



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 023**

**PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT**

Thursday, February 26, 2026

---

Chair: Chris Bittle





## Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Thursday, February 26, 2026

• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 23 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Pursuant to Standing Orders 110 and 111, the committee is meeting today to consider the certificate of nomination of Anton Boegman to the position of foreign influence transparency commissioner.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely on Zoom. Before we continue, I ask all in-person participants to consult the guidelines on the cards on the table. Please take a moment to watch the video. This is for the health and safety of everyone here, especially our interpreters.

I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair. As always, if you'd like to speak, put up your hand.

I'd like to welcome today's witness, Anton Boegman, the nominee for the position of foreign influence transparency commissioner. You have five minutes to deliver your opening remarks.

**Anton Boegman (Nominee for the position of Foreign Influence Transparency Commissioner, As an Individual):** Thank you and good morning, Mr. Chair and committee members.

It is my pleasure to appear before this committee in relation to my nomination as foreign influence transparency commissioner.

Canada's institutions and interests are increasingly under threat from foreign interference. Malign foreign actors seek to exert influence through covert means to shape public policy, to change public opinion or to interfere with our democratic processes, all to support their own interests. A critical measure to counter these activities is transparency. Canadians need to know who is trying to influence them and why.

The office of the foreign influence transparency commissioner is being established to enable this transparency, to enforce the rules and regulations that will govern what types of influence activity need to be disclosed, and to support the efforts of other agencies and offices in protecting Canadian institutions and interests.

[Translation]

I'm honoured that I'm being nominated for the position of commissioner. I've devoted my entire career to protecting and support-

ing our democracy, first as a naval officer, and then, for the past seven years, as the Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia, an independent non-partisan role.

In 2018, following the Cambridge Analytica scandal, I examined the risks associated with disinformation and foreign interference in elections.

My reports to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia on these issues led to the adoption of innovative legislative measures to combat deliberate misinformation, while maintaining Charter protections.

[English]

I believe that, while effective legislation is necessary, a multi-faceted approach is better.

In 2023, in response to evolving risks to elections, I established an election integrity working group, unique at the provincial level, bringing together other provincial and federal agencies with roles in protecting democracy. I believe this experience is directly relevant to the mandate of the office and demonstrates my ability to build the kinds of partnerships and information-sharing pathways that will be essential for consistent application of the Foreign Influence Transparency and Accountability Act nationwide.

My service as an independent officer of the B.C. legislature has provided me with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to be successful in the role of commissioner. I've administered elections, implemented registers, and regulated election advertising and campaign finance. I've carried out large-scale communications campaigns and have interpreted and enforced the rules in a fair and non-partisan manner. My values of accessibility, integrity, transparency, accountability and service guide my decision-making and are aligned with what is required in the commissioner role.

This is a new office in the process of being established. If I have the honour of being appointed commissioner, my priorities will be to launch and operationalize the office and registry, to engage with communities likely to be targeted, and to build public awareness of the office, the registry and the rules. It's critically important to ensure that there is clarity about the rules and that they are understood. I would also work to establish and operationalize partnerships required to support this mandate—for example, with CSIS and the RCMP. I believe it's essential to start enforcing the rules promptly and to report publicly on that activity.

Citizens need to see this work in action. Only then will it work to support efforts to strengthen public trust in our democratic institutions—by making transparent foreign influence activities and by reinforcing fairness through a non-partisan approach to enforcement.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

My message to Canadians is this: If I'm appointed Canada's first foreign influence transparency commissioner, I will tirelessly commit to ensuring that activities aimed at influencing political and governmental processes in Canada are made public, that foreign actors are deterred from carrying out clandestine influence activities in Canada and that the regulations currently being developed are enforced.

I hope I can count on your support.

Thank you.

[*English*]

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

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

**Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Boegman, getting the foreign influence registry up and running has been a real challenge for this government. There has been delay after delay. To be clear, that's not your fault; that's their fault. First, the Liberals said the registry would be up and running before the last election, then they said it would be up and running in June 2025. It was then supposed to be in place by December 2025. When the Minister of Public Safety last appeared before this committee earlier this month, he had a vague new timeline as the spring of this year.

You've been nominated to serve as the commissioner of the registry. Do you have any idea when the registry will be up and running?

**Anton Boegman:** At this time I don't have a timeline as to when the registry will be up and running. I am simply a nominee. I've been engaged in the process to get me to this point. I have not been engaged in any level of detail with the work that's been ongoing to establish the office and to get the registry up and running.

I can say that it would be a priority of mine to get the registry up and running, whether it's in an interim format or whether it is in the complete technological solution that would be necessary. I can say that I would work immediately to start developing the necessary

guidance, the necessary information bulletins, to establish clarity about the rest—

**Michael Cooper:** Thank you for that.

You indicated that up until this point you've had no involvement with getting the registry up and running. I want to be clear. For example, in January the Department of Public Safety released draft regulations. There was a public consultation period that ended at the beginning of this month. I take it you were not involved in any way in preparing the draft regulations. Do I have that right?

**Anton Boegman:** That is correct. I've read the regulations, obviously, but I have had no role in preparing the regulations.

**Michael Cooper:** The final regulations are being prepared and that process is under way. Are you involved in that process?

**Anton Boegman:** I am not involved in that process.

**Michael Cooper:** You've not been consulted whatsoever?

**Anton Boegman:** No.

**Michael Cooper:** In terms of staff, have staff for the office been hired?

**Anton Boegman:** My understanding is that there is a transition team that's housed in Public Safety that's doing the work right now to get the office in readiness. My understanding is that more staff will need to be hired if I am the—

**Michael Cooper:** To get the office to readiness, you said that more staff will need to be hired once you're appointed, but have any staff been hired who will be housed on a permanent basis?

• (1110)

**Anton Boegman:** I do not know that.

**Michael Cooper:** You do not know that. Okay.

Would you agree that the independence of your office is key to your office and the registry functioning properly and free from interference?

**Anton Boegman:** Yes, I think independence of the role is critical.

**Michael Cooper:** Does it concern you, from the standpoint of ensuring that independence, that the Department of Public Safety drafted and is now in the process of finalizing draft regulations without any input whatsoever from you, the almost certainly soon-to-be commissioner?

**Anton Boegman:** I think that's largely a function of how the legislation has been drafted and that a commissioner cannot be in place until the law is in effect.

However, it's not unlike the model in B.C. When I was appointed chief electoral officer in British Columbia, there was obviously a code in place for the administration of those elections for the campaign finance requirements, and that is the code that was used. Once I was in office, I was able to assess whether I thought it was effective and where I thought the gaps might be, and to make recommendations for change.

I am pleased to see that much of the detail in relation to the registry is set out in regulations that provide greater flexibility in the future to evolve what is required for the registry as the threat may change.

**Michael Cooper:** Once you're appointed as commissioner, you're going to have a big job ahead of you, given the very real threats posed by foreign interference actors. The government has allocated \$25 million to the office over the next 10 years. That works out to roughly \$2.5 million every year. That includes everything from securing office space to setting up supporting IT infrastructure to paying salaries for staff.

From your standpoint, are you satisfied that your office is sufficiently resourced to do the job of administering and enforcing the registry?

**Anton Boegman:** I must confess that I have not yet had the opportunity to do a detailed plan as to what I think would be necessary, being in the role. I need to have some level of trust that sufficient resources will be provided in order to be effective in that role. I do know that there are mechanisms to seek additional funding if I believe additional funding is necessary.

Again, that's very similar to my background as chief electoral officer. When I required additional funding to take on a new mandate to do additional things, I would appear before the appropriate legislative committees to request that.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Cooper.

We'll turn to Madam Kayabaga for six minutes, please.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome. I would like to first congratulate you on making it to this step and give you an opportunity to tell us about yourself and how you see yourself as qualified to do this job.

From your perspective, how do you see the foreign influence transparency registry contributing to Canada's fight against foreign interference and transnational repression? Would you say that you have experienced any cases in which a registry would have aided in countering a threat?

**Anton Boegman:** Certainly. Thank you for that.

As I explained briefly in my opening comments, I do think my experience as chief electoral officer is directly relevant to the role here. The role of the registry itself and the office of the foreign influence transparency commissioner is just about that: It's about transparency in those activities that are undertaken at the behest of, or in association with, a foreign principal to influence Canadian governmental and political processes. It is one tool in a range of tools. In fact, it is one element of what I believe should really be a whole-of-government or whole-of-society approach in being able to respond effectively to the risks of transnational repression and the risks posed to our democratic institutions from foreign interference. This piece, of course, will look to make transparent those activities when they are taking place. It will also serve to deter those who may want to undertake these activities in a covert fashion.

I do have experience in establishing a register. We had lots of registers in British Columbia. The register of electors had over 3.5 million voters. That needed to be maintained and updated on a regular basis. We had registries of political parties. We had registries of third party advertising sponsors. I do have direct experience in that area.

• (1115)

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** That was going to be my follow-up question, on whether you had any specific events you could point to where you had to do this work.

Obviously, this will be the first time we have a commissioner in this role. What do you think you'll be working on in the first couple of months? Foreign interference is something that electors are talking about. How do we bring community trust? How do you play a role in rebridging the community trust that people need in order to continue to trust our systems when it comes to foreign interference in elections?

**Anton Boegman:** Maybe I'll touch on the last part of your question first. I think establishing trust or rebuilding trust is an outcome that will occur through successful implementation of the mandate through the carrying out of the activities that are necessary. For me, moving in, obviously it will be a brand new office. Establishing that office is operationalizing the registry and getting the registry in place; working on things like making definitions when they're necessary; establishing interpretation bulletins; establishing guidance; and then communicating that guidance so that it's clear on what the rules are when people do need to register, when they need to inscribe themselves on the registry and those sorts of things.

I think there needs to be lots of outreach. There needs to be outreach particularly among communities that are affected by some of the issues we are facing. I think there needs to be outreach in the academic community. I think there needs to be broad outreach around what the registry means, what the focus of the registry is and what the object of the registry is in terms of greater transparency in these types of activities.

I think these sorts of things would be priorities for me if I were to be appointed into this role. I think the outcome of doing those successfully would be to broaden trust.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** How do you think the establishment of a foreign influence transparency registry will help Canada further contribute to bilateral and multilateral co-operation in efforts to counter foreign interference across the board?

**Anton Boegman:** A foreign influence registry is a tool. It is a very effective tool, in my belief, but it's one tool among many. It's also a tool that has been used by some of our allies. There are registries, as I'm sure you know, in the U.K. and Australia, and the U.S. has had legislation in this area since the late 1930s.

It's bringing us into line with what is currently used by many of our allies in this same area. I think it will help reinforce some of the relationships we have when we know that this tool is in place and there are means to have greater transparency regarding some of these influence activities that are taking place and targeting our processes.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Some people may be a little skeptical and think that the government is trying to overreach. How will you handle not under-enforcing but also not overreaching?

**Anton Boegman:** I have to trust, obviously, that in the development of the legislation, it will meet the requirements of the charter. Obviously, regarding balancing, any time there are regulations that affect people and what people have to do, there has to be a trade-off between the necessity of those and, of course, the rights that are established for all Canadians in the charter.

Again, drawing from my experience back in British Columbia, there are times when you are regulated in terms of what you can say and when you can say it through the election advertising laws and the campaign finance laws. These are deemed necessary to have a greater good, which, in that case, is the preservation of the fair and level playing field in an election campaign.

There's obviously a need for a foreign influence transparency register. The application of that will be key, but the application is really to provide greater transparency, and it is not to be used as a tool to persecute or repress.

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

[*Translation*]

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

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you very much for being with us today, Mr. Boegman.

You mentioned that one of the cornerstones of your role was independence. However, I understand that there are duties that do not fall under the commissioner's authority. For example, the power to conduct intelligence investigations will be handled more by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS. The ability to assess geopolitical threats will fall to entities other than you.

I wonder whether there will be times when contradictions arise between the information we obtain from CSIS and the signals being sent by the Prime Minister. I'll give you a concrete example. The Prime Minister left for a trip to India stating that India no longer posed any risks, whereas six months ago, CSIS clearly stated that there were threats, even criminal threats, from India. How will you juggle both, knowing that information comes from one source but can also come from another source, and that you need to remain neutral and bring out the truth of it all?

• (1120)

**Anton Boegman:** Thank you for the question and the opportunity to speak in French. I'm not a French speaker; Canada's second language is not my mother tongue, so forgive me if I use the wrong words or anglicisms in my response.

Your question is a good one. When something is said, there may be clues or evidence that indicate something else. If I'm appointed commissioner, I'll need to develop partnerships with other agencies to be able to gather additional information and reach my own decisions. If I think that a foreign influence activity has occurred, I must contact the individual or entity to ensure that it's in the registry.

**Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much. Your French is impeccable.

With respect to this limited investigative power, how do you plan to conduct additional research? For example, if you need to access

a bank account to check for specific transactions, how would that fit into your role? What kind of partners could you work with to carry out that type of investigation?

**Anton Boegman:** I think it will be important to form all kinds of partnerships with other agencies, such as financial, police or intelligence agencies, to see whether things are happening in areas of society.

The commissioner's office will be quite small. It may have 30 people. The goal of the office is simply transparency. If I identify an activity that indicates an agreement between an individual and a foreign principal to communicate with a member of Parliament, engage in public communications or distribute funds, I will need to list the individual in the registry, in accordance with the established criteria. That is why partnerships with all kinds of organizations will be very important.

**Christine Normandin:** Do you intend to take an agnostic approach to the various agents that could exert influence? On the contrary, do you already have in your sights certain countries known to make more attempts at interference, countries that will attract more of your attention?

**Anton Boegman:** The system is agnostic. It's a registry listing every occurrence of an individual or entity carrying out certain actions. However, I'm sure there are countries that are flagged as countries that do things here in Canada. India, China, Iran and Russia are countries identified in documents and by services. We need to know what these countries are doing here. Therefore, we'll need to have partnerships with other agencies to understand whether the activities.... Sorry, I can't think of the word.

However, the registry is agnostic, so each time an entity or individual carries out certain actions, it will be recorded in the registry.

• (1125)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Next is Mr. Van Popta, please, for five minutes.

**Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC):** Thank you.

Mr. Boegman, welcome. It's nice to have a fellow British Columbian in the room.

You're applying for this job, in part, based on your credentials as a successful chief electoral officer for British Columbia. I'm going to ask you a couple of questions about that—I hope you don't mind—and particularly around the most recent provincial election in 2024, which was the 43rd election. I'm going to focus on the riding called Surrey—Guildford, which I'm sure you're very familiar with. That's a riding where the NDP incumbent won by a narrow margin of 22 votes. Obviously, those 22 votes were very important to the people in that riding. This supports our argument and our pep talk with our volunteers that every vote counts.

In this case, it was really particular because it actually had an influence at the provincial level. If that vote had gone the other way, Mr. Eby would have been denied his one-vote majority.

My facts are right. Is that correct?

**Anton Boegman:** Yes, that's correct.

• (1130)

**Tako Van Popta:** You'll also be aware that the unsuccessful Conservative candidate, Mr. Randhawa, commenced legal action to overturn the certification of the vote, arguing that there were some voting irregularities at a seniors' home, which, coincidentally, had 22 mail-in ballots. All of those the requests for those mail-in ballots came from one ISP and a computer that was tied to the administrative office of that facility. It was somebody doing this in a coordinated fashion.

You stated in the court documents, in paragraph 98, "Receiving multiple requests for mail-in packages from a single computer session or location does not, on its own, signal to Elections BC that there has been any wrongdoing or contravention of the Election Act." I would agree with that assessment.

You went on to say, "The Vote by Mail Team decided to fulfill the request from the Facility...to ensure the voters received their mail-in voting packages in time." In the next sentence, which I would underline, you said, "However, the Team failed to follow-up with the District Electoral Officer, Ms. Malhi," for that riding "to confirm that an individual at the Facility...was appointed as an election official." Somebody dropped the ball.

I take it that being appointed as an election official would require some basic training, like how to help patients under their care vote without influencing their vote. That seems to not have happened.

Can the voters of Surrey—Guildford rest assured that those 22 mail-in ballots did not influence the outcome of the vote in that riding, and that the vote as you certified it is the true expression of the majority of that riding?

**Anton Boegman:** There are some parts to that that I'm very happy to respond to, but others are in the hands of Elections BC. Of course, I'm no longer the chief electoral officer there.

The lawsuit was filed and dropped by the candidate in Surrey—Guildford. That happened after my term ended, so I have no information in relation to why that happened and what was behind that.

I know the plan, when I was the chief electoral officer, was that if the proceedings were going to take place in court, the courts would determine validly what happened and what didn't happen. If it did not, there would be an investigation for Elections BC to do.

I can't speak for Elections BC.

**Tako Van Popta:** I'm going to challenge you a bit on that, because you say in the same document that Mr. Randhawa was just out of time. He missed the limitation period. Elections BC was basically saved by the bell. He had to drop the case, move on and live to fight another day.

My concern is, particularly in such a tight race, whether Elections BC actually exercised the due diligence you would have expected, as a professional, and whether your team lived up to the demands of the day.

**Anton Boegman:** The requirement to appoint an individual as an election official is something that is done, but it's not required under the legislation. It's not absolutely necessary under the legislation.

**Tako Van Popta:** In this case, it might have been appropriate.

I've also read the affidavit of the Green candidate, who said he tried to canvass the home and was told, "No, these people are all sick and they don't vote," yet 22 people cast a vote. At least there's some suspicion, anyway.

I would have expected some alarm bells to start going off in your office.

**Anton Boegman:** I can say, based on the information I was provided as the chief electoral officer, I believe the election was administered in accordance with the legislation. I do not believe that activities counter to that took place.

**Tako Van Popta:** Fair enough. It will never be tested in court, of course.

I have one follow-up question. How were the elections of—

**The Chair:** Mr. Van Popta, you don't get to self-rule on your... Go ahead. We have a little time. You can go ahead with a very brief question.

**Tako Van Popta:** How are the lessons of the 43rd election going to help you be a better foreign influence transparency commissioner for all of Canada?

**Anton Boegman:** There are always lessons to be learned in various roles and from different people with whom I associate.

What was reinforced is that training can always be better. Training of the staff who are performing roles can always be better. Even though you put what you think is decent training in, whenever there are people who are interacting in these roles, human nature and the complexity of legislation can mean that inadvertent errors possibly take place. You can always improve the training. You always have to put checks and balances in everything. I think that making assumptions is never a good thing. You need to follow up to make those assumptions. At the end of the day, you're providing a service. You need to make sure that it's done properly.

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

“What’s good for the goose is good for the gander.”

Mr. Louis, you have six minutes.

**Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

I want to welcome Mr. Boegman, our potential first foreign influence transparency commissioner, to this committee. Thank you for your willingness to put your name forward for this important role.

The Foreign Influence Transparency and Accountability Act establishes a new framework intended to strengthen transparency and protect the integrity of Canada’s democratic institutions. As Parliament considers this nomination, it’s important that the committee understand not only your professional qualifications but also how you’ll approach the practical responsibilities of standing up for this new oversight office.

As previously mentioned, Mr. Boegman, your experience as chief electoral officer in British Columbia serves you well. You mentioned that, provincially, you brought forward a multi-faceted approach. That included bringing together a working group, which you said was unique at the provincial level.

Can you share with this committee what lessons you learned from bringing that working group together?

**Anton Boegman:** I brought the working group together primarily because I felt that, as the head of the election agency, I didn’t have all the information that was necessary in order to fully understand whether there were any actors at play in the electoral process who we weren’t aware of. I engaged with local representation from CSIS, the RCMP and provincially with the office of the chief information officer, the registrar of lobbyists in British Columbia and the provincial government. We needed to bring together people who had access to different sources of information, people who were able to see areas that we just didn’t have visibility into.

I found, at the time, that everyone was very interested in working together. At the time, however, the information-sharing pathways were not as direct as I would have liked, although I’m pleased to see that some of the changes that have been made. For example, they now allow CSIS to have an MOU with a provincial partner in order to exchange information.

I found that having the group set up was a great thing, because it allowed us to practise, to plan and to do scenario planning to understand, if something should happen, what the response would be, which agency would have that lever and which agency was best positioned to respond to that threat, whether it was something that was counter to the campaign finance laws, for example, or perhaps a criminal offence. It really helped crystallize the roles of the different agencies as we commonly looked across the risk to the democratic process. That was the biggest one, just knowing the different roles, knowing who has the levers and knowing which tool can be used to accomplish the end goal.

• (1135)

**Tim Louis:** That doesn’t depend on an election cycle itself. It sounds like that work—

**Anton Boegman:** That can be ongoing, yes.

**Tim Louis:** The team that you would be in charge of seems to be around 30 people. How big was the provincial team approximately?

**Anton Boegman:** I think there were just under 80 full-time equivalents at Elections BC. We did have access to temporary staff under the legislation, so typically, depending upon the cycle, there would be an extra 20 to 30 people in the office. During a provincial election, we would have about 250 people at the headquarters office and, of course, 25,000 people in the field.

**Tim Louis:** You also mentioned that our closest allies and partners, like the Five Eyes, possess similar mechanisms to the foreign influence transparency registry we are setting up. How will you be able to work with our other partners and allies to share information and best practices? Are they meeting already on their own and would be now invited to the table? Have you considered how to approach this?

**Anton Boegman:** That’s a little bit of putting the cart before the horse. I’m not certain how those organizations meet. I can speak to you obviously about my background. I did engage with other Canadian election management bodies at regular meetings, but I also knew that there was a lot of great engagement that could happen internationally with other countries. I was an advocate for that. I would certainly look to establish those relationships and to understand how they have implemented their registries. Obviously there is different legislation guiding each registry. Ours is country-agnostic, for example, as I’m sure you know, whereas the British one has different tiers in it. It’s just understanding what those mean, whether they find those are successful. As the legislation is implemented and the office is up and running and starting to do its work, then I think you’re always looking for areas where you can innovate, where you see that there’s perhaps a gap, and often ways to overcome that come from other organizations.

**Tim Louis:** You’d say that there would be patterns that you would seek within....

**Anton Boegman:** Yes, for sure.

**Tim Louis:** Lastly, you said you would be engaging with communities that would likely be targeted, and you mentioned that brings on transnational repression. You said we need to establish trust or rebuild trust. You mentioned the academic sector, maybe cultural groups. What do you think is the best way we can reach out to establish that trust and build that relationship with cultural groups and academia?

**Anton Boegman:** I would need to meet them in person. There are a number of organizations. Certainly I followed very closely the work of Commissioner Hogue, and understand the input that she received. I know that work is ongoing, but certainly for me it would be identifying these groups and meeting with them in person, and establishing regular ways to communicate back and forth.

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

We have Madame Normandin for three and a half minutes please.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Boegman, you spoke about your past experience in setting up registries. As we know, Australia was criticized for a registry that was costly and relatively ineffective. We also unfortunately know that the government here has a tendency to implement computer programs that are very costly and not very effective.

I'd like to hear your point of view on two aspects.

The first is the latitude you'll have in creating the registry. Will this be something that falls exclusively under your responsibility, and will you be able to make all the decisions in setting it up? The second pertains to the characteristics of a good registry. What are you looking for, exactly, in terms of costs, ease of use and speed of implementation? I'd like you to tell me about your expertise and what a good registry looks like.

• (1140)

**Anton Boegman:** Thank you for the question.

To answer the first part of your question, I'd say that the registry is currently in development. I don't think a final solution has been reached. It's more of a temporary solution, and maybe it's not the best solution. It's very important to have an easy-to-use solution for individuals or entities that need to register. It's important that the information is clear and that the steps to enter the information into something else can be followed. It's important to have this information in other languages because there may be people who might want to register and whose first language is not English.

If I have the honour of being appointed commissioner, this responsibility would be mine alone. Currently, the responsibility is shared with other people.

**Christine Normandin:** How do you plan to ensure that individuals who may need to register will have the information indicating that they should do so? Do you already have an idea for an awareness campaign, an information campaign, for example? How do you plan to proceed?

**Anton Boegman:** Communication is very important. As for written communication, for example, there are newsletters written in different languages. In British Columbia, I believe 16 languages are used to communicate with all the minority communities. It's easy for members of these communities to understand the rules and know what they need to do to register. There are many means of communication: in writing, orally, online, through the media and social media.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'll go to Mr. Jackson, please, for six minutes. I will be firm on the six minutes.

**Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** That's fair, Mr. Chair.

Welcome. It's nice to meet you.

I want to follow up on a line of questioning from my colleague, Mr. Cooper.

We've established that a lot of things are out of your control, with the establishment of this registry, and I think that's fair. I want to make sure that, despite all of that, if you're confirmed into this position within the next month or so, given what you can control, you will be ready to go on day one that you're confirmed into this role.

**Anton Boegman:** Yes.

**Grant Jackson:** Are you confident, given everything that's ongoing, that you're being set up for success in this role, given what you've seen?

**Anton Boegman:** I believe I'm being set up for success, but I know that I do have other mechanisms, for example, if I believe additional funding is necessary, and that I can pursue those mechanisms.

**Grant Jackson:** Can you share what those mechanisms are?

**Anton Boegman:** I think they're the same mechanisms that any federal agency would use to access funding through Treasury Board.

I certainly believe that this is a very important issue for all parliamentarians and that there will be support for the efforts of the office and to ensure that the office receives the funding that's necessary to be successful.

**Grant Jackson:** Thank you.

You'll be aware of recent legislation that passed in both Houses in terms of removing the first-generation limit for Canadian citizenship for Canadians living abroad. That expands the number of people around the world who are eligible for Canadian citizenship.

I'm curious. You talked a bit in your opening comments about interacting with Canadians and communities. How do you plan on engaging with Canadian citizens abroad if you're confirmed in this role?

• (1145)

**Anton Boegman:** I think that would be an area where I would look to perhaps Global Affairs for expertise on how to speak to Canadians abroad. Certainly, an online presence is a very good way to provide information that can be accessible from anywhere in the world. I think designing how that information is made available will be important.

There are community groups that represent Canadians who are abroad or other individuals who are abroad. I think working through the diplomatic service would be another way to make sure that information is available.

**Grant Jackson:** When we asked some folks from Global Affairs—the Prime Minister's former national security adviser, now ambassador to France, and a few others—they were not sure exactly how their efforts in terms of the Global Affairs response to foreign interference were going to interact with Canadians living abroad, given these legislative changes.

I'm a bit concerned that the legislation is passed and is in effect and the Global Affairs team doesn't seem to have any idea on how it is going to respond to that increased number of citizens. I would encourage you to flesh out a bit more, if you could, the process as to what interactions your office is going to have with Canadians abroad. I think that's a bit of a concern for a lot of people.

Also, I wonder about the registry itself and those who should be on it. It's one thing to collect that information from people within Canada who are operating that way, but how do you see your office interacting with those folks who are operating in other countries to Canadian diaspora communities?

**Anton Boegman:** The law of course applies to anyone, regardless of whether they're in Canada or outside Canada, so identifying those individuals and communicating with them is going to be critically important. I think there are specific instances where an individual or an entity meets the criteria to register, and that's one avenue. There would be, I think, easier ways to communicate with them.

There could obviously be covert activity and I would receive information through partnerships with law enforcement, CSIS or other agencies. We would work to try to establish contact and require registration.

In general, it's making sure that information about the register and the requirements to register, clarity on definitions and information bulletins are available. Online availability, obviously, is the best means to have that presence available to those who are not in Canada or for people across Canada. We have such a large and diverse country. Having that available, and having multilingual access, is going to be important.

**Grant Jackson:** Thank you.

I'm curious. You mentioned—I think in a response to another question—detecting interactions between actors and Canadians or elected officials, including financial interactions. Did I hear you correctly?

**Anton Boegman:** That's really just in relation to the criteria that are necessary for someone to register. One of the criteria is that there's a passing or dissemination of funds or something of value. I would look forward to making sure that I would have ways to understand whether that was taking place.

**Grant Jackson:** How would you envision that looking, for Canadians living abroad, detecting financials or the items of value interacting between a foreign actor and a Canadian citizen living in another country?

**Anton Boegman:** It would be very challenging, obviously. I would have to rely on other agencies to provide support in that area.

The focus of the transparency commissioner obviously is on providing that transparency to Canadians through the register, whereas there are other federal agencies that have direct responsibility for intelligence-gathering and those sorts of things.

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

We'll turn to Mr. Greaves for six minutes, please.

**Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Mr. Boegman. Thank you for being here.

As a fellow British Columbian and as the MP for Victoria, I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank you for your work in our home province and for your service, most recently, in the 2024 provincial election.

I think your experience in British Columbia will serve you in good stead in this role federally, given that many of the issues that you will have dealt with in that capacity will be mirrored at the federal level as well. One of the issues that we know is of particular significance at the moment, perhaps one of the greatest challenges in our politics and to our electoral system, has to do with misinformation and disinformation deliberately spread by bad actors—some of them located outside our borders—who seek to confuse and ultimately misinform Canadians for their own ends.

Could you please speak to how you've addressed online disinformation and misinformation in your previous role in British Columbia, and how you will tackle it should you be appointed as commissioner?

• (1150)

**Anton Boegman:** Certainly.

When I first was appointed as chief electoral officer, I remember having lunch with the privacy commissioner of B.C. He pointed me to a report that a British parliamentary committee had tabled on the issue of misinformation and disinformation. En route to a meeting in Newfoundland, I read that tome cover to cover. That was my introduction to the threat, what had been going on and some possible solutions. I used that. I made it required reading for my management team.

That resulted in a report that I tabled with our legislators addressing the dangers of misinformation and disinformation in the election space. I was fortunate to be able to work with legislators in B.C. They changed the law to have specific prohibitions about certain forms of misinformation and disinformation, some that mirror what's currently in the Canada Elections Act. That was unique in British Columbia. It had not been done before. We were able to implement that in the last election.

I think there was a lot of knowledge about these new provisions. I think there was a deterrent effect from the knowledge of that, because there weren't many instances where we needed to apply that law, in that case. I think it's resulted in a system that is much more robust, a system that much more reflects the modern environment and what some of the evolving risks to elections and to our democracy have been.

Certainly, that is how I approach that in this case.

In the role as commissioner, should I be confirmed in this role, I need to understand or assess what that risk is and what could take place with what the specific requirements of the law are for the register. The Canadian register, as I understand it, is not one like the U.S. FARA law, which can focus on public opinion activities to influence public opinion. It's a narrower definition in the current legislation. You need to be able to define and understand whether some activities are taking place. It may meet a broader definition of disinformation, but it may not meet the requirements of the act and require legislation if it's not being aimed at a political or governmental process.

Really understanding that, being able to define that, being able to communicate what those requirements are and then moving forward....

**Will Greaves:** Thank you, Mr. Boegman.

Mr. Chair, I'll be sharing the rest of my time with my colleague, Mr. Sari.

[Translation]

**Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Boegman, thank you as well for being with us today.

Traditionally, there was much more talk about foreign interference involving funding and disinformation, generally sent through the media. However, we're now entering a new, much more digital era and, I'd say, much more connected to generative AI, etc., or even what's called super AI.

This system can now truly focus on what's called the creation of cognitive intelligence in general and focus on the creation of knowledge that can be sent to the public. This really results in political narratives. In your opinion, is this something that could pose a risk, given that it can produce massive amounts of automated content that could influence electoral decisions?

**Anton Boegman:** I think so, yes.

AI is a somewhat new thing in this environment. In the United States and other countries, we've seen that AI is used by various actors. In this case, I think the first thing to do in combatting the harmful consequences of this activity is to be transparent.

In ads or in posts on social media, for example, there could be a message at the bottom of a post stating that the ad was generated by AI. There should be such a message, so it's clear to Canadians and so the person who sees the post knows that it's not real.

• (1155)

**Abdelhaq Sari:** It's delivered in—

[English]

**The Chair:** You have five seconds left.

[Translation]

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Thank you very much, Commissioner.

[English]

**The Chair:** We're going to have a round of two minutes each, based on a request from the Conservatives. I will again be firm on the two minutes.

We'll go to Mr. Kram.

**Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of the most common criticisms of the old long-gun registry was that honest, law-abiding Canadians would proactively go out and register their firearms, but hardened criminals who never had any intention of abiding by the law anyway would not go and register their firearms. We all know how that worked out. I'm a bit concerned that we're going down the same pathway with the foreign interference registry.

Mr. Boegman, how would you ensure that this foreign interference registry was effective and wouldn't just end up inconveniencing people who are following the law anyway?

**Anton Boegman:** Again, I have not been part of the process of getting to this point other than having my name put forward. Obviously, it's an area that I'm tremendously interested in; I think there's a real need for it, because the potential negative impact on our democracy is significant.

One of the key parts of the law and the regulations underneath is a wide range of administrative monetary penalties that can be applied. From my understanding, the top end of that is far greater than even what's in the U.S. FARA law, and that allows for a very robust response when you identify these instances where there have been contraventions of the requirements, such as people not registering or not updating when they need to and when these activities are taking place. That will actually form a strong deterrent against these types of covert activities taking place.

Obviously, it's not going to prevent it. I'm not naive. Interference activities have been ongoing since governments have been around. I read once that there was French interference in the U.S. presidential election of 1796 because they wanted Mr. Jefferson, I believe, to be elected president. There were all kinds of things happening there.

By being clear about what the requirements are for registration and when activities meet those requirements, and by having a way to register that doesn't have a heavy administrative burden will be important for making sure it's easy for those who need to register to do so. Having the deterrent will mean that people who are doing these activities covertly will think twice about doing them.

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

Mr. Greaves, you have two minutes, please.

**Will Greaves:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Boegman.

In your earlier answer, you referred to the federal statutory definition of misinformation and disinformation. You suggested that it was a narrower definition than the one used in some of our peer countries. I wonder if you could elaborate on that in terms of whether you feel that the way in which misinformation is currently defined is overly narrow and therefore potentially misses other relevant activity that seeks to interfere in our electoral processes, and whether you as commissioner would be willing to consider requesting that government expand the definition to capture the appropriate scope, in your view.

**Anton Boegman:** I think I was using that as an example and not specifically meaning the definitions of disinformation and misinformation. It was more what the requirements are for registration in the Canadian foreign influence transparency registry and what I have seen in some of the other countries that have these registries. For example, in the U.S. the FARA law really addresses any activity that aims to change public opinion, whereas in our own law, it has to be aimed at political and governmental processes. There could be other activity that could be happening that is not specifically focusing on those processes. In that case, it wouldn't require registration.

I've read a lot of different debate on either side as to whether that's a good thing or a bad thing. As I said before, I think the fact that the requirements are set in regulations is very good, because it allows future flexibility. I'm also cognizant, as a bit of a realist, that having a narrower definition will make it easier to set up the office, get it up and running and avoid the risk of just being overwhelmed by everything from too much input coming in.

Should I be appointed to this role, I'll be looking at how the model works and obviously at whether I see any potential gaps in it. I would have the ability under the law, should I be appointed commissioner, to issue not only an annual report but also special reports on subjects under that.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Boegman. We do like a thorough answer here at PROC.

We do have to move on to Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

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

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

Mr. Boegman, for the entries in the registry, we can expect that some people will do it naturally, but there are complex situations. We saw that in the case of Mr. Nijjar's assassination, for example, there were several entities and representatives, and money was moving from one country to another. It will require the co-operation of CSIS.

How will you ensure that files don't fall through the cracks? With the creation of a new entity, it will be easy to say that it's someone else's fault. How will you ensure that you work proactively and that someone won't say it wasn't in my department?

**Anton Boegman:** That's another good question.

I think it's very important, in the beginning, to have a clear understanding of the mandates of every agency. The foreign influence transparency commissioner's mandate is clear: to maintain a registry and record the necessary activities in the registry. That's the commissioner's mandate, and the other agencies have different mandates. It's very important to establish boundaries and determine which agencies should respond to issues.

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

[*English*]

Thank you so much, Mr. Boegman, for being here.

We will now clear the room. We are suspending the meeting to go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]







Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>