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Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger



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• (1005)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.)): Good morning. I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 72 of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee is meeting today to continue its study.

I see, Mr. Cooper, that you've raised your hand.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to move a motion on notice pertaining to the order of reference from the House arising from the question of privilege concerning the intimidation campaign orchestrated by an operative at Beijing's Toronto consulate against the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, Michael Chong.

The motion will be distributed. I will now read the motion into the record:

That, in relation to its order of reference of Wednesday, May 10, 2023, concerning the intimidation campaign orchestrated by Wei Zhao against the Member for Wellington—Halton Hills and other Members, the committee

- (a) make use, for the purposes of this study, of the evidence received during its study on foreign election interference, without limiting the witnesses who may be called;
- (b) make use, for the purposes of this study, of the evidence received by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics during its study on foreign interference, without limiting the witnesses who may be called;
- (c) invite each of the following to appear on their own:
 - (i) the Honourable Michael Chong, for one hour,
 - (ii) Eric Janse, Acting Clerk of the House of Commons, for one hour,
 - (iii) the Honourable Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, for one hour,
 - (iv) the Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety, for one hour,
 - (v) the Honourable Bill Blair, President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, for one hour,
 - (vi) Jody Thomas, National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister, for two hours,
 - (vii) David Vigneault, Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, for two hours,
 - (viii) David Morrison, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and former Acting National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister, for two hours,
 - (ix) Mike MacDonald, former Acting National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister, for one hour,
 - (x) Vincent Rigby, former National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister, for one hour,
 - (xi) Michael Duheme, Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, for one hour, and

(xii) Cong Peiwu, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Canada, for two hours;

(d) directs the parties to provide their preliminary lists of other witnesses to the clerk of the committee within one week;

(e) order the production,

(i) within one week, of the July 2021 CSIS report entitled "People's Republic of China Foreign Interference in Canada: A Critical National Security Threat", together with all records concerning the transmission to, distribution within, analysis of and handling by, the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development and the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, of this report, and

(ii) within three weeks, of all other memoranda, briefing notes, e-mails, records of conversations, and any other relevant documents, including any drafts, which are in the possession of any government department or agency, including the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force, the Critical Election Incident Protocol Panel, any minister's office and the Prime Minister's Office, containing information concerning planning or efforts by, or on behalf of, foreign governments or other foreign state actors to intimidate a Member of the House of Commons, provided that

(iii) these documents be deposited without redaction with the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, in both official languages,

(iv) a copy of the documents shall also be deposited with the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, in both official languages, with any proposed redaction of information which, in the government's opinion, could reasonably be expected to compromise the identities of employees or sources or intelligence-collecting methods of Canadian or allied intelligence agencies,

(v) the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall promptly notify the committee whether the Office is satisfied that the documents were produced as ordered, and, if not, the Chair shall be instructed to present forthwith, on behalf of the committee, a report to the House outlining the material facts of the situation,

(vi) the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall assess the redactions proposed by the government, pursuant to subparagraph (iv), to determine whether the Office agrees that the proposed redactions conform with the criteria set out in subparagraph (iv) and

(A) if it agrees, it shall provide the documents, as redacted by the government pursuant to subparagraph (iv), to the clerk of the committee, or

(B) if it disagrees with some or all of the proposed redactions, it shall provide a copy of the documents, redacted in the manner the Office determines would conform with the criteria set out in paragraph (iv), together with a report indicating the number, extent and nature of the government's proposed redactions which were disagreed with, to the clerk of the committee, and

(vii) the clerk of the committee shall cause the documents, provided by the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel pursuant to subparagraph (vi), to be distributed to the members of the committee and to be published on the committee's website forthwith upon receipt; and

(f) makes the evidence received during this study available for its study on foreign election interference.

Madam Chair, this motion arises from a question of privilege on a matter that is about as serious as it gets. We have a situation in which, two years ago, an accredited Beijing diplomat at the Toronto consulate arranged to intimidate a sitting member of Parliament by threatening to sanction and punish his family in Hong Kong because that member put forward a motion calling out the Beijing regime for perpetrating genocide against Uyghur Muslims.

This is an attack on this House and on every member of Parliament. It's an attack on our democracy. It is an attempt to interfere with a member of this House's ability to do his job to stand up on behalf of his constituents and on behalf of Canadians, which every member of this House should be able to do free of interference.

CSIS identified that this Beijing operative, this Beijing diplomat, had been involved in orchestrating this intimidation campaign two years ago. It was revealed in a memo and documented in a memo, yet for two years, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, Mr. Chong, was kept in the dark. The Prime Minister, incredibly, claims that he first learned of this in *The Globe and Mail* and not two years ago, even though the Prime Minister's national security adviser, Jody Thomas, told Mr. Chong that the memo had been distributed to relevant departments as well as to the national security adviser of the PCO.

One of two scenarios is possible, neither of which is good for the Prime Minister. One is that the Prime Minister is not telling the truth, that he was briefed and that he kept the member for Wellington—Halton Hills in the dark. He covered it up and turned a blind eye to a Beijing diplomat intimidating a sitting member of Parliament and threatening the safety and security of that member's family. The other scenario is that the Prime Minister is incompetent and has set up a structure in which he has been kept in the dark and is not being brought up to speed with respect to what as I said at the outset is a matter that could not be more serious: a Beijing diplomat trying to intimidate a sitting member of Parliament when he's doing his job by threatening the safety and security of his family.

In either case, it underscores that this Prime Minister is simply unfit for the job when it comes to protecting Canada's national interests and defending the safety and security of Canadians. It is further evidence that this Prime Minister does not take Beijing's interference seriously.

• (1010)

I have to say it's very disappointing that, in the face of the Prime Minister's inaction, his incompetence, his neglect and, arguably, the possibility that he is lying or not being forthcoming—I'll withdraw lying—or not telling the full truth, the Prime Minister would go out on a campaign to try to attack and impugn the character of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills by spreading misinformation that the member had been briefed two years ago when he had not. He also sent and directed two members of Parliament, including the member for Kingston and the Islands, to spread that misinformation in the House. That's about as low as it gets.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): I have a point of order.

On that point, Madam Chair, I made a statement, which I later clarified, and I apologized for the manner in which that was re-

ceived. However, I'm curious why we even have to do this study if Mr. Cooper has already come to all these conclusions.

The Chair: I think we'll return.... I know Mr. Cooper is wrapping up.

I watch the House, even when I'm not in the House, and I know you've clarified that point several times, but repetition works in this place.

Go ahead, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The bottom line is we need to get to the bottom of what happened, who had this memo, how the memo was transmitted, when it was distributed and to whom it was distributed, and that is provided for in this motion.

It's not only a matter of calling witnesses; it's a matter of producing the evidence. It's not just documents, but following the timeline and following exactly how that memo was distributed to find out exactly who knew and when.

I hope that in the spirit of the unanimous vote on the question of privilege, this motion will also be unanimously adopted.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1015)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

Go ahead, Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much.

First of all, it's a pleasure to be here with all of you today. This is kind of a continuation of some of our work at the ethics committee.

For those of you who have had the privilege of working with us, you'll know that the New Democrats generally support the production of important documents. You'll also know that in a unanimous way, we've agreed that this is a serious issue. We have subject matter experts who are going to be presenting to us today.

I would say on the record that we agree in principle with the production of documents. We believe there needs to be a system in place from which a third party can assess what is and what isn't cabinet confidence and national security and assess all the other things that we tend to hear at committees that prevent us from getting access to information.

That being said, I would say we support this, but we strongly encourage members around the table to allow us to get back to the matter at hand today, which would include the testimony of key witnesses for the remainder of the meeting.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Thanks, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the comments that everybody has made. Obviously, we all take this matter very seriously. A question of privilege is something that brings concern to all of us as members of Parliament. Particularly in this case, I think it's something we need to get to the bottom of.

I wish I'd seen the motion a bit earlier so that I could have reflected on it, because there's probably a large degree of agreement on the majority of it. In my mind, I was operating on the assumption that we had until Tuesday, based on a previous conversation, to think about additional witnesses. This is prescriptive of specific witnesses the Conservative members are putting forward, but I think our team would like to have some time to reflect on what witnesses we'd like to add to the list. I think all parties should have the opportunity to consider that.

I also would note that we have three panels of witnesses lined up for today. Those witnesses, I believe, have been rescheduled, so I don't want to be disrespectful of their time. I think it's important for us to move forward with committee business for the day.

We've operated in this committee for the vast majority of the time in good faith and have reached agreements on.... You could even look at the fact that we agreed to study foreign interference before some of these allegations started circulating in the media, so we've always expressed an interest in this topic. Remember that the witnesses who are here today are speaking to the topic of foreign election interference, and they have important things to contribute.

It's an important matter. We're ready to work together. That is my general sentiment here, but we need a little time to consider the motion. I believe if we take that time, we'll find a way forward, as we always have done in the past.

With that, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

The Chair: That being a non-debatable motion, we'll call the question.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I just want to put on the record—and I will be continuing to try to keep us on time—that I do know some of the parameters.

Mr. Chong would be the natural first appearance, and we are working to make sure that we can try to get him here before the constituency week. Then, as we determine the witnesses, we'll work to see where we can put them in.

After the constituency week, we will be heavily on the question of privilege, as members have shared a desire to do so. It remains that Tuesday is when to get your witnesses to the clerk. If a notice has not been sent out yet, it will be shortly.

With that, the committee is meeting today to continue its study on foreign election interference.

We have with us today Mark Bourrie, barrister and solicitor; Michel Juneau-Katsuya, former chief of the Asia-Pacific unit, Canadian Security Intelligence Service; and, from the Vancouver Anti-Corruption Institute, Peter German, barrister and solicitor.

You will each have up to four minutes for an opening statement, after which we will proceed with questions from committee members.

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bourrie, you have the floor. You can speak in the official language of your choice.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Bourrie (Barrister and Solicitor, As an Individual): I'll be making my remarks in English. I've given them to the translators and I've sent them to the clerk.

I'll start off by saying that the remarks will probably be much more valuable to you if you have a copy of the Ottawa Magazine article I sent to the clerk earlier this week. It really has the full story. Four minutes certainly can't do it justice.

With the clock running, I'd like to thank you for inviting me.

As you can see in the 2012 email record I gave to the clerk's office, I had hoped for this opportunity some time ago. I believe my experience with the Xinhua News Agency might give the committee some useful background and context, as it examines China's attempt to extend its influence into Canada's political system.

I've been a practising lawyer for five years, but I started writing for newspapers in the late 1970s. I was quite young. I wrote for several daily papers when I was a student. I spent 13 years as a freelancer in the Georgian Bay area of Ontario writing for *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star*.

I came to Ottawa in 1994 and joined the press gallery as a freelancer. Between 1994 and 2007, I wrote for the *Toronto Star*, the *National Post*, the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Hill Times*, the *Law Times*, *Canadian Lawyer* and a bunch of other publications that you can see in my CV. In 2004, I started working on my Ph.D., which was on the press censorship system in the Second World War, and in 2007 I accepted a limited-term teaching appointment at Concordia University in Montreal. In 2009, I finished my doctorate, my teaching contract was over and I was back in the press gallery.

Most of my freelance work had been divided up by my colleagues or the publications had cut back on what they were buying, so there was some adjustment needed. At the same time, there were interesting things happening in media. Experiments like BuzzFeed, VICE, *Canadaland*, *iPolitics*, *Blacklock's Reporter* and other non-traditional media were trying to take the place of dying media. Away from the media landscape, there seemed to be a real thaw in Chinese-western relationships.

Here are some things to remember for context when you're listening to what I'm going to tell you.

In 2009, Hu Jintao was still president and leader of China, and there were still term limits for his positions. China had just come off a successful summer Olympics. Relations between China and Taiwan seemed to be improving. Canada had sent trade missions to China for years, and all recent governments had tried to get a deal. The Harper government succeeded in 2014.

In 2009, representatives of the Chinese news agency Xinhua asked me to write some freelance pieces for them. I had concerns and tried to get advice from CSIS. There was considerable suspicion about Xinhua's operation in Canada among my colleagues and people on the Hill in general, and I reached out to CSIS for guidance and never heard back. Most of my interactions with Xinhua are documented in the Ottawa Magazine piece I sent to the committee clerk and in the email material I also forwarded to you.

Xinhua was trying to accomplish two things that seemed mutually exclusive but it turned out were not. It wanted to make money and expand to become a wire service feeding content to credible news organizations throughout the world. It made deals with large outlets like the Associated Press and with Chinese media in Canada and other places. It also wanted to give credibility to Chinese institutions and the regime.

Xinhua was apolitical. I saw no attempt to push the interests of one Canadian political party over another, but then my experience was limited. Xinhua did not want to offend political actors here, and the articles of that time are I believe still online. Xinhua covered lavish social events at the Chinese embassy that drew in Liberal and Tory MPs and senators. It refused to run any criticism of the Conservative government.

However, it turned out that Xinhua's bureau chief collected intelligence for China, and he asked me to spy for him. He wanted information on the private meeting between Prime Minister Harper and the Dalai Lama in April 2012, so I quit and I told him why.

• (1025)

The Chair: Mr. Bourrie, we want to know why, but I need to move to the next person. Hopefully there's time for questions and comments. We will also circulate your opening comments.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): I'm okay if we give him 30 seconds, if there's unanimous consent to give 30 seconds.

The Chair: Is that fine?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We're going to give all opening comments five minutes. That means our time will be limited.

Go ahead, Mr. Bourrie.

Mr. Mark Bourrie: I'll talk like an auctioneer.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Please tell us why, but not too fast for the interpreters. Thank you.

The floor is yours.

Mr. Mark Bourrie: I'm going to go off the cuff here. The emails are in the material I sent, my emails with Xinhua.

The bureau chief of Xinhua wanted me to ask around to find out through any contacts what happened when Prime Minister Harper met with the Dalai Lama. He wanted me to file material about the Dalai Lama in Ottawa that he made clear would not be used in journalism, and I basically told him to screw off. That's the Coles Notes version.

The Chair: That's excellent.

I can confirm that—

Mr. Mark Bourrie: I blew the whistle on them.

The Chair: You blew the whistle on them. Thank you.

I was repeating what he said, for the record.

The documents that have been shared are in translation. Until they are in both official languages, they will not be circulated, but they are on the way, just so everyone knows.

With that, Mr. Juneau-Katsuya, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya (Former Chief of the Asia-Pacific Unit, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, As an Individual): To keep things as concise as possible, I've deleted a few paragraphs from the speaking notes I gave to the interpreters. So I trust they will be able to keep up with me.

Madam Chair and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to give you my thoughts and analyses based on 30 years of work, research, investigations and analyses of Chinese intelligence activities in Canada. This is work that I did as a counter-espionage agent, a private sector security advisor, and a university researcher.

Right off the bat, I can confirm to you that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, has been aware of Chinese interference in Canadian elections since the mid-1990s. At the time, my unit had prepared the Sidewinder report, working with the RCMP. That was when we learned for the first time, from the Elections Canada archives, that the Embassy of China had contributed in 1995 to the campaign funds of Liberal Party of Canada and the Conservative Party of Canada. At the time, the Chinese service was inept. But over the following 30 years or so, they boldly and expertly enhanced their techniques and operations.

[*English*]

The problem, however, is not only coming from Chinese operators. It is also caused by our own candidates, elected officials and political staff, who are naive or calculate intentionally to gain power with the assistance of the Chinese government. The Chinese intelligence services are so good at it because they understand the electoral system and the weaknesses of human beings, and their work is a long-term game.

Today, I want to be very clear. We can prove that every federal government from Mr. Mulroney's to Mr. Trudeau's has been compromised by agents of Communist China. Every government was informed at one point or another. Every government chose to ignore CSIS's warnings due to negligence, self-interest or partisanship. Every government has been infiltrated by agents of influence acting on behalf of the Chinese government, and we knew who they are. Every government took decisions about China that are questionable and can only be explained by interference exercised from within or motivated by self-interest.

Not only have sitting governments been compromised, but all federal political parties have been compromised at one point or another. The inaction of the federal government—all federal governments—has led to attacks on many municipal and provincial governments. Ultimately, every government has been part of the problem, not the solution, and remember that not only China is practising interference.

Considering these facts, I would like to respectfully propose some actions to be taken.

One, establish a mandatory process for all future elected officials, political staff and volunteers in which they swear to and sign a declaration saying they are not under the influence or acting on behalf of a foreign government or entity. This form will clearly warn of possible criminal procedures in cases of intentional deception.

Two, eliminate the possibility for foreigners to vote for the selection of candidates and nominees. This is obvious nonsense.

Three, give an explicit and clear security briefing to all newly elected MPs and have them sign off that they attended and understood the briefing, again with a warning of repercussions in cases of deception. Prevention is our best defence.

Four, prohibit all outgoing cabinet and senior public servants from working on or participating in any activity or job related to their previous functions for a period of three to five years, for both foreign and national entities.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Fifth, I propose that Canada pass criminal legislation on foreign interference, identifying activities considered unlawful and the penalties that could be incurred.

Sixth, I recommend the establishment of an independent office, separate from CSIS and the RCMP, which would report directly to the House of Commons, and whose director would be appointed by the House. The proposal that a national coordinator position be established within a department is nonsense.

Seventh, this office should have its powers spelled out in a statute that gives it the right, as a peace enforcement body, to investigate, search, arrest and criminally prosecute, without having to request anyone's permission.

Eighth, I propose the establishment of a transparency monitoring mechanism to reveal identified cases of interference, once they

have been investigated and confirmed. As I said, education and awareness are the best defence.

[*English*]

Nine—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: I have three lines left.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I know, but it's already taken five minutes and 11 seconds. I gave Mr. Bourrie four minutes, and it took him four and a half minutes.

I'll let you finish.

[*English*]

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Finally, reduce the number of Chinese diplomats in Canada. It is estimated that 70% of the current staff are performing illegal intelligence duties in Canada.

Remember that every week that passes by weakens the Canadian public's trust in our system and our government's ability or determination to do something. Ultimately, our allies are losing trust in us and have doubts about us. Don't underestimate this issue.

Thank you very much for the extra time.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Mr. German.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Peter German (Barrister and Solicitor, Vancouver Anti-Corruption Institute): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Good morning, members of the committee. Thank you for the invitation.

By way of a brief introduction, the Vancouver Anti-Corruption Institute was established in 2021. It's an integral part of the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform at the University of British Columbia. We're a non-profit and do project work internationally. We do research and writing, and host conferences and workshops.

On a personal note, I am a former deputy commissioner of the RCMP and of Corrections Canada. I also authored two reports for the Attorney General of British Columbia, who is now the premier, entitled "Dirty Money" and "Dirty Money—Part 2".

My intent in the next few minutes is to speak to outcomes, which actually works quite well following up on my friend Michel.

Inevitably, this committee will be recommending legislative changes, which may include the creation of a registry and/or agency to deal with the issues that brought you together. Our experience internationally is that many, if not most, countries of the world have laws in place to deal with all forms of criminality. In this manner, they are compliant with international norms and standards. Unfortunately, few countries enforce legislation with respect to critical issues such as corruption and money laundering.

Money laundering is the back office of transnational organized crime and walks in tandem with it. Money also plays a large role when dealing with election interference. How much, from where and why are critical questions.

Virtually all countries have anti-money laundering laws but few actively enforce them. In Canada, our record has been spotty, although budget 2023 and initiatives in B.C. do offer hope, as does civil forfeiture in the provinces. My point is that saying and doing are two different things. Canada must be a doer. We adhere to the rule of law and must project our belief in integrity and good governance to the world.

Where does that leave you? When creating legislation, a registry or agency, a few issues are vitally important.

First is verification. Information is just noise unless it is verified. The adage of “garbage in, garbage out” captures this issue.

Second is public access. Transparency is key. With it, media and interested parties can provide a form of oversight that is critical in a democracy.

Third is independence. Those mandated to deal with these issues must know that they are protected from attack, demotion, censure or career challenge.

The fourth issue is consequences. There must be consequences if individuals or entities fail to comply.

Fifth is enforcement. Dedicated and funded enforcement entities are essential. The RCMP federally and Elections Canada's investigative and enforcement unit are already in place, but they need strong legislation, secure funding and timely access to prosecution services. For example, despite investigating criminal activity, Elections Canada's investigative unit does not have access to the valuable trove of information housed at FINTRAC.

As a final comment concerning money, the funds used to influence the political system generally enter the political arena through domestic or foreign proxies. We refer to three stages in the money-laundering cycle: placement, layering and integration. The intent is to obfuscate the paper trail. Not surprisingly, money supplied by foreign influencers is more akin to the financing of terrorism, as it is used to commit a crime and is not the product of criminality, as is the case with traditional money laundering. Again, enforcement agencies need the legislative tools, the funding and the specialized resources to follow the money trail.

Members of the committee, yours is a particularly important role at a critical juncture in the life of our country. I thank you for your work, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1035)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. German. I appreciate it.

We have six-minute rounds now. Questions will go through the chair, unless we're pausing in between for the purpose of interpretation. Let's not get personal.

We will start with Mr. Nater.

Mr. Nater, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Juneau-Katsuya, after having learned that a source from CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, had revealed specific information about foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 elections, you said that this source deserved a medal. As a former CSIS agent, do you think that information reported in the media is credible?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Thank you for asking.

We aren't certain whether the source is from CSIS or another organization from the extensive family of Canada's security and intelligence services.

In any event, the person who triggered all this information created a historic event. We wouldn't be talking to one another here today without the whistle-blower and everything I've witnessed over the past 30 years. Unfortunately, because I was sworn to secrecy, I couldn't talk about it until now.

The Chinese have made up a lot of ground. But as I was saying, it's not just the Chinese. They were nevertheless very aggressive, very bold, and have succeeded in doing a lot of catching up.

So yes, I believe there's a difference between ethical responsibility and moral responsibility. I believe that the whistle-blower behaved morally, which in my view takes precedence over ethical and contractual considerations.

[*English*]

Mr. John Nater: Thank you very much. I will switch to English now.

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: It was my pleasure.

Mr. John Nater: I want to follow up with you. You spoke just now about very aggressive actions of the People's Republic of China and said in your opening comments that as many as 70% of diplomatic operatives—

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: This is a conservative number.

Mr. John Nater: I'm sorry. Can you say that again?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: This is a conservative number, 70%.

Mr. John Nater: So it's perhaps even more. I believe, according to an Order Paper response our party received, that there are 178 accredited PRC diplomats in Canada. It may be 177 now, after the events of the last few days.

Given this high number and, frankly, the high number of people acting illegally, what do you make of the fact that it took two years for this one diplomat to be expelled, let alone potentially 70% of all diplomats?

• (1040)

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: The comparison is really important. America is our greatest economic partner, and they have about 80 diplomats here in Canada, so there are twice as many Chinese and we have a trade deficit with China.

Where is the mistake coming from? My speculation as an investigator is that unfortunately at Foreign Affairs—or Global Affairs today—we have some people working naively and non-intentionally—or maybe intentionally—on behalf of China. A certain sort of shakeup must be done on that side as well.

Look how much time it took to make a decision on expelling somebody who was so obvious. I'll repeat what I said in my comments: We've known for the last 30 years. We warned prime ministers and cabinets about all those things, and people, for self-serving interests, for partisanship or by negligence, neglected to take action.

I may understand the political ramifications, the economic ramifications and other ramifications that exist, but at the same time, because we acted so weakly, this foreign interference took place and is well rooted in our system as we speak.

Mr. John Nater: We've now expelled one diplomat. Do you think that will have any intimidation effect? You talk about weak actions in the past. Is there a strong enough effect with one single diplomat, or do you think it has to be a stronger?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: It's a step in the right direction. It's not enough, and that's why I'm suggesting that we cut the number of diplomats in place here in Canada. There's no reason to have so many diplomats from a country that doesn't want to do business with us. We have a trade deficit. We sold a company, Nexen, in Alberta for \$15 billion. We're not even capable of buying a corner store in China.

This discrepancy in the relationship doesn't justify having so many diplomats, other than if some people are favouring China for the wrong reasons.

Mr. John Nater: You mentioned in your opening comments a series of points on how to beef up our legal framework. The first one you talked about was a mandatory process for candidates and staff, with a signed declaration with the threat of criminal proceedings. What sanctions would you propose in terms of the criminal proceedings? How strong of a—

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: I say jail time. We're close to treason here, literally, so I say jail time. Now, the amount of the jail time would be judged by jurisprudence and by our system, but definitely jail time—not a fine and no suspended sentences or anything of that nature.

Mr. John Nater: In my few seconds left, I'll note that in a CBC interview back in February, you were reacting to the reports in *The Globe and Mail* at the time. You talked a bit about the case of Ken-ny Chiu and the fact that the Chinese community in his riding was manipulated by the CCP. I'm done, but at some point could you elaborate on those comments?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: You're not asking for that now. Is that correct?

Mr. John Nater: I've run out of time, Madam Chair. I respect—

The Chair: I appreciate that, Mr. Nater.

Go ahead, Mr. Fergus.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here to testify.

Mr. Juneau-Katsuya, in your opening address, you said that you had been aware of the government's negligence, irrespective of the party in power, for 30 years. You had determined that disloyal people—that's the least we can say of them—were working at Global Affairs Canada.

Furthermore, Mr. Bourrie spoke about a former parliamentary secretary targeted by the Chinese government through a journalist working for a press agency. Do you think that was a serious breach? Did the government of the day take the time to address the problem?

• (1045)

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: It was a very serious breach. Unfortunately, Mr. Harper's response at the time was that it was a personal matter and that there was no need to get involved. He allowed the person at issue to keep his job.

Hon. Greg Fergus: No diplomat was...

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: The journalist left owing to a personal squabble. I recall that it was her husband who had discovered the relationship between her and the parliamentary secretary, and he told a Toronto newspaper about it and sent along an exchange of emails between his wife and the parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Did the parliamentary secretary resign?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: No, he kept his job.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Did he move on to another position?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: I believe so.

The example you gave was just one among dozens. This kind of negligence was occurring under whichever political party was in power at the time.

Canada has been losing all kinds of credibility with its international allies. As Mr. German said, there's a world of difference between saying and doing, and that's where Canada is losing credibility. Today, we have a historic opportunity to rectify matters, independently of what was done in the past. It's impossible to erase the past, but you can make sure that it doesn't happen again.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, I forgot to start my clock. How much speaking time do I have left?

The Chair: You have three minutes left, Mr. Fergus.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Great.

[*English*]

Mr. Bourrie, thank you very much for your testimony here.

When you raised some issues, you actually went out of your way to identify to the authorities what the situation was.

Mr. Mark Bourrie: It was at considerable personal cost, frankly.

I sent an email. Unfortunately, you don't have the material here, and it breaks my heart, frankly.

Hon. Greg Fergus: By the way, you can submit the material afterwards.

Mr. Mark Bourrie: Oh, I have already submitted it.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Okay. That's great.

Mr. Mark Bourrie: I told the Xinhua guy, "Look, this is not what Canadian journalists do." I sent that to the press gallery. That was in April 2012. They did nothing. That was the staff and the journalists who were on the press gallery governing committee.

I went around and tried to get some sort of media coverage of it. I wrote an article that ran in August 2012 in Ottawa Magazine, and finally people woke up to the fact that this was going on.

Nobody in the government contacted me. Nobody at CSIS contacted me. This is the first CSIS agent I've laid eyes on in my life—as far as I know.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Bourrie: The gallery tried to frame it as a dispute between me and Xinhua. I said, "No, this is a problem with you and your governance." When Xinhua said that they were going to sue me, I said that's fine; this is not my dispute, not my monkey, not my zoo, and I left it at that.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Xinhua asked you to spy on the PM. They asked you to spy on the Dalai Lama. You reported this. What did former prime minister Harper do about it?

Mr. Mark Bourrie: Nothing.

Hon. Greg Fergus: There was not even a follow-up or an acknowledgement?

Mr. Mark Bourrie: Nothing. I was completely and utterly on my own, reliant on, basically, the strength of my wife to get through this, as well as a couple of people in the press gallery.

In terms of the House, in terms of the government, in terms of the media, I was on my own. They wanted to live in a dream world, and I was not part of the dream.

Hon. Greg Fergus: I note for the record that another witness is going to be coming forward, the chief of staff to the Prime Minister. What question would you ask or would you want to have asked?

Mr. Mark Bourrie: I would like to know why—and this echoes my new friend—they were so naive. I know, as I said as a background, that this was Hu Jintao's time and that things have changed with the new regime in terms of the ugliness and the mask falling on it, but even so, where was anybody on this at the time?

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Mr. Bourrie.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Normandin.

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

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for their opening remarks. They were very informative.

Mr. Juneau-Katsuya, I'd like to begin with you and go back to a few of the things you mentioned. The Sidewinder report, which was drafted by your organization, says that China was not particularly subtle in its efforts back in the day, but that even so, the various governments never did anything. You mentioned dubious decisions made by successive governments. Could you give us a few examples? I'd also like to know whether the shelving, if not the actual destruction of the Sidewinder report, was one such debatable decision.

● (1050)

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Thank you very much.

The report was not, in fact, shelved. We were ordered to shred it, along with all the working notes we had put together. To my knowledge, only one copy exists today, and it's with the RCMP.

There are many examples of dubious decisions made over the years. One was mentioned by Mr. Fergus, about the fact that every-one now knows that that there was an inappropriate relationship between a journalist who is now acknowledged by all the intelligence services to have been a spy, and a parliamentary secretary. The government's reaction was to say that it was a personal matter and that nothing was to be done about it. Not only that, but the man in question remained on the job.

Earlier, I mentioned another decision, which was that an energy company in Alberta was sold for \$15 billion, while we couldn't buy anything. When the company was acquired for \$15 billion, we found ourselves with an influential power in our midst. As ordinary Canadian citizens, if today we wanted to talk to the premier of Alberta, we'd probably be put on a long waiting list, whereas a company that has invested \$15 billion, with perhaps several thousand employees, will likely get a hearing within a week. That's the kind of situation we've noticed.

We've also seen instances of people who clearly appeared to be meeting regularly with agents from the United Front Work Department, the main Chinese agency that handles foreign interference around the world. People were meeting them in the community and in China, and some had their travel to China paid for. These people were close to the circles of power and the decision-making system.

Several mayors, including the mayor of Vancouver and the mayor of Ottawa, were against certain Chinese activities, but made a trip to China at the Chinese government's expense. When they returned, they adopted municipal bylaws to counter frequent demonstrations being held in front of embassies.

Those are only a few examples. At the moment, there's a lot of foreign interference at the provincial level, and the provinces are completely in the dark. Nothing is being done and there has been no awareness raising.

When CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, attempted to make industries aware of intellectual property theft, the Security Intelligence Review Committee reprimanded CSIS, saying that it was not its responsibility and that its role was to give information to the government, and specifically to the Prime Minister. We can see the outcome today: all the prime ministers sat tight and did nothing.

Ms. Christine Normandin: My speaking time is limited, but I'd like to continue this line of inquiry.

You mentioned that China's ways of doing things were rather primitive and you gave us some examples. Another witness, Mr. Morris Rosenberg, told us that he had been naïve at the time. Should we believe him? If someone closes his eyes or makes dubious decisions, could it be out of personal interest?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: I can't speak on behalf of Mr. Rosenberg. However, what I've seen is that in most instances involving any of the political parties, even if they are not officially in power, people are always motivated by personal or partisan interests.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

I'd like to ask a question about Canada's international credibility, particularly with the Five Eyes, which you've mentioned before.

We've been told several times that CSIS is to blame, and that it should have been passing on the information. What message are we sending to the Five Eyes when we blame CSIS? If Canada disparages its own intelligence services, what message is being sent to the Five Eyes?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: It is sending a very bad message.

The Five Eyes are currently asking themselves some serious questions, further to a litany of poor or overly late decisions, even when the evidence was blatant: the Huawei decision, the decision to expel a diplomat, the decision to address the issue of foreign interference. It took a whistleblower to get Canada moving on this. It's a matter of considerable concern to the United States and the Five Eyes.

Through Operation Dragon Lord, the United States monitored the Canadian government and looked into its relationship with Chi-

na. Since the 1990s, our allies have had doubts about Canada's willingness to take action and protect secrets to which it is privy.

• (1055)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Green, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you. Good morning.

I'm going to put a series of rapid-fire questions to you. Given that I only have six minutes, I'm going to ask that, should I need to intervene and take my time back, you not take it personally. It's certainly not personal.

I'd like to begin with you, Mr. Juneau-Katsuya. I've had the privilege of sitting on a committee with you in the past. You've provided some compelling testimony at committee that certainly is in keeping with what you're saying here today.

To be specific, you mentioned that every single prime minister since Mulroney has been warned about foreign interference and none of them did anything about this. I think we can all agree that foreign interference is a non-partisan issue.

Just so that I'm clear, the act requires CSIS to report foreign interference only to the government. Is that correct?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Currently, yes.

Mr. Matthew Green: Do you believe that CSIS should be required to tell—or is CSIS required to tell—the target of foreign interference about the interference?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Depending on the operational situation, sometimes we might decide not to inform the target or the person who is targeted right away in order to understand a bit more about the network and what is at play. Eventually, it is our responsibility to protect Canadian citizens because ultimately our boss is not the government; it is the Canadian people.

Mr. Matthew Green: It's safe to say there are different types of foreign interventions. One could be in favour of a particular candidate and boosting them. You mentioned the nomination processes.

I have a keen interest in hoping there are recommendations from all of our standing committees on this particular issue that will safeguard us in further elections.

In your opinion, do you believe the nomination process, in the continuum of interference and influence, is probably one of the most vulnerable points of intervention that a government can be involved in?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Absolutely. It is one of the less regulated processes to a certain extent. It is left to every political party to decide who will be eligible to vote and who will be eligible to volunteer or work as political staff. You have here a pool of possible interference at play.

Mr. Matthew Green: In your work, did you ever come across allegations, information or intelligence, whether it was verified or not, that foreign actors, be they state actors or non-state actors, used nomination processes to find preferred candidates and to perhaps influence members of a particular community, ethnic group or nationality to attend en masse and support one candidate over another?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Worse than that, I've seen candidates going to the consulate and asking for their help.

Mr. Matthew Green: They were going to the consulate—going to the state actors.

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: They were going to the state actors and asking for their help to be elected, and they got elected.

Mr. Matthew Green: You've provided in testimony at the ethics committee, which I'm on, that CSIS, the RCMP and other government agencies are essentially using spyware to monitor Canadian citizens who might be involved in this domestically. As I understand, there would need to be a process for that. There is a process from which they would have ministerial approval, perhaps from the Minister of Public Safety.

There are also MPs sometimes who are targeted in this. Is that correct?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Yes, but just to be clear, usually we do not target Canadians. We target foreign agents. If they are in contact with Canadians, then the Canadians might become part of it.

Mr. Matthew Green: Given the nature of smart phones, it's a comprehensive capture, so everything that comes in would be captured by that.

That being said, is it your testimony here today that information has been collected that says there were candidates seeking favour from foreign national consulates to get into the nomination streams domestically?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: That's correct.

Mr. Matthew Green: There are currently laws in place for that. You mentioned treason. I think part of the challenge we have around finding case law is that it's something we probably all have heard of but maybe don't fully understand.

Can you perhaps reflect for a moment on how important it would be for us to have clear legislation in place with clear consequences that ensure the threshold for that type of thing could be avoided in future processes?

• (1100)

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: In our jargon, we call them “agents of influence”. Stalin used to call them the useful idiots.

Mr. Matthew Green: Yes.

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Those useful people sometimes either intentionally or by inadvertence offer their services simply because they are seduced by a culture, by a country or by national interest. They believe they do the right thing, but unfortunately they don't understand that there are professional intelligence officers who are capable of manipulating them and eventually get what they want.

Mr. Matthew Green: In that instance, though, it's your testimony here, for the purpose of this committee, that for capturing these processes, there should be clear laws in place so that if CSIS has information or intelligence that is verified, as per Mr. German, of a candidate seeking out foreign support within a domestic nomination or election, it should automatically trigger a criminal investigation that has with it a criminal responsibility, which you outlined as jail time.

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Yes, but the problem we currently have with CSIS and the RCMP is that their chain of command and the reporting goes directly to the Prime Minister, and that's where the road blocks.

Mr. Matthew Green: Your testimony is that we should have a non-partisan arm's-length government agency, independent of Parliament and empowered by Parliament, that would be responsible for the full safeguarding of our democracy to ensure these types of interactions are fully verified, fully investigated and ultimately fully prosecuted?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Absolutely.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It's called NSIRA.

Mr. Matthew Green: How is that working for us?

The Chair: Are we serious? We were doing so good. Let's just maintain how great we were all doing.

Thank you for that line of questioning. I appreciate it.

We're going into a quick second round. We'll give three minutes to Mr. Cooper, followed by three minutes to Mr. Turnbull, a minute to Madame Normandin and a minute to Mr. Green.

Go ahead, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

I note for the record that the Xinhua News Agency and the People's Daily were banned from being at Prime Minister Harper's 2013 Arctic tour, and that in an August 22, 2014, CBC article, Prime Minister Harper's spokesperson said with respect to Xinhua and the People's Daily that neither of them were welcome.

I am going to ask Mr. Juneau-Katsuya a couple of questions.

First of all, you conducted an interview with CBC in which you commented on Kenny Chiu. You said something to the effect that the Chinese community in his riding has been manipulated by the CCP. Can you elaborate on that?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: One of the strategies of foreign interference by the Chinese is to infiltrate a community and influence or even bully the community into acting or working with a certain perspective. With the avenue of social media, a great exploitation has been started to simply launch negative campaigns against certain individuals, which will eventually influence the community.

The Canadian Chinese community has been well educated for decades on how much reach the Chinese government has had in the community. They know they are under observation. They have not been able to report it to the authorities, and when they did, the authorities in the past were not able to investigate adequately, so they felt totally alone.

They adapted to the situation, and unfortunately what we have is a community that very often reads Chinese newspapers, which are affected or manipulated by the state and deliver their own message. At the end of the day, they know that within the community there are agents of influence—Canadians acting on behalf of the Chinese government—reporting on individuals. Now, if that was not enough, we recently discovered there were secret Chinese police stations in the community.

That form of supervision, intimidation and bullying has basically controlled many in the Chinese community, who, in great numbers, have relatives back in homeland China.

• (1105)

Mr. Michael Cooper: In the Steveston—Richmond East riding, and in other ridings in the Lower Mainland and the GTA with a large population of Chinese Canadians, there was a significant drop in turnout and participation in the 2021 election. Do you think that's a coincidence?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: Absolutely not. That is also part of the manipulation.

We have seen, for example, Chinese foreign students being told and instructed by the consulate, after being given a document with pictures of candidates, to go door to door and speak in Chinese to constituents, saying, “You vote for this person; you do not vote for that person.” Then they pretend that they are capable of knowing who they are voting for.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Turnbull, you have the same time.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Madam Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for your testimony today.

Mr. Juneau-Katsuya, I'll start with you.

You have explicitly stated that we can prove that every government has been compromised, from Mulroney's to Trudeau's, which is a big statement. I noted that I think you also said that previously at the ethics committee.

We also heard from Mr. Bourrie that he was asked to spy on the Dalai Lama and PM Harper at the time, and that he blew the whistle and Harper did nothing. I connect this with what we saw a couple of years later, because I believe that was in 2012, if I am not mistaken. In 2014, PM Harper signed a 30-year trade deal with China. Many experts at the time expressed really grave concerns about how this might affect our national security.

Mr. Juneau-Katsuya, would you say that PM Harper was soft on China?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: He became soft. It started with smoking guns when he was elected the first time, even quoting me

occasionally in the House of Commons, but with time, agents of influence were capable of gaining access to him and changed the course of his decision-making.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you.

Did the 30-year trade deal signed by the Harper government compromise national security, in your view?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: National interests at least, definitely.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Okay.

You spoke to a trade imbalance in your previous remarks. Was that a result...? Is that a fallout or an implication...?

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: That imbalance has been present for decades now. It's always been present. We always had a trade deficit with China, so it didn't change anything. It didn't improve anything either.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Did you table, or can you table, your suggestions from your opening remarks? I believe we should have them, but I'd like to see them in writing if possible. I thought they were really good.

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: I did share my document with the clerk.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Wonderful.

Mr. German, I know you've spoken a lot about money laundering. I would be interested in any further reflections you have on what we really need to do to prevent the stream of money that may be flowing in to support foreign interference.

Dr. Peter German: Money is always present in these discussions. As I tried to point out, I think we have to have robust legislation, which is something Michel alluded to, and it has to be enforceable. Not only does that mean we need investigative tools and processes, but we need adequately empowered enforcement agencies. That includes the Elections Canada office. It has a good investigative unit, but they need the resources and the access and so forth to make these things happen.

Money is critical in all of this, and we do have the intelligence there. It's a matter of tapping into it and using it.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

Mr. Juneau-Katsuya, you mentioned earlier that certain types of ridings were at greater risk of interference. I'd like to hear what you have to say on this, and I'd like to hear from Mr. German as well. Is it true? If so, should we concentrate our efforts on ridings like these?

[English]

Dr. Peter German: I think it's fair to say that where ridings contain a large number of people of Chinese ethnicity, you're going to see more action and more areas of concern. Another member mentioned Steveston. I lived in Steveston for many years. Certainly the Lower Mainland is a rich community because of the different ethnicities that exist in greater Vancouver, but there's always a downside. The influence of Canadian citizens who happen to have been born elsewhere or who happen to have relatives elsewhere is really an issue we have to be alive to. My friends have spoken to that with greater detail than I'm able to in terms of specifics.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Juneau-Katsuya: I totally agree with you that this would be the best place to start, because it's the weak point in our system. Foreign interference is not just political in nature; it also takes the form of influence and intimidation. All authoritarian governments that practise intimidation will work from within communities, whether to embed agents there, or simply to intimidate the people. There is no doubt whatsoever that the authorities should give special attention to such communities.

The problem facing us today, however, is that the legislative system does not give the police the tools to which Mr. German alluded.

The Chair: Thank you.

Over to you, Mr. Green.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you very much.

Mr. German, you mentioned the layers of money laundering. I think there have been some comments around Canada's role in being a useful idiot and people being useful idiots in some instances. At the ethics committee, we're studying the Trudeau Foundation. That allegation was lobbied there. Mr. Zhang Bin, who's a multi-billionaire in China and a very influential person, provided a donation to the Trudeau Foundation.

In your opinion, is that type of intervention considered influence, or could it also cross the threshold into interference?

Dr. Peter German: Well, as to influence and interference, I'm not too sure there's much difference. I think the distinction is probably whether it becomes criminal at some point.

I don't have the answer and the facts in that particular case. However, what I did say in my opening remarks, and I think it's of interest, is that when we talk about money laundering, we talk about the proceeds of criminality. When we're talking about election influence and when we're talking about anti-terrorist financing, we're talking about money being used for a purpose. It's at the beginning as opposed to being the endgame.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

This is one of those panels for which we wish we had a lot more time, and that's why I'll say to witnesses, first of all, on behalf of PROC committee members, thank you so much for your time today. Thank you for your patience at the beginning of the meeting. If there is anything else you would like to send to committee and

would like us to consider, please share it with the clerk. We'll have it translated into both official languages and shared.

We really appreciate your insights today, and we wish you a good rest of the day. Thank you for the work you do. We look forward to keeping in touch. Please keep well and safe.

The meeting will suspend as we bring in the next panel. Thank you so much.

• (1110)

(Pause)

• (1115)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

In our next panel, we have Nancy Bangsboll, independent researcher, by video conference. We have Thomas Juneau, associate professor, graduate school of public and international affairs, University of Ottawa, in person. Finally, we have Christian Leuprecht, professor, Royal Military College of Canada, by video conference.

You will each have up to four minutes for your opening statement, after which we will proceed to questions from committee members.

Ms. Bangsboll, the floor is yours. Welcome to PROC.

• (1120)

Ms. Nancy Bangsboll (Independent Researcher, As an Individual): Thank you.

Good morning. My name is Nancy Bangsboll, and I'm an independent researcher located in southwestern Ontario.

Research has proven that the Tides Foundation U.S. provided a substantial amount of foreign funds to organizations in Canada, including Dogwood, Leadnow, The Council of Canadians and many others. They registered as third parties and then worked together to influence the results of the 2015 election.

My research has been focused on the riding level, on the influencers involved in cities and on how these foreign-funded organizations and campaigns have affected not only our election results, but also, more importantly, government policies since 2015.

The recipients of these foreign funds in Canada included organizations that openly declared a commitment to defeating Conservative candidates, and a commitment to working together and voting together in order to achieve their various goals. They repeatedly did so in print, in video and in robocalls in advance of and during the 2015 election. Significant evidence of the advantage given to the endorsed candidates was detailed in Leadnow's "Defeating Harper" report and in notes from the wrap-up meetings of Leadnow.

I submitted a large complaint to Elections Canada in the summer of 2016 requesting that the commissioner fully investigate and prosecute the violations of the Canada Elections Act and any other offences the commissioner's own investigation exposed. In the winter of 2016, two investigators from Elections Canada visited my home and spent two and half hours reviewing the evidence provided in the complaint. Investigator Tim Charbonneau and I continued to correspond by email and phone until October 2017, when I received my last email from him. He informed me that he was continuing his inquiries and that he made considerable progress. He reminded me that in any case involving allegations of collusion, it was very important to speak to all parties involved, and given the scope of this investigation, they had to talk to a lot of people. He thanked me for my patience.

In May 2018, I reached out to him again with more information, but he did not respond. Weeks later, I read a statement by Marc Chénier, the lawyer for the Chief Electoral Officer who was testifying on June 6 before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I was stunned to hear him say that the investigation into election interference was closed. This is how it was ended, according to Mr. Chénier:

We had to interrupt some of the commissioner's investigations because it was impossible to obtain the evidence we needed. In the political world, there are often allegiances. People provide mutual support to each other and that is normal.

Apparently, all of the evidence provided meant absolutely nothing unless those committing the offences admitted it.

I have only concentrated on Tides here, but there are many other influence groups doing the same things. There are so many of these highly funded organizations and activists now involved in our elections and in government policy development that it's impossible to count them. Sadly, the average Canadian doesn't even know they exist.

Thank you. I cut my statement short because I was trying to get under four minutes.

The Chair: You did a wonderful job. I look forward to questions and comments from members.

With that, we will now proceed to Professor Juneau.

The floor is yours.

Dr. Thomas Juneau (Associate Professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you.

The focus of my remarks will be on the response: what Canada can do to better counter foreign interference, with a focus of transparency. It's not the only element of our response that we can improve, but it is a central one that we underexploit. Basically, I will make a pragmatic case, or instrumental case, for why the lack of transparency has been counterproductive.

The starting point for any discussion on foreign interference has to be the reality that the targets are often diaspora communities. Among those communities, mistrust towards government and national security agencies is often high. That can also be true among Canadians as a whole.

That is often one of the chief obstacles to better countering foreign interference. It makes co-operation and information sharing more difficult. Failing to understand and address this limits the effectiveness of our efforts. Societal resilience has to be one of our first lines of defence against foreign interference and the other threats we face today, such as economic espionage, disinformation and others. However, mistrust, compounded by poor transparency, unnecessarily lowers the ceiling for successful responses.

Second, there are a lot of misconceptions in the national security community about what transparency is. Too often, transparency is viewed as an either-or proposition: It's transparency or national security. Transparency is additional work. It's costly. It's an irritating bureaucratic box to tick. These are all misconceptions.

Transparency is, or at least should be, an enabler of national security. Less transparency amounts to fighting foreign interference and other threats with a hand tied behind our backs. In fact, it should be one of our key strengths or assets in the fight against non-democracies. Too often, this is misunderstood and that's a missed opportunity.

Very quickly—and we can further discuss this—what can be done? We need more briefings and better briefings for parliamentarians and political parties, and also training on how recipients of these briefings can use that information, because often it is poorly understood. We can do more engagement, including through the development of specialized engagement units, with minority communities; better engagement with the media, which the intelligence community does not do well enough, including local and ethnic media; and better liaison with universities and the private sector. Communication here is much better than it was just a few years ago, but there are still a lot of obstacles to effective co-operation. That would include a better understanding within the intelligence community of the interests of stakeholders, their culture, their needs and how they might use that information; and better engagement with the public in general, through speeches, outreach, social media, parliamentary testimonies, public reports and annual reports, with actual substance as opposed to jargon.

By the way, one of the major obstacles to doing all of this is the epidemic of overclassification in the intelligence community. Also related to this is transparency in the way that I frame it here—as engagement in a sustained matter. That implies better information sharing and better coordination between the intelligence community and non-national security departments in Ottawa, as well as with provincial and municipal levels of government, which have a key role to play. We see that now in the context of foreign interference. We saw weaknesses at that level in the context of the convoy last year. There has been much improvement, but there is still a long way to go.

To conclude, having more transparency and more engagement is a lot of work for an intelligence community that is already over-stretched. It requires specific skills that are not fostered enough in the intelligence community. It requires more people, simply. It means that you have to define the parameters of the mandate of engagement units regarding what they can say, what they cannot say and to whom and in what context they can say it. It means that you need political cover, because engagement, especially in contexts with minority communities, can be sensitive.

I'll conclude on this. It is a necessary investment, if looking forward we want to be serious in countering foreign interference and other threats we face. Thank you.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Professor Leuprecht.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Christian Leuprecht (Professor, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual): Madam Chair, thank you for the invitation to come today.

[*English*]

The Chinese Communist Party's ultimate goal is to constrain Canada's capacity to make sovereign decisions. Foreign interference is fundamentally a matter of Canadian sovereignty. Too many Canadians and MPs are taking democracy for granted. Instead, a government that claims to have a values-based foreign policy should be defending and protecting Canadian democracy and freedoms and our way of life.

Subversion by Beijing is the single greatest threat to Canada's sovereignty and democratic way of life today. Canada needs a coherent deterrence strategy that imposes cumulative costs on hostile state actors.

One, lower the threshold for investigations by following the lead of our allies and establish, in law, clear thresholds for foreign interference, as well as punitive consequences.

Two, delineate foreign interference, subversion and subterfuge. When a foreign hostile actor intentionally, deliberately and repeatedly violates Canadian law and resorts to prima facie illegal and criminal conduct, that amounts to subversion and subterfuge.

Three, foreign interference in Canada appears to be concentrated in large metropolitan areas, so task the integrated national security enforcement teams, which have already proven themselves effective against terrorism, with foreign interference investigations and resource them accordingly. At a minimum, activities directed against MP Chong, his family and, ostensibly, other MPs amount to conspiracy and harassment, which are Criminal Code offences and thus readily meet even the exceptionally high threshold for the expulsion of diplomats the Prime Minister has laid out.

Four, in effect, the CCP's United Front Work Department behaves like a state-sponsored transnational organized criminal syndicate, so let's treat it as such and shut down these thugs and their club of secret police stations.

Five, the UFWD is enabled by China having the second-largest foreign diplomatic service in Canada. Why is Canada accrediting so many more Chinese diplomats than Canadian diplomats are accredited in China?

Six, explicitly restore CSIS's subversion mandate, which was abandoned after the Cold War.

Seven, having just retasked NSICOP with yet another study, for the purpose of this one study only, the Prime Minister could opt to turn NSICOP from a committee of parliamentarians into a parliamentary committee, while giving Canadians public assurance that there would be no executive interference in the study. That would give NSICOP, rather than the political executive of the day, latitude to decide on the content and timing of matters it feels would be in the national interest to report to Parliament.

Eight, build a cross-party agreement on an integrated national security strategy the way some of Canada's key allies have long done.

Nine, now that it appears the Prime Minister may have misled Parliament, which is a very serious matter in a Westminster constitutional democracy, there is yet more reason for an independent public inquiry.

Canada needs to draw red lines and stand up to bad actors by sending a cordial yet clear message that breaking Canadian law to constrain Canadian sovereign decision-making is unacceptable and will have real consequences.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

We will now enter six-minute rounds, starting with Mr. Cooper.

Go ahead, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm going to start out by directing my questions to Ms. Bangs-boll.

In its report "Defeating Harper", Leadnow claims credit for defeating 24 Conservative incumbents in the 2015 election.

Can you summarize how, in that election, Leadnow used funds and in-kind support from the U.S.-based Tides Foundation and other foreign actors and organizations?

Ms. Nancy Bangs-boll: Yes.

The first thing you have to recognize is that money coming in through Tides U.S. or any other foreign foundation is delivered to Tides Canada or many other foundations here that support activism, so you don't really, at the end of the day, always find out who's supporting whom or which activist group is getting money from where.

I can tell you that in the study of one riding, when we looked at the costs that gave advantage to certain candidates, we covered flights, because we knew in some cases where people were flying from as members of a team. We covered travel, whether it was by car or whatever else from Toronto to London. We also covered signs, banners, flyers, advertising material, radio time that they didn't have to pay for, food, T-shirts, rent locations and phone banks.

The Leadnow office was in the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto. I don't know how they paid for that, but that's where their main office was. Polling is expensive. Any candidate is going to have to pay for all these things, but this was given freely. There were Facebook ads and online ads. David Suzuki was involved in a number of these campaigns and travelled with the crew to many different locations. That's hotel rentals and whatnot.

• (1135)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Ms. Bangsboll.

Do you believe that any candidates received this kind of support in the 2015 election and did not report it to Elections Canada? Do you have evidence of that?

Ms. Nancy Bangsboll: We couldn't find any evidence that anyone reported in-kind expenses from activist organizations, yet at least 11 were targeted with full staff. I mean, here we have seven staff members. They're all on salary. They're not volunteers, but they're dressed like volunteers. They all had to get here, and they're working with Mr. Suzuki and a member of Mr. Suzuki's staff, so when you have that—

Mr. Michael Cooper: Ms. Bangsboll, 11 candidates received in-kind support with full staff and did not report that.

Ms. Nancy Bangsboll: According to the “Defeating Harper” report, 11 cities or campaigns were targeted with staff. A lot of other cities did not have the staff. Those were where they had a primary interest in defeating the Conservative candidate and thought they had the best chance.

Mr. Michael Cooper: You reported this to Elections Canada. Is that correct?

Ms. Nancy Bangsboll: Yes.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Elections Canada wasn't able to do anything about it.

Will you undertake to provide this committee with the supporting documentation you have?

Ms. Nancy Bangsboll: Absolutely.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you very much for that.

I'm going to turn my attention and ask a question of Dr. Leuprecht.

You referred to the United Front Work Department. At the ethics committee, the brother of the Prime Minister, in respect of

a \$140,000 so-called donation to the Trudeau Foundation, said that there was no possibility of foreign interference and that the donation came from a Canadian company, a shell company based in Montreal out of a house, that is controlled by a company called the China Cultural Industry Association, which is part of the United Front Work Department.

Do you agree that in that context, there's no possibility of foreign interference, or would you say there was?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: Mr. Cooper, open-source documentation raising concerns about this donation dates back to 2016, so we have had ample time to have an honest discussion, which I think people are not prepared to have. It is also why people are resisting a foreign agent registry, because of the number of Canadian elites who would get ensnared in such a registry.

Mr. Michael Cooper: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have 24 seconds.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Leuprecht, I'll allow you to use the balance of your time to add anything you wish.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: These are very serious matters in a parliamentary democracy. There are many options available to the government today if it wants to show that it is serious about defending Canadian democracy. We need to decide: Are we standing with the tyrants or are we standing up for Canadian democracy?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Romanado, you have six minutes.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us today.

My first question is for Professor Leuprecht.

The last panel we heard from had some pretty powerful testimony with respect to foreign interference and the fact that it's been going on for decades. I'm not sure if you were watching, but in that last panel we heard about the case of a Chinese state-run agency, Xinhua, asking a journalist to spy on the former prime minister. A reporter at that same news agency was involved in a scandal with the parliamentary secretary to foreign affairs minister John Baird, Bob Dechert, in an apparent honeytrap operation.

How concerning is it that this was all so close to an important ministry like foreign affairs?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: Other open-source evidence is problematic with regard to John Baird in terms of financial matters and Jean Charest, which has been documented, as well as the former ambassador and cabinet minister Mr. McCallum.

We can see from the evidence you have provided that, if we triangulate that, there are multiple attempts to target the same individuals in different fashions. This effectively correlates with the types of operations that have been documented against sitting parliamentarians today.

• (1140)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Professor Leuprecht, I'm going to follow up on what you just mentioned in terms of financial matters. Could you confirm that Mr. Baird went to work for a Chinese billionaire after he resigned from the foreign affairs post? Is that something you think should be addressed in our legislative recommendations?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: The matter of concern is public record. It shows that the Canadian framework is not sufficiently robust to lay out clear rules as to what is and is not acceptable, both while in office and when out of office.

Rather than looking back, the valuable work the committee can do is to make sure that we lay out much clearer rules and lay out clear penalties for violating those rules, whether they're being violated by Canadians, by foreigners or by accredited diplomats in Canada.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Further to that, on our previous panel Mr. Juneau-Katsuya said that Prime Minister Stephen Harper became "soft" on China at the end of his mandate due to agents of influence getting to him. What would you make of that assessment?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: As I testified to before the Canada-China committee, I believe elite capture is a significant challenge. This is elite capture by China—both by pecuniary interests and by companies and law firms that are related to elite capture. As I have just stated, I believe this is the major reason for significant resistance and active lobbying against the foreign agent registry that has been proposed.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you very much.

My next question is for Professor Juneau. In full disclosure, we both have the same alma mater, which is McGill University.

Professor Juneau, you mentioned a bit about the overclassification of classified information. Can you elaborate on that a bit? Also, can you provide me with any feedback with respect to the same questions that I asked the previous witness?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: On the issue of overclassification, I mentioned it very quickly in passing, simply because, as part of broader efforts for the intelligence and national security community to be more transparent on the issue of foreign interference and when dealing with other threats—economic espionage, disinformation and others—overclassification is an obstacle to the sharing of information.

I find—and I think it's a view shared by quite a number of observers, former ones too—that a lot of information within government and within the intelligence community is classified while it could easily not be classified, or it should be classified but it is classified at too high a level. That makes efforts to share information with Canadians generally speaking, with parliamentarians in many cases, including as we've seen in the news in the last few days, and with civil society much more difficult.

As part of what I was trying to suggest—having a broader, much more significant push to be more transparent to help us better counter foreign interference—that is going to be a major obstacle. It is the result of a culture in the national security community that remains very insular, very protective, and where the incentive struc-

ture very much favours overclassification. You can be penalized for not classifying information, but you can't be penalized for overclassifying information. It's very easy for me to come here and say it's a problem. In practice, I fully acknowledge that solutions are not easy, but they are essential.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you so much.

I have one last question for Professor Leuprecht. Do you think then minister Baird made any decisions at Foreign Affairs that lead you to believe there was some level of elite capture?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I'm afraid there isn't sufficient information in the public domain to be able to draw conclusions, but concerns about the relationship and consequences in terms of the extradition of one individual, for instance, are a matter of public record.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd also like to thank all the witnesses.

Professor Leuprecht, I'll begin with you, but Mr. Juneau should feel free to comment if he wishes.

You spoke about the role of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. I'd like to return to that briefly, because it was touted as a panacea that could obviate the need for an independent public inquiry. You also reminded us that the committee doesn't report to Parliament and that there are other problems, like the trouble it has in obtaining information from the Privy Council Office, which makes it very difficult for it to do its investigative work.

What do you think about getting this committee of parliamentarians the information it needs to do its work properly?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: Ms. Normandin, You've just raised a very important question.

I wrote an entire book about that, called *Intelligence as Democratic Statecraft*, which has a chapter on exactly how Canada operates, and the positive and negative aspects of the existing system.

In Canada, the sharing of information is definitely a problem. As I point out in my book, we need to place more trust in our parliamentarians. They know precisely how to use the intelligence and information available to them. They are in a very good position to decide what should be done with the information and how to communicate their conclusions to the general public.

I understand the reluctance about the structure of the committee on the one hand, and the sharing of intelligence on the other. However, the evidence obtained from other parliamentary partners, like the United Kingdom and Australia, would not lead to the current government's conclusion that you can't really trust parliamentarians. The very opposite is the case.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Professor Leuprecht.

Professor Juneau, I'd like to look more deeply into the matter of declassifying information and the role of the media. One of the things we were told was that the media had been aware of foreign interference in the past, but that they weren't interested in it.

With more information, and more data being declassified and made available, might the media take more of an interest in what is going on, and do a better job of informing the general public so that they could understand what's happening? Have we misjudged the role of the media in transmitting information.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Thank you.

I'm going to return to your previous question about the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, the NSICOP. I'm in complete agreement with the suggestion made by my colleague, Professor Leuprecht, about transforming it from a committee of parliamentarians into a parliamentary committee.

But it's important to point out that on the basis of information resulting from my research on a number of projects, there is no evidence of inappropriate political interference in the redaction of classified NSICOP reports before they are released. That needs to be said. The redaction is done at the senior management level of the bureaucracy. Based on available information—I've done some research on this for various projects—there is no evidence of inappropriate interference.

The NSICOP reports have been very good so far. I've read them all and find them very substantive. The problem is not the committee itself, but rather the fact that many of its reports have been ignored or neglected by the government. A partial solution could be a procedure requiring the government to respond to all the committee's reports, which is not currently being done. This requirement would draw attention to the reports and put some pressure on civil society, the opposition parties, and the media to discuss them at greater length.

I think you're right to focus on the media issue. As I said in my earlier presentation, the national security community has not been transparent enough with the media, whether in terms of technical briefings, which often don't say much, or in responses to media inquiries. When journalists contact someone at a minister's office or someone in the public service, it often takes much too long to get a reply, which in any event usually contains more doublespeak than information.

And yet the media play an absolutely essential role in transmitting information to Canadians, whether on national security or other areas. We really are not doing enough about this. If we truly want to be more transparent in order to provide better information to communities like the Chinese Canadian, Iranian-Canadian or Indo-Canadian diaspora about a threat and what might be done to

counter it, then the media need a lot more information and they are not really getting it at this point.

• (1150)

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you. I don't have very much time left, but I'll give it a try.

It's been suggested that we set up an independent body to investigate foreign interference, which would not report to the Minister of Public Safety and would be separate from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Just briefly, do you think this is worth pursuing?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I'm not convinced, but I could be. The details of the proposal would have to be looked at for a clearer picture. I don't think that establishing yet another new agency is necessarily the solution. I would tend to say that the solution lies more with better tools and more resources, in addition to a clearer legislative mandate for the existing organizations.

Ms. Christine Normandin: What do you think, Professor Leuprecht?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: As I mentioned in my testimony, I would remind you that there are already teams integrated into national security in all of Canada's major cities. They've dealt effectively with counterterrorism and are doing a good job on their investigations. They could be provided with the resources and mandate needed to carry out an investigation into foreign interference. The problem is that because we have not yet clearly defined what constitutes foreign interference, it would be difficult at this time for any of these agencies to conduct such an investigation.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Green, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you very much.

I'm going to pick up on that, because I think it is this committee's responsibility to provide sound governance recommendations and legislative changes based on your testimony as subject matter experts.

Mr. Juneau, you wrote the book, *Intelligence Analysis and Policy Making: The Canadian Experience*. In it you covered some recommendations on ways we can support our security apparatus.

I'll share with you that I co-chaired the Emergencies Act review committee. In that process, we witnessed during the insurrectionist occupation of Ottawa tens of millions of dollars flooding into the hands of people who were intent on disrupting our democracy. There seemed to be a pretty clear breakdown from our intelligence apparatus and our frontline law enforcement. The Rouleau commission provided an opportunity for a very thoughtful and thorough analysis, not just on the use of the Emergencies Act but on the pre-conditions and the failures.

Is it your opinion that for this particular allegation of Chinese foreign interference, an independent public inquiry might be the best non-partisan space to get facts that could be helpful in determining the extent and scope of this? To this moment we've only heard about Mr. Chong, but I understand there could be 10 more members. Would you be supportive of an independent public inquiry?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Thank you. I would just like to point out that I co-wrote the book you mentioned with a colleague, Stephanie Carvin, from Carleton.

On the issue of a public inquiry, I am honestly not convinced that it is the best way to go. I find that right now we have NSICOP, NSIRA, you and Elections Canada. We have a variety. Others—the RCMP and CSIS—have their own ways of dealing with some of this. The independent special rapporteur will have his own recommendations. I am not convinced that the value added, on top of all that, by an independent public inquiry—which would take a lot of time, cost money and drain a lot resources—would really bring more than a marginal value to everything we already have.

Mr. Matthew Green: Is it your testimony here today that NSIRA and NSICOP could adequately deal with the allegations that have been made and provide adequate legislative frameworks in a minority government, where we could have an election within a year? Speaking of timelines, do you think that's adequate?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: NSIRA, NSICOP and the others going on.... Again, if you look at the record of NSIRA and NSICOP and read the reports, they are very good. They are independent. They are critical—

Mr. Matthew Green: They're not binding.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: They're not binding. That is a problem. I would agree with that.

Mr. Matthew Green: Just to reiterate it and put it on the record here today, would it be your recommendation to this committee in this study that we provide a binding feature within those bodies to force government into legislation? In previous testimony, we were told CSIS only has to advise government. We were also told by the subject matter experts that every prime minister has been told, for the past 30 years, that this has been a problem, yet they've done nothing.

How do we have an independent, non-partisan, rights-based approach to this that doesn't weigh the economic interests of foreign trade with democracy domestically?

• (1155)

Dr. Thomas Juneau: As a small point of clarification, I do not agree with the statement that was made earlier and elsewhere that governments have done nothing to counter foreign interference. I certainly agree and have written that they haven't done enough, the current government and its predecessors. To say that they have done nothing, frankly, simply doesn't work.

On the issue of it being binding, I would agree with changes, for example, to NSICOP's mandate to make it a parliamentary committee, and what I mentioned in answer to a previous question is that the government has to respond to these reports. On making the recommendations binding, I am honestly not sure, from a technical

perspective, how that would work, so I'm reluctant to say anything definitive on that.

Mr. Matthew Green: I will share with you, quite frankly, that my concern in these very hyperpartisan times is that often the outcomes are lost. What is present in these partisan debates—and we hear it sometimes in testimony from witnesses—is chasing the ambulance of whatever crisis is in the moment without any clear reflective legislative changes. Sometimes it appears, between government and opposition, that there isn't necessarily a willingness to improve and strengthen legislation.

You've talked about greater transparency. We have a government that uses client-solicitor privilege, cabinet confidence, secret orders in council and obstruction in the production of documents at every parliamentary step along the way, and I think we can all agree that democracy is fragile globally. Right now we're in a bit of a crisis, given the allegations that are there, the deepening cynicism and the lack of participation in our elections.

Without putting all this on your shoulders, are there maybe three high-level recommendations that you think in the short term would help us address the cynicism coming out of this particular study and provide some legislative remedy?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Sure. I think I mentioned a lot of them in my presentation: more transparency generally, better engagement with parliamentarians, better engagement with civil society and, specifically on foreign interference, better engagement with diaspora communities. That goes through the creation of engagement units. These already exist within CSE and CSIS in particular. They actually do quite a good job, but I think they're too small, so broaden and deepen their scope and resources. On NSICOP, have government respond, and transform NSICOP into a parliamentary committee. I could go on.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Just to get us to the top of the hour, we'll do one question for the Conservatives and one for the Liberals.

Go ahead, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Given that I only have the opportunity to ask one question....

Mr. Leuprecht, in your opening remarks, you suggested that the Prime Minister may have misled Parliament. Would you give us the context in which you believe that the Prime Minister may have misled Parliament?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I believe that statements made over recent days and the way some of the communication has shifted with regard to Member Chong are highly problematic, and that in itself I think is reason to understand that, as I've reinforced, the legislative framework in place in our national security posture is insufficiently robust.

Many of these problems could be solved by an Australian approach that has an automatic five-year review built in. Our last systematic review of our national security framework, if you like, goes back to 1981 and the McDonald commission. Clearly, we need a more systematic approach.

It is not clear to me whether the Prime Minister's statements were with intent or were simply a function of the best information available at the time, but it clearly shows that in terms of inter-ministerial responsibility, there are some challenges in coordination between the Prime Minister and his own department and the statements that he subsequently has made on the matter.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Sahota, you have one question.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Going to Ms. Nancy Bangsball, you mentioned at the beginning of your testimony that you do research. I wasn't able to find any articles.... It doesn't have to be books or anything like that, but I wasn't able to find anywhere where your research has landed and then been published. I was wondering if first you could explain where your research ends up.

My second question is, are you a member of the Conservative Party and are you a donor to the Conservative Party of Canada?

• (1200)

Ms. Nancy Bangsball: The reason you won't see anything published by me is that I don't publish. I share my research with individuals who do publish. I've done that deliberately for many years because I don't like the negative attention that you receive from individuals and organizations that don't want to be exposed. I've had no interest in exposing myself to that, but my research has been used by others.

What was your second...? Yes, I am a member of the Conservative Party.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you for that, and thank you for your testimony.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sahota. That was your one question.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you for at least coming out publicly before this committee today. I'd love to learn more about your research in the future.

The Chair: That's excellent. That actually landed perfectly at one minute and 28 seconds.

With that, on behalf of the PROC committee members, I would like to thank all of you for joining us here at committee. Thank you for the work you do.

If you have anything else you would like committee members to consider, please send it to the clerk. We will have it put into both official languages and shared with committee members.

With that, we wish you a good rest of the day.

The meeting is suspended until we come to our third panel.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1205)

The Chair: Good afternoon. I call the meeting back to order.

In our next panel, we have Ms. Jenni Byrne.

Ms. Byrne, you will have up to 10 minutes for your opening comments.

Welcome to PROC.

Ms. Jenni Byrne (As an Individual): That's perfect. Thank you.

Thank you very much for inviting me here today. The committee and the work you are doing are critical to protecting Canadian democracy, and there's no way around it. The facts that have come to light so far are extremely troubling. It is the most basic responsibility of the government to protect Canadians and our democracy from foreign interference, and it is increasingly clear that the government has completely failed in this responsibility, leaving our country vulnerable to hostile foreign actors. We now know, thanks to patriotic Canadians who are willing to ring alarm bells in public, that this government has been systematically turning a blind eye to illegal foreign interference from Beijing.

New evidence of this country's cavalier attitude and wilful blindness towards Beijing's interference in our country's electoral system seems to emerge every week if not every day. This government has been aware for at least two years that a PRC diplomat was targeting the family of Conservative MP Michael Chong in Hong Kong in an effort to silence him.

This is a genuinely shocking revelation and one that raises extremely serious questions about this government. Any intimidation of Canadians, whether directly or through their family members, by a foreign government is wrong, and in this case Beijing was specifically targeting an elected MP for the principled and courageous position he has taken in condemning Beijing's human rights abuses.

That kind of direct interference in our electoral system cannot be tolerated, but what did this government do to protect Canadians or MP Chong? They did nothing. They didn't expel the diplomat or protest to Beijing until they were forced to by incessant questioning from the Conservative Party. They didn't even tell Mr. Chong at all about what they knew was happening to his family until there were media reports.

Sadly, this approach of turning a blind eye has been the government's standard way of addressing this extremely serious issue. The government's silence has left Canadians and their family members overseas more vulnerable than ever to foreign interference activities, and their indifference has undermined our democracy.

Instead of doing their job and protecting Canadians, especially members of Canada's Chinese community who are the primary victims and targets of Beijing's interference efforts, the Liberals have spent an extraordinary amount of time and effort trying to stop any independent investigation into foreign interference from moving forward at all. They only gave in and allowed these hearings when the NDP, their coalition partner, finally forced them to. Since then, we've heard disturbing allegations in connection with the Trudeau Foundation.

Dr. Pascale Fournier, the former president and CEO of the Trudeau Foundation, raised the alarm over a donation that the Trudeau Foundation received from Beijing around the time that Justin Trudeau became Prime Minister, before Xi became president. Astoundingly, Trudeau even appointed the president and CEO of the Trudeau Foundation at the time of this donation to author a report on foreign influence in the last election. It is clear that the point of this donation by a billionaire with ties to Beijing was to try to influence the Prime Minister.

Dr. Fournier said there was evidence that members of the foundation's board worked with the donor to hide the true source of the funds. She also said she believed an independent investigation was needed but that the board members with deep ties to the Trudeau family refused. She resigned, but some of those board members remain in place. It has since been reported that foreign donations to the Trudeau Foundation increased by 10 times around the time Justin Trudeau became Prime Minister, and this while the Prime Minister's brother was an active member of the Trudeau Foundation.

All of these attempts at foreign influence are concerning.

Even more concerning is the government's obvious desire to sweep them under the rug. The Prime Minister couldn't even bring himself to call for an independent investigation into the problem. Instead, he appointed an old family friend, who also happened to be a member of the Trudeau Foundation, to look into the idea for him. It has become clear that this government does not take the threat of foreign interference in our political system seriously. If they did, they would be doing something about it. They would be trying to get to the bottom of these allegations.

Instead, they are fighting at every step to shut down hearings and delay investigations. It often seems as though this government and its friends are angrier at the whistle-blowers and the journalists who are reporting on foreign interference than they are about the serious threat to our democracy that this foreign interference poses.

As someone who's been involved in Canadian politics for more than two decades and who believes strongly in protecting our democratic rights and freedoms, I'm glad the Liberals finally were forced into taking a serious look at this issue, even if they had to be dragged here kicking and screaming.

I look forward to answering your questions.

● (1210)

The Chair: Thank you for your comments.

We will now start the six-minute rounds, starting with Mr. Cooper.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Cooper, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Byrne, for appearing here today.

I think Canadians are astounded at the level of interference that has come to light from Beijing, interference involving attacking and intimidating a sitting member of Parliament and potentially other members of Parliament, setting up illegal police stations and attacking our democracy in not one but two federal elections. It is now well established, based upon reporting by both *The Globe and Mail* and *Global News*, based upon their review of CSIS documents, that Beijing conducted a vast campaign of interference in the 2019 election campaign involving clandestine funding and the support of at least 11 candidates. We know that Beijing interfered in the 2021 election for the purpose of seeing the Liberal Party re-elected. The Prime Minister received multiple briefings, going back to as early as February 2020, about Beijing's interference in the 2019 election, so well in advance of the 2021 election when Beijing interfered again.

In the face of those briefings, the Prime Minister sat on it, took no meaningful action and kept Canadians in the dark, despite the advice of CSIS that the best way to combat foreign interference is through sunlight and transparency.

Based on everything we have seen over the past few months—that is truly astounding—can you, as the former deputy chief of staff to Prime Minister Harper, comment on how the government has handled this and how Prime Minister Harper, based on your experience working with him, would have handled this type of interference?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I believe that, had Prime Minister Harper been given these allegations, they would have been made public, and they would have been acted upon. If you've seen how Prime Minister Harper handled things, for example, sending the Iranian delegation home, shutting down the embassy in 2012, that's how Prime Minister Harper handled things when he was briefed by CSIS.

As the former deputy chief of staff and national campaign director both in the 2011 campaign and the 2015 campaign, I was never at one point briefed on any foreign interference leading into both of those elections.

● (1215)

Mr. Michael Cooper: I think you made an important point about Iran because we were seeing, back 10-plus years ago, the Iranian regime targeting Iranian Canadians and interfering in our domestic affairs. They were using accredited diplomats to orchestrate that interference, and Prime Minister Harper shut down the entire embassy. He sent all of them home, back to Tehran.

By contrast, we have a Liberal government that has turned a blind eye to Iran's interference, notwithstanding that the IRGC shot down PS752. These Liberals, despite a vote of this House of Commons in 2018 to designate the IRGC as a terrorist entity, haven't seen fit to do that. As a result, the IRGC is able to recruit, raise funds and intimidate Iranian Canadians.

Maybe you would wish to elaborate on that.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: You're 100% right, and I'm very cognizant of the work that the Conservative caucus, led by Melissa Lantsman, has done in terms of bringing awareness and pushing forward the Liberal government to list the IRGC as a terrorist entity, which would be the right and proper thing to do. Frankly, in light of what we have seen over the last three or four months in terms of their dragging their feet in terms of investigation into China, it's also very perplexing to me that they don't. It's a very simple thing to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, and it's shocking that they have not done so up until this point.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Why do you think that is?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I don't know. I guess you should ask them.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Very good.

What advice would you have given the Prime Minister had CSIS briefed you with warnings that a candidate running for the Conservative Party was part of a foreign interference network?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: My recommendation, had I been briefed on that, would have been that the person no longer be a candidate for the Conservative Party of Canada.

Mr. Michael Cooper: By contrast, we know this Prime Minister was briefed about a candidate who was part of a foreign interference network. The Prime Minister turned a blind eye to that and allowed that candidate to run. That candidate was later elected as a member of Parliament.

What do you think of that?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I think it's an abdication of responsibility in terms of protecting the electoral integrity of the election to be briefed on something and not act on it.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Chair, I think this further underscores a Prime Minister who doesn't take foreign interference seriously, whether that interference comes from Beijing, Tehran or other hostile foreign states.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Yes, 100%...

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mrs. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Through you, I'd like to thank the witness for being with us today.

Ms. Byrne, we heard from a former intelligence officer today, in a previous panel, that there is evidence of attempts at foreign interference that go back decades. From Prime Minister Mulroney to the current Prime Minister, there have been attempts at foreign interference. You just mentioned that, in your time as deputy chief of staff, you were never briefed on attempts at foreign interference.

Did I understand that correctly?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: That is correct.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: How could it be that the former deputy chief of staff was not briefed at all by CSIS about attempts

at foreign interference, when CSIS intelligence officers have testified there were attempts?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I can't speak to that.

I can tell you with all certainty that I was never briefed on foreign interference. I know Mr. Morrison, one of the former security advisers, said that foreign interference has increased significantly over the last few years, but I think it's even more important that there be a public inquiry, which can go back—

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I'd like to stop you, because I have very limited time and want to share my time with other colleagues.

In your capacity as co-deputy chief of staff, you would have been privy to the mandate letters of ministers. Could you confirm whether any mandate letters for any ministers' parliamentary secretaries or others had any reference to foreign interference and combatting foreign interference?

• (1220)

Ms. Jenni Byrne: The last mandate letters would have been back.... A cabinet shuffled. It would have been in 2011. I was not working in the Prime Minister's Office, but I have no recollection of whether or not they included foreign interference.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Okay. Thank you very much.

I'm going to turn my time over to Mr. Turnbull, who also has some questions.

Thank you.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Ms. Byrne.

Given your connection to the current Conservative leader, can you tell us why Mr. Poilievre chose not to do a single thing to strengthen our democratic institutions and protect against this threat when he was the minister of democratic reform?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: As I said, there were no.... We were not briefed on any threats, but I think it's—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: You're saying there were no threats back when Pierre Poilievre was—

Ms. Jenni Byrne: As I said, not that I was briefed on....

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: We've heard from numerous national intelligence and security experts that this has been going on for over 30 years.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Call a national inquiry and open the scope to more than the last eight years.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I appreciate that, but don't you think it's a bit rich for you to make a whole bunch of allegations and claims at this committee about the current Prime Minister, when the Leader of the Opposition today did nothing when he was the minister of democratic reform?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I think that's completely—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Moving on from that, back when Mr. Poilievre was the minister for democratic reform, Elections Canada asked for powers to investigate violations of the act, but instead Mr. Poilievre proposed to take away power from the agency.

I can imagine why Mr. Poilievre would want to remove investigative powers, given the fact that the agency was investigating him for elections violations at the time.

Do you know why Mr. Poilievre tried to reduce the power and effectiveness of our election agencies to respond?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Well, Elections Canada can absolutely investigate the actions of foreign interference going forward now.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Do you think giving Elections Canada fewer tools improves our response to foreign interference?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Elections Canada can investigate now. Elections Canada, sir, can investigate now, as well as a public inquiry.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I would assume that giving them more tools, not fewer tools, would improve their ability to respond to foreign interference.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: But they can actually—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: What you have said is that our government does nothing to address foreign interference.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: You haven't.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: That's what you've claimed, but here we see the opposite—

The Chair: Why don't we pause? I'm going to pause the time—

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Why don't you, in your preamble, sir, tell me what you've actually done?

The Chair: Why don't I pause—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: We've done quite a few things, actually. I have a five-page list, but I'm not going to—

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, I have the floor and I am going to pause.

I think what might be the best approach is to go through the chair, provide the witness time to answer and provide time for the question. Let's go through the chair. That would also provide time for interpretation.

Is that suitable?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Through you, Madam Chair, I ask these questions because there is another fact here, which is that the former government's Elections Act changes really.... The minister responsible for democratic reform at the time, who is the current leader of the Conservative Party, introduced a bill to make it harder for first nations, youth and vulnerable people to vote.

Do you recognize now, Ms. Byrne, that it was a short-sighted policy?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I believe I was called here to testify on foreign interference.

Madam Chair, I believe you would probably want to keep the questions relevant, considering I am here for an hour. This is not a committee to discuss the Elections Act. We could do that another day. This is to discuss foreign interference.

Mr. Matthew Green: I have a point of order.

I know I am a guest at this committee, but MPs have quite some latitude in asking questions they want to ask. I've never been on a

committee where a witness directs members of Parliament on their line of questioning.

I would ask, as the chair, that you allow the member his parliamentary privilege to continue with his line so that I can get to mine.

The Chair: I am sure there are many people who have been watching the testimony of the guests who have been joining us. We really appreciate their time. There has been quite a bit of latitude, so I think we will offer that today.

I would just ask that we continue going through the chair for the remaining time of just under one minute.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Ms. Byrne, do you believe that making it harder for Canadian citizens to vote is a way to address foreign interference?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: No. I think a way to address foreign interference is for the government to take it seriously.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you.

I've seen reports suggesting that the Conservative Party has sent operatives to the U.S. to study how the Republican Party's political machine works. It's a machine that includes dangerous voter suppression tactics.

Have you ever participated in any kind of workshop or training sessions with the U.S. Republicans?

• (1225)

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I have not.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you.

Do you think the snitch line proposed by the Conservative Party back in the 2015 campaign, whereby neighbours would report their neighbours, did anything to combat foreign interference?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: The 2015 election campaign was not affected by any form of foreign interference that I was aware of.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Madam Normandin.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Ms. Byrne, thank you very much for being here.

I'd like to go back to when you were a campaign manager, in 2015. To your knowledge, at that time, what were the main national security threats to elections?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: The main threats in terms of foreign interference...?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: No. What were the threats generally?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I'm sorry. Could you repeat yourself?

The Chair: I am going to pause really quickly.

I want to make sure that, with interpretation, Ms. Byrne, you know that whatever time it takes for interpretation for you to hear the question will be returned to the member. Perfect.

We'll take a pause in between. Let's restart that time.

[Translation]

You have six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

In 2015, you were a campaign manager. At the time, we all remember that there were terrorist attacks. According to you, what were the various threats that may have affected the elections, generally speaking?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I think there were a lot of issues that were of importance during the 2015 election campaign. I would have to say—and I know your NDP colleague is going to ask questions—that the only form of foreign interference that I was aware of leading into the 2015 campaign was the Tides funding of Leadnow, which had a vote now organization that focused on 29 electoral districts. Of those, 16 were Liberals' and 13 were New Democrats'.

That money.... Admittedly, Leadnow said that 17% of its funding came from foreign donors. We know that in 2015, \$1.5 million went from American organizations—from Tide—into Leadnow. With Leadnow, for example, there were two ridings I'll point out that were targeted. They were Elmwood—Transcona, which the Conservative MP lost by 61 votes. There were paid staff and 130 volunteers who were put into Elmwood—Transcona, where we lost by 61 votes.

Kootenay—Columbia is—

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Excuse me for interrupting, but I'm not asking for details about who lost an election, or by how many votes. What I really want to know is how you learned about this type of interference in elections. Where did this information come from?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I received the information from press reports.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I'd like to hear what you have to say about a statement made by an earlier witness, to the effect that every government for the past 30 years, from Mulroney to Trudeau, was compromised by China, that each of these governments was informed of it at some point or other, and that every one of these governments chose to ignore warnings from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Do you agree with this statement, which was made earlier to this committee?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: What I can say is that I know I was never briefed on any form of interference from Beijing in terms of election interference for the two national campaigns that I ran.

The difference between that and what we're seeing with the current government is that it's evident they were briefed several times and chose to ignore it. That is not my opinion; that is an undisputed fact. We know that because of press reports.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Some information must nevertheless have been brought to your attention, because it was public. Even if you weren't involved in the decision, I'd like to hear your opinion. It's known, for example, that Prime Minister Harper had defended his MP, Bob Dechert, after having learned publicly that he had been in a relationship with a journalist working for a Chinese press agency. In hindsight, do you feel that the decision not to relieve him of his duties was correct?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I don't understand what you.... I actually don't know what you're talking about.

• (1230)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: At the risk of repeating myself, I hope it's not something to do with the interpretation. In 2011, Stephen Harper defended MP Bob Dechert, after he had publicly admitted being involved in a relationship with a journalist from a Chinese press agency. Today, in hindsight, do you think that allowing him to keep his job was the right decision?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I was not in the Prime Minister's Office when that incident happened. I was the director of political operations.

I can say that, leading into the 2015 campaign, I was not briefed by CSIS on any—

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Would you support a decision like that today?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: What I'm saying is that, if former prime minister Stephen Harper had been briefed that there had been foreign interference with someone who was going to run, he would have dealt—

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Ms. Byrne, with respect, I want to say something.

The Chair: I am going to interrupt you for a moment, Ms. Normandin and Ms. Byrne. Once again, I would remind you that comments be addressed to the chair, because I've noticed we are not following the speaking order. Thank you.

Ms. Christine Normandin: And so, Madam Chair, through you, I am asking the witness for her personal opinion, not whether she was aware of it. Given the information we now have, I'd like to know her opinion.

Did Prime Minister Harper make a good decision by allowing his MP to keep his job? I'm asking, because there are similar circumstances at the moment that have been strongly condemned, including by Conservatives. I would therefore like to know, to use an English version of a Quebec expression, whether what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I can't have an opinion on something I'm unaware of.

My understanding is there was no briefing regarding Mr. Dechert in terms of what happened in 2011.

As I said, all I can say is that, as the campaign director in 2015, CSIS never informed me or briefed me on any concerns they had with any candidate who ran for the Conservative Party of Canada during the 2015 election campaign.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: At the risk of repeating myself, there's no need for a briefing. The media have reported it. The information has been out there for over 12 years. So I will repeat my question. In the opinion of the witness, does she feel today that it was the right decision to allow the MP to keep his job?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I don't think there's been enough information.

I'm telling you there was no briefing and there was no evidence provided. There were newspaper reports. CSIS hasn't come out and said that they briefed the Prime Minister of Canada and he ignored that information, unlike the party here.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: So to what extent does the witness generally believe information put out by the media?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I believe what has been reported in the press regarding foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 campaign because the Liberal government has admitted it's actually been true. The information is coming from CSIS officials, who obviously feel so concerned about what's going on in terms of the ignoring of briefings on foreign interference that they obviously feel the only course of action they have right now is to be whistle-blowers within the press.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Go ahead, Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you very much.

Welcome to the committee, Ms. Byrne. I know that you're well adept in these spaces, so I'll put a series of questions to you in a rather rapid-fire way. I will respect the chair, but I feel that I can probably ask them in a respectful way that might not require an intervention.

Just to confirm, were you the campaign manager for Mr. Poilievre's leadership?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I was a senior adviser.

Mr. Matthew Green: Will you be the national campaign manager? Has that been announced?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Is there an election coming up soon?

Mr. Matthew Green: Probably.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Matthew Green: You referenced non-state actors, which I think is an important point. A point that hasn't been raised, of course, is the tens of millions of dollars that flowed into the country during the convoy.

We know that you were a senior adviser to Mr. Poilievre during that time, and we recognize Mr. Poilievre's relationship with the convoy. You referenced Ms. Lantsman. We know that Ms. Lantsman was the first MP to provide a petition calling for the end of vaccine mandates in the lead-up.

What was your advice to Mr. Poilievre to ensure that there was a firewall between the insurrectionist actions of the convoy and the leadership campaign at the time?

• (1235)

Ms. Jenni Byrne: In terms of the convoy, I believe Liberal Justice Rouleau stated that there was actually no evidence that foreign money or foreign interference was actually part of...that he found any evidence that was part of what happened in terms of the freedom convoy.

You were on the committee, so you would probably have—

Mr. Matthew Green: GiveSendGo and GoSendMe put about a million dollars coming from the United States—

The Chair: I'm sorry. Can we pause the time for a second?

Go ahead, Mr. Ferguson.

Hon. Greg Ferguson: I'd like to apologize to my colleague. I have a point of order.

There was a statement regarding Justice Rouleau. I think there was an adjective added by the witness. I'm just trying to figure it out. Is that a title? Because clearly it's not the case, as far as I know, that anybody who's a member of the judiciary is appointed on...or has memberships in political parties.

The Chair: I'll return the floor to Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

Let's try to keep points of order to the actual Standing Orders so that we can continue with this.

My question was against advising...at a time when \$10 million is going to Tamara Lich, who's from the Maverick Party; there are close connections between senior Conservative MPs and the movement; and you have Mr. Poilievre in a leadership race that you're a senior adviser for.

I mean, it's a fact that a million dollars came in. We know that to be true. What advice would you have given Mr. Poilievre, given the close relationship to the Conservative Party and the convoy, to ensure that foreign interference did not occur?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: If you're talking about donations, over 62,000 people donated \$9.7 million to our leadership—

Mr. Matthew Green: To be specific, what advice would you be providing at this moment to the leader in the leadership race to ensure that there was no...?

Did you take any precautions? Let me just put it that way. If the answer is no, you can say no and we can move on.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Precautions... I guess the only thing you could be talking about would be fundraising, so that's what I was trying to address.

Mr. Matthew Green: It could also be memberships. Presumably, with the numbers that have been reported, there had been a lot of allegations during the last leadership race about inflated numbers and fake numbers. We've heard testimony from expert witnesses that nomination races are a prime place for foreign interference.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: It might be in other parties. I know that the Liberal Party of Canada has free membership. I'm not sure what your party has. Ours is a \$15 one-year membership. People must pay by their own credit card or they must pay by a personal cheque.

Mr. Matthew Green: There was no advice given at that time from you, as a senior leader, to Mr. Poilievre regarding the relationship between—

Ms. Jenni Byrne: There are very clear Elections Canada rules regarding leadership, and there are very clear party rules regarding leadership.

In terms of the donations, as I said, over 62,000 people donated close to \$9.7 million—

Mr. Matthew Green: You would agree, of course, that foreign interference can happen outside of elections. Can we find that common ground?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: We've seen it, based on the reports we've seen, from the Liberal Party in terms of nominations across the board.

Mr. Matthew Green: I think there were also some allegations on the Conservative side as well, provincially as well—Mr. Brown, Mr. Ford, Mr. Charest. Lots of that stuff seems to float around during leadership time.

You mentioned that during your time, you had never been briefed on matters from CSIS as a senior adviser in the Harper government. Was it something you ever considered, though? Even if you weren't briefed, was there ever a time when this topic came up and you felt it necessary in either a partisan role as a national campaign director operative or a PMO role?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: No, I never said I wasn't briefed by CSIS. I said I was never briefed by CSIS on foreign interference or any matter regarding that.

Mr. Matthew Green: Yes, that was what I asked.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: No, it never came to mind, because I never had any thought that there were foreign actors participating in the

election process, except that there were press reports leading up to the 2015—

Mr. Matthew Green: I'm new to the Hill. I've been around less time than you, but I find that odd. I find it highly suspicious that somebody with that kind of security clearance would never consider foreign interference, given that you would be briefed, that we have two committees on it and that you have what I would consider to be high-level security clearance.

At no time did the topic ever come up, given the role you played in these governments.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: It leads into the first time that I considered that foreign interference could be a problem. It was what I said in terms of the Tides Foundation funding Leadnow, which was—

• (1240)

Mr. Matthew Green: In all your time, I find that, quite frankly... I'm not saying this to be personal. I'll say this to the chair. I find it highly suspicious. I'll use the framework of my friend Mr. Cooper: Either you knew and did nothing or you didn't know and you're incompetent. I'm not saying you're incompetent, because I consider you to be a highly intelligent person. I'm using the words of Mr. Cooper, whom I've heard use that phrase with many of my Liberal counterparts. Which one is it?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Well, Mr. Green, prior to, of course, the Tides's funding campaigns that helped both you and your coalition partners in the 2015 election, please tell me when there were any reports of foreign interference in a Canadian election?

Mr. Matthew Green: You've completely ignored all the testimony—

The Chair: Whoa, whoa, whoa, Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: —leading up to your arrival here. It's a level of hubris that's normally reserved for the Liberals, but I will leave you to it.

The Chair: I know, Ms. Byrne, you are well aware that committee members get to ask questions and make comments. You have agreed to appear, and I do appreciate that you were going to take time last week and that you're coming back again, so thank you.

I will go into the second round, with Mr. Nater, followed by Ms. Sahota.

Mr. Nater, you have five minutes.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to our witness.

I will be splitting some of my time with Mr. Steinley.

You mentioned in your opening comments, Ms. Byrne, that the Liberals seem to be angrier at whistle-blowers and the media than they are about the actual issue at hand. Why do you think that is?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I don't know why it is. I think this is an issue that they obviously don't want to talk about. There's reason they haven't called a public inquiry, which would have been a very easy thing to do. There's a reason they drag their feet and filibustered this committee so that Katie Telford, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, wasn't able to attend. There's the fact that they lash out at media that ask them questions and claim that CSIS is wrong, only to, of course, backtrack.

Of course, on the briefing note that said MP Chong's family was targeted in Hong Kong, the original answer by the Prime Minister—and he was very hostile about it—was that it never made it out of CSIS. Well, now we find out that it actually made it out of CSIS and one of three national security advisers would have received it and not actually read the brief.

I'm not sure why. I guess they are hostile because there's obviously something they are hiding.

Mr. John Nater: Following up on the allegations of Mr. Chong being threatened and his family being threatened, there is an indication that there could be multiple MPs. Given the fact that this was the result of a Uyghur motion—I would note that the Liberal cabinet abstained on that Uyghur motion—how concerning is it, as someone who's worked 20 years in the political apparatus, that members of Parliament are being threatened by foreign operatives on something as fundamental as human rights around the world?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I think it's extremely concerning. Mr. Chong has been a long-time defender of human rights abroad. It was his motion on the treatment of Uyghurs within China by the Beijing administration that caused his family in Hong Kong to be targeted.

To your point, Mr. Nater, this was a motion that the Liberal cabinet abstained from, as well as some backbench MPs and a couple of backbench NDP MPs. I think it's extremely concerning. It casts a chill, and it should cast a chill for every member of Parliament regardless of what political stripe they are. If a government allows this to happen, it makes every single one of you a target of foreign interference based on the votes you have and based on your right to vote and speak in the House of Commons and put forward motions.

Mr. John Nater: I have a final question before I pass it to Mr. Steinley.

We saw last weekend at the Liberal convention that a failed U.S. political operative was one of the keynote speakers. We saw a former Liberal leader make a joke about foreign election interference.

Do you think it's appropriate to be making jokes about, and making light of, something as serious as foreign election interference?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: No, I think it absolutely is not, and I think it speaks to the heart of where the Liberal Party is right now. They do not take this issue seriously. They do not like the fact that the opposition and the media refuse to let up until they get answers.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you for being here, Ms. Byrne.

I have a question for you. Leadnow's interference in the 2015 campaign strikes me hard, because we lost Regina—Lewvan by 132 votes in that election. The Liberals knew of this interference, with over \$1 million pumped into the election in 2015. Why do you think they didn't investigate that foreign election interference?

• (1245)

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Well, maybe it was because it benefited them. I think that's a question you should ask them.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Piggybacking on that, since we haven't seen them investigate it, would you agree—and you said it here today—that there should be a public inquiry and that it should go back even farther than the 2019 campaign? Do you think the Liberals would agree to having that public inquiry date back to 2015?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I think if there is a public inquiry and if officials feel there was foreign interference—and I have no idea if there was prior to the 2015 campaign, based on the media reports that I've seen.... I believe that is something they should have already called.

Mr. Warren Steinley: This is my last question. If there is not a public inquiry, is that a condemnation of the Liberals not taking this seriously?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I can't see at this point how there can't be a public inquiry. From what has come out in terms of the hiding...the misinformation and the targeting of Mr. Chong, I do not see a scenario where David Johnston cannot call a public inquiry, which is, from an issues management point of view, why this government continues to get caught kicking and screaming. It's an indictment of how their issues management process has been on this issue.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question to the witness is regarding statements made by her on a podcast called *Curse of Politics*.

There was a discussion regarding the 2021 election, and in that, you noted that one can agree with the strategy, but you can't argue that the strategy worked. The Conservative Party strategy did not work; this is what you were implying.

If you look at B.C., we lost four seats in the Lower Mainland. We lost support in four of five of the Surrey ridings. You can't tell me that our strategy worked in the Lower Mainland. It just didn't.

There were many issues in that campaign that affected voters in that region. I'm sure you did a post-analysis of many of those reasons.

I talked to many candidates and MPs who were elected from that region, and legalizing assault weapons was a major issue that came up at doors. They heard from Chinese Canadians that the legalization of assault rifles was an important election issue to them.

Now, there's never one election issue. I think this is something you mentioned on that podcast as well. It is sometimes the accumulation of many issues. Do you still stand by those words, that the Conservative Party strategy at that time did not work for those ridings?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Yes, I think I was clear. As I said, I had nothing to do with the central campaign in 2021. I was very clear that I disagreed with the campaign's direction on a few things, most notably campaigning to support a carbon tax. That was an extremely big one.

I don't think it's mutually exclusive. I think there were several factors for why, in the last election, the Conservatives did poorly, especially in suburban-urban ridings in the GVRD and the GTA. That does not mean foreign interference didn't happen.

I don't think the election result would have made a difference—I really don't—but I don't think that takes away from the fact that we should be very concerned about foreign interference in our elections.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Absolutely, and I actually agree with you that foreign interference perhaps did not have the result of overturning those riding elections. However, it is important to take steps. That's why we're here today. That's why we are, even with unanimous consent, looking at the privilege motion regarding Mr. Chong. That is why a foreign agent registry is going to be implemented in the coming months. There have been consultations taking place. That is why we set up NSICOP and all of the different procedures that have been set in place.

I think all of us around this table and many witnesses agree that actions have been taken by this government and that there's more we can do to continue to strengthen our democracy so that foreign interference doesn't take place.

What I find it very strange and odd is that we've heard from most experts here who had any advisory roles when it comes to our partner agencies, such as CSIS, that foreign interference has been a big problem for a while. It's a growing problem, as you said, and that's why we're taking these actions. However, for you to say today that there was absolutely no knowledge of this, other than Leadnow and other than this last election, seems, in Mr. Cooper's words, suspicious. It really does seem suspicious. Or you built up some type of structure at the time that you were the adviser to Mr. Harper and you were happy to be ignorant about what was taking place.

I'm wondering whether you had ever provided advice to the previous democratic reform minister, our current leader of the official opposition, Mr. Poilievre, that policies should be put in place to make sure that we are protected. You mentioned Iran in today's testimony as well, not just China, and maybe there are others you want to comment on.

• (1250)

Ms. Jenni Byrne: As I said, I was never briefed on the potential of foreign interference leading into elections. There were no reports I was privileged to or that I received. There were no briefings by CSIS saying that candidates were compromised. There was no report, for example, like the one leading into the 2019 election campaign. That went from NSICOP through to the PCO and up to the Prime Minister and said there was a concern by CSIS officials that there was going to be foreign interference in the 2019 campaign. That never happened.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: It would also not be likely that—

The Chair: Time is up.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is Madame Normandin.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

I'd like to return to the matter of local interference. You spoke earlier about the Tides Foundation situation. When you were a campaign manager, you tried to obtain assistance to counter this election interference.

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Well, as I said, I was never briefed as a campaign manager on foreign interference. There was not one time that I was briefed as the national campaign director or as the deputy chief of staff that CSIS had a concern on foreign interference leading into an election campaign.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: You were never briefed on foreign or domestic interference?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: No.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Then what about interference by other countries, just to make sure. You were never given information about interference by Russia or the United States? The possibility that there might have been such interference was never discussed from a strategic standpoint?

[English]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: There was never any briefing that I received that there was foreign interference leading into either of the two national election campaigns that I ran.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I'd like you to tell us, without reference to briefings and strictly based on your own personal knowledge, whether you ever considered the possibility that there might be interference from Russia, the United States, Iran or any other country, in the course of your work as a campaign manager. Completely aside from anything to do with briefings, I'd like to know whether you, as a national campaign manager, had ever considered such a possibility.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: No, there was no concern in terms of interference. The only discussion we had.... We know that leading into the 2015 election campaign, the Liberal Party of Canada worked very closely with the Democrats in the U.S. in developing their database and campaign techniques, but that would have been the only conversation we had. I think it's probably safe to say, and I would agree, that it did not seem to constitute interference. That just seemed to be the Liberal Party deciding to go to the United States to usurp some campaign techniques from the Americans.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Never, at any time, did the issue of foreign interference ever arise in campaign management discussions?

[*English*]

Ms. Jenni Byrne: No, there was never a discussion, except leading into the 2015 campaign when media reported that the Tides Foundation gave at least \$1.5 million to Leadnow to run a campaign to support 29 Liberal and NDP candidates in 29 electoral districts.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

In the spirit of non-partisanship, I'm going to attempt to find some common ground on some things I think we can agree on.

You would agree that a full independent public inquiry might be or is the best way for us to go back as far as we need to go to reassure Canadians that there is a fulsome investigation and review, with recommendations coming back to the House of Commons?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I agree.

Mr. Matthew Green: You'd be willing to go back as far as necessary to ensure that the testimony we'd hear would cover, in a non-partisan way, both ruling parties and both governing parties in the last two decades?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Green: Would you agree that having timely, open and full access and transparency as they relate to documents, in instances, of course, relating to national security, would help the commission provide the best framework to address the issues that have been raised?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Yes, I think so.

Mr. Matthew Green: You mentioned the decades of work you've had, and you referenced your party but alluded to other parties. Would you also agree that there could be revisions or alternatives to the ways in which nomination processes happen to ensure that we're safeguarded against foreign interference as it relates to the mobilization for memberships and candidates?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: As I said, I think every party handles nominations differently. I don't know what the NDP has. The Liberals have a free membership system.

Mr. Matthew Green: Are you okay with the system as it is now?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Well, each party has a different—

Mr. Matthew Green: That wasn't what I asked. I'm just saying—

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I think Elections Canada already has a process that political parties have to follow. If political parties are afraid that there is foreign influence within their nominations, like what's happened with the Liberal Party, then I think they must do things to—

Mr. Matthew Green: As it relates to NSICOP and NSIRA, do you think they're adequate bodies for dealing with this, given that we had them but we're still here?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Listen, the fact of the matter is that NSICOP provided a report for the Prime Minister leading into the 2019 campaign and it was ignored. I'm not going to comment—

Mr. Matthew Green: Would you concur, then, that there should be a mechanism whereby those reports also come to the House?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Yes, I think I'd be open to that.

Mr. Matthew Green: Do you think there should be legislative processes to ensure that MPs targeted for foreign interference are made aware in a timely way that the interference is happening?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Byrne, if you would indulge us, could we ask for a maximum of 10 extra minutes of your time, past the hour?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Sure.

The Chair: That way we can give Mr. Cooper his five minutes and complete this round, and then have Mr. Gerretsen. Then we'll thank you for your time.

Mr. Cooper, go ahead.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In July 2021, CSIS had a report detailing how a diplomat, Zhao Wei, at the Toronto consulate had orchestrated an intimidation campaign against a sitting member of Parliament, Michael Chong. We know the report was provided to the national security adviser at PCO as well as to the relevant departments. We also know, according to the Prime Minister's chief of staff and the Prime Minister's national security adviser, that the Prime Minister is routinely briefed on national security matters. According to his chief of staff, Ms. Telford, he reads everything and nothing is held back, yet in the face of that, the Prime Minister wants Canadians to believe that he learned about this in *The Globe and Mail*, something that couldn't be more serious, as we're talking about a foreign hostile state and an accredited diplomat targeting a sitting member of Parliament to interfere in his ability to do his job on behalf of his constituents and on behalf of Canadians.

In the face of that, it's very difficult to believe what the Prime Minister is saying and even if he is being truthful. I have real doubts about that. It speaks to his lack of seriousness with respect to foreign interference and is an indictment either way. We need to get to the bottom of that. I put forward a motion at committee today to do just that.

It is my understanding that within the Prime Minister's Office, there is an extensive tracking system for sensitive documents. As someone who has worked in the Prime Minister's Office in senior positions, can you tell us how documents are tracked within the Prime Minister's Office?

• (1300)

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Within the Prime Minister's Office, the PCO is the traffic cop, so to speak, of documents that would go to the Prime Minister. These tracking sheets are actually very extensive, from what I remember. They not only indicate that they go to the Prime Minister, but indicate every official they go to on the bureaucratic side, depending on the department. They also track, obviously, which agencies they would go to and what political staff they would go to.

These would be available, and it would be very simple for the Prime Minister to direct the PCO to make public that tracking document to find out where this mysterious briefing note went and who it was delivered to. Tracking notes, from what I gather and from what I remember, are not top secret or classified documents.

If the Prime Minister and the government were truly open to figuring out where this tracking note somehow got lost in delivery, it would be very easy to find out which officials, which security agencies and which political staff received it.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you for that.

Ms. Byrne, in the motion I put forward, at paragraph (e), there is an order for production that provides that within one week, the distribution of that document within the Prime Minister's Office, the PCO, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, and the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness be provided to this committee.

Do you think that's a reasonable request? Is that something that could easily be handled?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I think it could easily be handled.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you for that.

I'm changing gears a bit. Just to be clear, you did not deal with the SITE task force on behalf of the Conservative Party in the 2021 election. Is that correct?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: That's correct.

Mr. Michael Cooper: You did not in 2019. Is that correct?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: That's correct. I was not centrally involved.

I door-knocked for some local candidates in both 2019 and 2021, but I had no role within the central campaign.

Mr. Michael Cooper: You had no formal role in 2019 or 2021.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: No.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Why do you think you've been called here today?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I thought about that. I know on the surface that it's the 2015 campaign, so I think there's probably a bit of politics, considering that one of the asks.... I know there was a counter-motion to have my friend Anne McGrath called before a committee. She was the national director of the NDP for the last two elections. I think there was a bit of politics here to have me and not members of the other party.

The Chair: Thank you.

For our last round, we have Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, Ms. Byrne, for coming here today.

You noted in your comments earlier on that you didn't receive any information or read any reports regarding foreign interference, but—

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I did not receive any reports.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay.

In 2013, CSIS's public report identified foreign interference as an existing threat and one that was going to continue to grow in future years. Did you read that report?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I do not recall.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Did you receive that report?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I do not—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You were the deputy chief of staff at the time.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I was the deputy chief of staff, yes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You don't recall.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I do not recall.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You paint a very different picture of Stephen Harper than some of the other witnesses who have come before us today.

A former intelligence officer said that Stephen Harper “became soft” on China and “agents of influence were capable of gaining access to him and changed the course of his decision-making.”

A former parliamentary correspondent said that he was left out to dry by Stephen Harper when he had first-hand knowledge of foreign interference. He asked us a question to ask you, so I will ask you. Perhaps you heard it in advance. His question was, why were you and the Harper government so naive on China?

• (1305)

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I cannot answer for the former prime minister. As I said, I have no knowledge of what the gentleman who testified here—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I'm telling you what he said. He claimed that Stephen Harper was naive on China. The intelligence officer before him said that Stephen Harper was soft on China.

Why were you guys in the Prime Minister's Office not taking those threats seriously?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I have no evidence to say there was any evidence of that. As I said, I was not briefed on that, and I do not recall the public report by CSIS.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: In fairness, you didn't have to be briefed on it. It was a public document by CSIS.

I have a series of questions for you. Yes or no is sufficient, if you wouldn't mind indulging me.

You were never briefed on foreign interference after a Chinese state news agency asked a reporter to spy on the former prime minister.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I was not.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You were never briefed on foreign interference after the same news agency was involved in a honeytrap operation with the Conservative parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I was not.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You were never briefed on foreign interference when a year earlier, CSIS director Richard Fadden publicly warned that some politicians were falling under the influence of foreign governments through personal relationships.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I was not, as I was not in the Prime Minister's Office at the time.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay.

You were never briefed about foreign interference after John Baird took a job with a Chinese billionaire.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I was not. In 2015, I was the national campaign director.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You were never briefed about foreign interference after that same Chinese billionaire donated \$1 million to the National Arts Centre gala, while sitting next to the gala's honorary chair Laureen Harper.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I was not.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I'll turn the rest of my time to Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Ms. Byrne, NSICOP, the critical election incident public protocol, the SITE task force, the rapid response mechanism, the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, the plan to protect Canadian democracy, Bill C-59 and Bill C-76 are eight things that our government has done since 2015. Can you name eight from the Harper era?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: What I can say is that regardless of all that—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I'd like a yes or no.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Are you going to let me respond?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Yes, if you answer the question. Is it yes or no?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I'm going to answer the question, but—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Can you offer eight things?

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to pause the time. We're doing very well.

As we've always said, we ask questions and we answer. I was in that chair once upon a time, and I had the chair of a committee say to me really quickly that we know time belongs to members. I believe witnesses should also get time.

I will say the status quo around here—you've been in these hallways—is that it is the member's time, but Mr. Turnbull, I would ask that we give the witness time to answer.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Regardless of the eight things you named, we are still sitting here with the fact that for the last two elections, your government knowingly ignored advice from officials on foreign interference.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Could you name four things?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: As I said, we are still sitting here, when your government is dragging its heels after repeatedly ignoring—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: How about just two things? I'm sorry to interrupt, Ms. Byrne, but we have very limited time. How about just two things?

Ms. Jenni Byrne: I understand you're trying to turn this, but this has nothing to do—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I'm not trying to turn anything. I'm just asking—

Ms. Jenni Byrne: You absolutely are.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: —you a simple question about whether in the Harper era.... We've heard many witnesses say the Harper government did nothing. You've claimed that our government has done nothing, and you asked me a question, which is the opposite of how these things are supposed to go.

I gave you eight tangible examples and you can't give me one. I find that telling.

Ms. Jenni Byrne: Well....

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Okay. I'll move on.

Madam Chair, how much more time do I have?

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Okay. I'll just thank the witness for being here today.

The Chair: With that, we have—

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Chair, on a point of order, I would like to move a motion that the committee allocate sufficient time in Tuesday's meeting to deal with my motion concerning Mr. Chong.

The Chair: I just confirmed that we are losing services. We don't have resources left. We can deal with the motion you want to move at the next meeting. It cannot be dealt with today.

Ms. Byrne, I want to thank you for your time. If there's anything else you want to add, please send it to the clerk. We'll have it translated in both official languages and provided to all members.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

Keep well and safe, everyone. Thank you.

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