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# Alleged foreign interference entangles Liberals Conservatives in one riding

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Judy Trinh and Candy Chan

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In his new role as special rapporteur investigating alleged foreign interference, David Johnston will likely take a deep dive into the suburban Toronto riding of Don Valley North.

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The riding is emerging as a nexus for alleged meddling by China. It's represented federally by a Liberal and provincially by the Progressive Conservative party -- but what raises eyebrows are their connections to a wealthy supermarket mogul with close ties to the Chinese Consulate in Toronto.

The connections are between Liberal MP Han Dong, PC MPP Vincent Ke and supermarket mogul Wei Chengyi. Wei owns the Foody Mart grocery chain that has stores in Ontario and British Columbia. The two politicians often appear with the businessman at events covered by Chinese ethnic media.

But for Canadians who don't speak Mandarin or Cantonese - only now is the tangled web of relationships being unravelled.

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### A HANDSHAKE WITH PRESIDENT XI JINPING

Four years ago, Wei attended a conference in Beijing for overseas Chinese business leaders. Media reports from May 2019 show video of him shaking hands with China's President Xi Jinping.

One month later, Dong announced he would enter the nomination race to become the Liberal candidate for Don Valley North in Canada's federal election that fall. He launched his campaign at the Foody Mart head office located in the riding. Wei stood alongside him.

After Ke won his provincial seat in 2018, Wei was listed in the credits as a main advisor on a documentary celebrating Ke's win. The feature was posted on 365 Net TV, a Chinese digital program.

Wei is also the honorary chairman of the Canada Toronto Fuqing Business Association (CTFBA) which promotes ties to China. Its translated mission statement includes a goal to "unite rural feelings, integrate resources...and carry forward the spirit of unity."

But one of CTFBA's affiliate organizations is located at 220 Royal Crest Ct. in Markham, Ont. The address correlates with a Chinese

police station identified by the Spain-based NGO Sateguard Defenders which monitors disappearances of people in China.

Last November the RCMP confirmed it was investigating the office.

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## WATCHING OVER THE CHINESE DIASPORA

On its website, the Fuqing association also states that it was created under the "specific guidance of the United Front Work Department."

According to the Canadian government, the UFWD is a branch of the Chinese Communist Party. The document from Public Safety Canada released in 2021, says the UFWD is used to "stifle criticism, infiltrate foreign political parties, diaspora communities, universities and multinational corporations."

Tens of thousands of Chinese agents work for the UFWD worldwide to keep tabs on the activities of its diaspora. According to intelligence experts, more than 40,000 staff have been added to the UFWD since Xi rose to power.

Scott McGregor is a former military intelligence officer and the co-author of *The Mosaic Effect, How the Chinese Communist Party Started a Hybrid War in America's Backyard*.

He says the United Front works through a network of overseas Chinese associations to "collect intelligence and conduct propaganda." McGregor says in some cases money is laundered through the UFWD to achieve its aims.

"With transnational crime, it often happens in the funding piece so they can conduct the operations they're launching (like) a protest with paid protesters to other activity that's going on. The money often comes from organized crime," said McGregor.

## NAMING NAMES

The intense media scrutiny follows reports in The Globe and Mail and Global News about an orchestrated attempt by the Chinese government to get 11 candidates who were sympathetic to China elected in 2019. Both news organizations cited Canadian intelligence sources.

After viewing national security documents based on CSIS intelligence, Global News named Han Dong as a "witting affiliate" in Chinese interference networks and has also alleged that a staff member in Vincent Ke's office may have channeled money to candidates Beijing deemed "friendly" during the 2019 federal election.

Ke was also embroiled in controversy last spring, when the Ontario Liberals called on the provincial police commissioner to investigate a breach of trust by Ke or his office.

Documentation obtained by the provincial party showed what the Liberals called 15 "hidden shell companies" incorporated by Ke's staff and their family members after he was elected in 2018. Some of the registered non-profits had addresses corresponding to the homes belonging to relatives of Ke's staff.

One organization received a \$25,000 provincial grant to help keep seniors healthy. The OPP did not proceed with an investigation.

senior hearing. The CP did not proceed with an investigation.

## SILENCE, DEFENCE AND DENIALS

Wei has not responded to multiple requests for comment from CTV News. The requests were made in phone calls and emails to the business association he belongs to and the supermarket he operates.

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In a statement posted on his Twitter page, Dong said: "I strongly reject the insinuations in media reporting that allege I have played a role in offshore interference in these processes and will defend myself vigorously."

Ke called Global's allegations "false and defamatory," but resigned from the PC caucus to sit as an independent at Queen's Park.

"I do not want to be a distraction to the government and take away from the good work Premier Ford is doing for the province of Ontario. Therefore I will be stepping away from the PC Caucus in order to dedicate time to clearing my name and representing my constituents."

CTV News has not seen the classified reports but has spoken to more than a dozen sources from within the Chinese community in the Greater Toronto Area.

These sources include federal and provincial election campaign managers, former candidates, ethnic media reporters and local activists. Some of them were interviewed by CSIS agents and provided names.

## A LIST OF NAMES

Dong and Ke are among a group of local, provincial and federal politicians, multiple CTV News sources have named as benefactors of Chinese state support.

Sources have told CTV that under the direction of the Chinese consulate officials, intermediaries paid for party memberships and bussed in international students and seniors to cast ballots to secure Ke's nomination.

Similar incidents are alleged to have happened during Dong's federal nomination win.

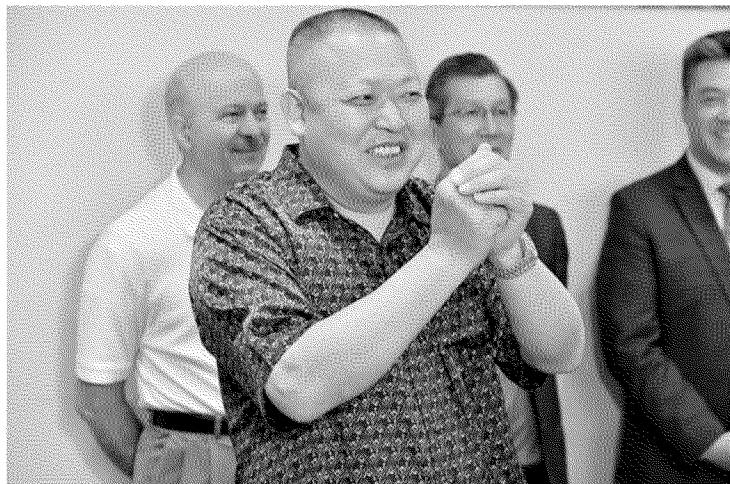
Gloria Fung is a pro-democracy activist and president of Canada-Hong Kong Link. She says Beijing has funded many candidates over several elections in order to place them in government at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

"The money has been distributed through individual members of the United Front organization to the candidate. So each one would donate to an individual making sure that it doesn't exceed the maximum limit. But the funds came from the United Front organization, which in turn get their funding from the Chinese Embassy," Fung said.

In the past few years, Fung has been threatened and harassed for protesting against restrictive laws imposed by China on Hong Kong. She knows investigating interference will be a challenge.

"They will not be so stupid as to leave a paper trail."

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Foody Mart Owner, Wei Chengyi at the launch of Federal Liberal nomination campaign for [unclear] who is on the far right. Wei hosted the event at his head office in June 2019. (Confederati Chinese Canadian Organizations)

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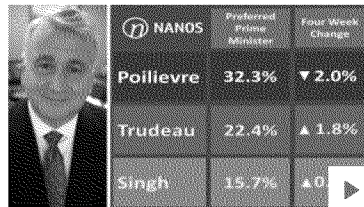


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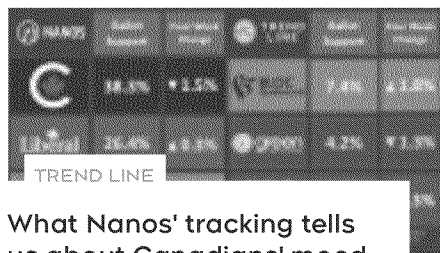
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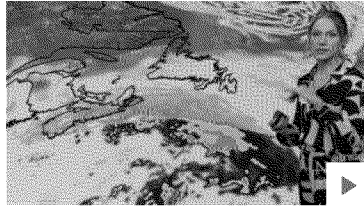
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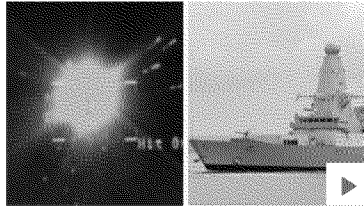
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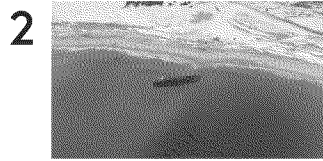


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former co-owners of the property, who have contributed only \$115,000 to the project.

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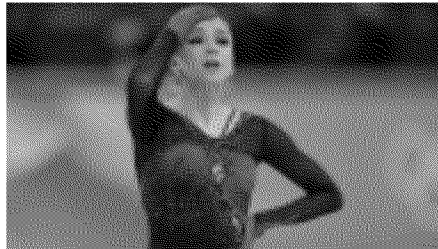
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