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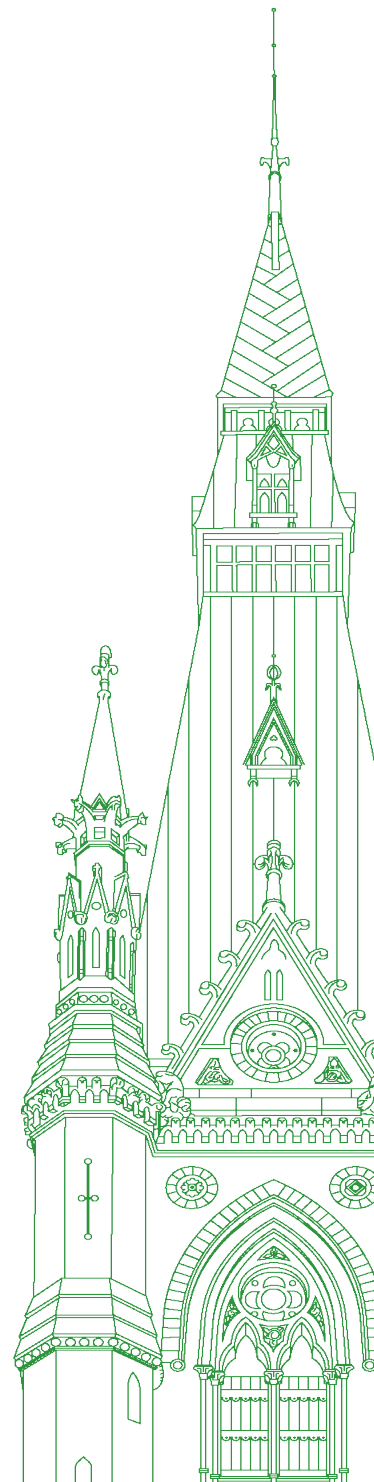
Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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Monday, August 17, 2026

Chair: Jean-Yves Duclos



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• (1505)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC)): Welcome. I see we have a few people subbing in here.

[Translation]

Welcome, Mr. Lemire.

[English]

Welcome to all the members of the committee.

I'll get to you in just a moment, Mr. Lloyd.

Welcome to everybody participating.

Mr. Battiste, welcome to the committee.

I know that our fearless chair, Jean-Yves Duclos, wanted to be here. I will note that I had one flight cancellation and two missed connections yesterday, so I'm happy to be here. It's a good thing that one of us made it, because our second vice-chair is not here either.

With that, I will call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 46 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee is meeting to discuss a request to undertake a study of allegations concerning the NATO military headquarters. Under the Standing Orders, today's meeting must be held within five calendar days—and that includes weekends—so that the request may be considered.

For the sake of clarity, the committee is meeting today to decide whether or not it will undertake a study on the matter raised in the request.

During the discussion of this request, the usual rules of debate apply. Accordingly, the committee is not required to conclude debate. If the committee decides to study the matter, it may do so in the manner and at the time of its choosing.

Thank you.

Mr. Lloyd, you have the floor.

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank colleagues from all parties for coming to this extraordinary summer meeting to discuss a very important matter. I'm going to start by moving this motion, so that everyone can get a

copy of it and have a chance to quickly review it before I make my remarks.

That, given that:

(1) in July 2026, Biwei Zhang, a Canadian national and former employee of the Canadian federal government, was arrested by Belgian authorities and accused of espionage after her work as an intern at NATO's military headquarters in Belgium; and

(2) these allegations raise serious questions regarding how an individual now accused of espionage was able to obtain access to one of Canada's most important military alliances and regarding the security screening, information-sharing and monitoring processes that were in place;

the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security undertake a study to examine Canada's security screening processes, that the study include a minimum of six meetings, that the committee invite the following witnesses to appear:

(i) the Minister of Public Safety,

(ii) the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service,

(iii) the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,

(iv) the national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister,

(v) the foreign influence transparency commissioner and

(vi) any other witnesses deemed appropriate by the committee;

that this study begin within 10 calendar days following the adoption of this motion, and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

That's it for the motion. I believe it will be distributed in both official languages to all members of the committee.

We're here today for this extraordinary meeting this summer—

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): I'll interrupt you here, Mr. Lloyd, to advise that the motion should be in everybody's inbox at this time.

Mr. Lloyd, I'm happy to have you intervene at this time. I know that it was requested before the meeting to have some time for the motion to be digested. I will remind all members that, as you will remember from when I was here during the last session, I'm a bit of a stickler for the rules. I will be vigorously regulating the debate as it relates to this meeting pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), so please keep your comments germane to that.

With that said, is it the will of the room that we have a pause right now?

Let's have a pause. That way, Mr. Lloyd's comments can be considered within the context of the motion that has just been distributed.

Let's take 10 minutes. If more time is needed, please let me know.

[Translation]

I have a list with the following names: Ms. Kirkland, Mr. Au, Mr. Housefather and Mr. Ramsay.

[English]

I think that's it. Thank you.

• (1505)

(Pause)

• (1525)

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): I believe everybody's had sufficient time, and we are now in a position to hear from Mr. Lloyd.

Please go ahead, Mr. Lloyd.

Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I want to reiterate that I'm thankful that colleagues from all parties have come during our busy summer to discuss this very important national security issue. This issue's really been brought to light by the recent allegations regarding Ms. Zhang, who is a Canadian national and a former employee of the federal government. She was working at NATO headquarters and has been accused by the Belgian government of engaging in acts of espionage.

Of course, Ms. Zhang is entitled to due process, and these are allegations at this point, but I know my constituents are telling me...and Canadians are rightly very concerned when we've seen multiple cases in the past number of years related to people who have been given national security classifications and been found to have been committing acts of espionage. I think of the Winnipeg lab security concerns. I think of a recent RCMP officer who was found guilty of passing along state secrets, and I think of members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are facing charges under the National Defence Act in relation to sharing state secrets.

Ensuring that our national security agencies are using the appropriate tools and taking the appropriate actions to screen people who are to be given positions where they would have access to state secrets, top secret material or material from our allies is of critical importance. I think it's quite embarrassing that Canada has faced allegations like this multiple times. I think it undermines our reputation among our allies.

The motion we have put forward is a very balanced motion. It seeks to address the system of security classifications to ensure that Canadians and our allies can have confidence that our system is operating appropriately to ensure the integrity of our national security.

I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1530)

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

[Translation]

We'll now go to Ms. Kirkland.

[English]

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, I support the motion and that we study what is happening here, although perhaps not specifically this example. The al-

legations have not been proven in court, and this committee isn't going to interfere with ongoing criminal proceedings. That's not what we're about, but we do have a responsibility to examine the Canadian security processes that would allow the situation to occur.

Canadians deserve to know, for instance, what security screening was conducted before this individual was granted access to one of the world's most sensitive military institutions. We need to understand what information someone in this individual's position would have access to, whether any sensitive material may have been compromised and what steps can be taken. The minister has said that he wants to get to the bottom of it, so we are hopeful that everyone on this committee agrees that we want to get to the bottom of it.

I find it especially concerning that the Belgian authorities, following concerns raised by NATO security, ultimately made the arrest. Canadians need to know whether our own institutions missed any warning signs or red flags. What pieces of this puzzle are missing? The Prime Minister said that the government is investigating the individual's federal employment and the security processes surrounding it. Of course, the minister has also said the allegations were "quite serious" and that he does want to "get to the bottom" of it.

We just want to ensure that this committee ensures that these promises result in clear answers. That's really what we're looking for, to protect Canadians, safeguard sensitive information and maintain the trust of all of our closest allies.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you very much, Ms. Kirkland.

Mr. Au, you now have the floor.

Chak Au (Richmond Centre—Marpole, CPC): Mr. Chair, I'm in favour of this motion because this matter is a very sensitive one for the Chinese-Canadian community. When something like this happens, it usually, and unfairly, gives Asian faces a bad name, but these instances are also allowed to happen when those responsible are not doing their jobs. The actions of a few should not cast a shadow over an entire community, especially when failures in oversight or in enforcement may have contributed to the problem.

That's why I think we need to get to the bottom of the issue, determine what went wrong, hold those responsible accountable and take the necessary steps to prevent it from happening again. If this kind of thing happens again, it would just divide our communities further and cause conflicts and disagreements within our own communities.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you.

[Translation]

Next up is Mr. Housefather.

Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak today.

[English]

The first thing I want to say is that I will be proposing an amendment that I am about to send to the clerk. I will read the amendment.

I move:

That the motion be amended as follows:

- (1) That the words "a minimum of" be deleted;
- (2) That the words "six meetings" be changed to "three meetings"; and
- (3) That all the words between the word "meetings" and the words "and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House" be deleted.

Mr. Chair, I have just sent that to the clerk in both English and French. I don't know if you want to suspend again, so that everybody can have the amendment distributed to them. If so, I would then be happy to speak to it.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you. Yes, we will suspend briefly.

I believe the motion is likely in order, but we'll have to double-check that.

We'll come back in just a few minutes.

Thank you.

• (1530) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1545)

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): All right, I call this meeting back to order.

I want to thank all the parties for what I see as a high degree of collaboration thus far. Thank you for using the time efficiently and wisely.

Technically speaking, we are only, according to the rules, supposed to discuss one element in each amendment, but I believe the spirit of the amendment is such that we can deal with everything in this one amendment, if everybody agrees.

Mr. Lloyd, I take it you want to intervene on the amendment.

Dane Lloyd: That's correct, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you.

Because we're on the amendment, Mr. Housefather has the floor in case he wishes to intervene. I still have Monsieur Ramsay and Monsieur Lemire for the original motion, but we have to start a new speaking list on this. On the new speaking list, I have Mr. Lloyd followed by Monsieur Lemire.

[Translation]

The last to take the floor will be Mr. Ramsay.

[English]

Monsieur Ramsay, go ahead on a point of order.

Jacques Ramsay (La Prairie—Atateken, Lib.): I believe my video is not working, because it says....

It's been corrected as we speak. Okay, that's been disabled. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Okay, that's good. Was that your point of order, or did you have a substantive point of order?

Jacques Ramsay: No, everything's fine. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Okay.

With that said, just to be clear, we are now on Mr. Housefather's amendment, and we have three speakers who wish to speak to that.

Mr. Housefather, do you wish to intervene further on your amendment?

Anthony Housefather: Yes, because I haven't yet.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Go ahead.

Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think that this is a bid to be collaborative. It's unfortunate that the motion was not shared, or at least not with the Liberal members of the committee, prior to the meeting. Otherwise, we could have talked beforehand and tried to work out what should be there.

Basically, the proposal we have is that we set aside three meetings instead of six. Six seems like an awful lot of meetings for this committee before knowing where this study will actually go. If the committee wishes to have more meetings after three, the committee can always decide to do that.

There was no discussion among the three parties as to who should be the witnesses at the committee.

[Translation]

The Minister of Public Safety will definitely be a witness. I don't think anyone objects to having him here, but I believe the committee chair and the two vice-chairs should discuss what witnesses to invite.

The same goes for the schedule and agenda. I prefer to let the chair of the committee work that out with the vice-chairs. Afterwards, they can check when the other committee members are available. I prefer to let the chair of the committee work it out with the other parties. I don't think we should simply accept the proposal of a party that hasn't collaborated with the other two parties on preparing its motion and that wants the committee to begin the study in the next 10 days, given that most of us already have full schedules because we didn't anticipate that there would be meetings.

[English]

Mr. Chair, that is my point in a nutshell. I encourage everyone to support this amendment, because I think if we do, we'll get out of here at a reasonable time today. Thank you.

• (1550)

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you very much, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Lloyd, you have the floor.

Dane Lloyd: I'd like to cede the floor to our friend Mr. Lemire and hear him speak, and then I'd like to take it after.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Monsieur Lemire, go ahead.
[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin by congratulating you on your efforts in French. It was amazing. We can see that the courses are bearing fruit.

The issue is clearly also important. It's a very sensitive one. Canada's international security reputation is at stake. Of course, we can ask questions about the processes and the shortcomings, and it is essential to do so. That is why the Bloc Québécois supported the request for a meeting made pursuant to Standing Order 106(4).

We also agree with the Liberal amendment proposing to limit the number of meetings to three. I think that's appropriate. However, one thing seems important, and Mr. Housefather mentioned it, as well, and that's the appearance of the Minister of Public Safety. I wouldn't remove that from the motion. Perhaps it needs to be done through a subamendment, but we would keep item i. so that the Minister of Public Safety would appear.

As for the timeline, the meetings can be held in September, but committee business must not be delayed. In particular, we have two important reports, including one on small ports, which is very important to Mrs. DeBellefeuille. It would be important for those reports to be adopted very quickly once the session resumes.

So the Bloc Québécois is not opposed to starting earlier, before the House resumes. However, what's important is to have three meetings and to be able to put questions to the Minister of Public Safety.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you for your comments, Mr. Lemire.
[English]

Mr. Lloyd, you have the floor.

Dane Lloyd: Thank you, and I thank my fellow members for their interventions.

I would like to move a subamendment to this, so that we return to the language that the Minister of Public Safety will be in attendance and then we also reintroduce the language of “any other witnesses deemed appropriate by the committee”. Instead of “and that this study begin within 10 calendar days following the adoption of this motion”, we would say, “and that this study begin on a priority basis on the return of the House”.

I think those amendments cover what Conservatives would like to see. Obviously, I would have liked to see six meetings on this, and I would have liked to see the committee start this business urgently, as this is a live issue that we're dealing with right now. As my colleague from the Bloc said, we also have a number of very important reports that we're dealing with in the fall. Time is very limited and very important at this committee, and I wouldn't want Canadians to believe that this committee doesn't take this national security issue very seriously and is not willing to spend any extra time on it before the House comes back in late September. However, given the political reality we're in today, I'll be moving that subamendment.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you very much, Mr. Lloyd.

There has been a great deal of collaboration between the parties. My understanding is that this has been agreed to.

(Subamendment agreed to)

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): We will resume debate on the main amendment.

Mr. Ramsey, did you have your hand up to intervene on the amendment, as amended? Go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Jacques Ramsay: I mainly want to confirm what was just said. I think that, to the extent that the study provides for a review of Canada's security screening processes, it must be done with some urgency. I would have had reservations if the study was meant to examine the specific case mentioned in the preamble, since the findings of the investigation into that case are not currently available, and it may have seemed premature to want to study something whose main findings are unknown.

However, insofar as we want to instead examine Canada's security screening processes, I think I agree with the subamendment and the amendment. I am confident that the chair, the vice-chairs and the other members of the committee will be able to agree on an accelerated schedule.

● (1555)

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay.

[English]

Are there any other interventions on the amendments?

My sense is that we have consensus on the amendments. Is that accurate? I assume we all endorse this.

(Amendment as amended agreed to)

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Okay. Let's move on to the motion as amended.

Does anybody need me to read the motion, as amended, into the record?

Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.): Yes, please.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Okay. I will do that in English. If anybody needs anything further or any further time, please let us know.

The motion, as amended, is as follows:

That, given that:

(1) in July 2026, Biwei Zhang, a Canadian national and former employee of the Canadian federal government, was arrested by Belgian authorities and accused of espionage after her work as an intern at NATO's military headquarters in Belgium; and

(2) these allegations raise serious questions regarding how an individual now accused of espionage was able to obtain access to one of Canada's most important military alliances and regarding the security screening, information-sharing and monitoring processes that were in place;

the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security undertake a study to examine Canada's security screening processes; that the study include three meetings; that the committee invite the Minister of Public Safety to appear; that this study begin on a priority basis and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

Mr. Lloyd, I believe there was something in there that caught your eye. It caught my eye as well.

Dane Lloyd: Yes, it's "any other witnesses that the committee deem...."

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Okay, so we will be adding that in after "priority basis".

Dane Lloyd: No, it's before.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Is it before "priority basis"?

Dane Lloyd: It's after "the Minister of Public Safety".

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Okay. I'm sorry. It's "and any other witnesses...."

Dane Lloyd: It's as the original motion worded it.

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): All right. There are no issues with that, I take it.

Is there any further debate on the motion as amended, as I just read it?

No. Okay, I think we have consensus around the table. Is that accurate?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Frank Caputo): Thank you very much for your co-operation.

[*English*]

To the MPs, it's really nice to see. It makes my job filling in as vice-chair very easy.

I want to thank the support staff as well, the translators and the clerks. Thank you very much for being here.

With that, I will adjourn the meeting.

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