way with these recommendations. We deliberate long and hard. We're looking for recommendations that will improve the situation in the security and intelligence field, and when it comes to protecting our rights and freedoms. I have spoken to the Prime Minister about this, and I've spoken to his national security and intelligence adviser about this. We believe that regular and substantive responses to our recom-

mendations would really strengthen accountability and increase transparency in the security and intelligence community.

In the U.K., our equivalent organization, the ISC, receives regular government responses because they have a MOU with the government. That's something that might be considered here in Canada, but we are certainly now raising with the Prime Minister and the government how to better get feedback and information about those recommendations and what's happening with them, even though one or two of them have found their way directly into mandate letters for cabinet ministers.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I see the chair, but I do want to take a brief moment to second your suggestion that a lot of work is done by your committee. I know from representatives from our party who have been part of that committee there's a tremendous amount of work that takes place. I want to commend you for it and thank you and all of your committee for the work that you're doing.

• (2130)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Harris. That's a good way to conclude, I think.

Thank you very much, Mr. McGuinty.

Thank you, colleagues.

The meeting is adjourned.

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