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POLITICS

Han Dong to sit as Independent MP following 'serious' allegations in new report



By Sean Boynton • Global News

Posted March 22, 2023 7:00 pm

Global National



CHINESE INTERFERENCE

00:45 / 02:38

WATCH: Han Dong leaves Liberal caucus as MPs pass motion calling for foreign interference inquiry – Mar 23, 2023



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Embattled Ontario MP **Han Dong** announced Wednesday night he is leaving the Liberal caucus and will sit as an Independent member of Parliament.

His remarks in the House of Commons came hours after **Global News** reported that Dong privately advised a senior Chinese diplomat in February 2021 that Beijing should hold off freeing Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, according to two separate national security sources.

"I have informed the prime minister and the leadership of the Liberal Party caucus that I will be sitting as an Independent at the conclusion of these remarks," he said.

"Mr. Speaker, I am in your hands as to what happens next."

Dong emphatically denied the allegations against him in remarks directed both to the House and the families of Kovrig and Spavor, who were detained in China for over three years on allegations of espionage.

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"The allegations made against me are as false as the ones made against you," he said, referring to Kovrig and Spavor.

3 : 06

A look at MP Han Dong's political background and voting record

"Let me assure you, as a parliamentarian and as a person, I have never and would never advocate or support the violation of the basic human rights of any Canadian – of anyone, anywhere, period."

He broke down in tears as he concluded his remarks by thanking his family. Other Liberal MPs in the House rose to their feet and applauded after Dong finished speaking.

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inquiry into foreign interference in Canada.

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NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh said earlier in the evening Dong should be removed from the Liberal caucus.

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These are extremely serious allegations.

If true, the safety of Canadians was put at risk for political gain.

Prime Minister Trudeau must remove Han Dong from Caucus and these allegations must be thoroughly investigated.

There must be a public inquiry.

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#BREAKING: Liberal MP Han Dong secretly advised Chinese diplomat in 2021 to delay freeing Two Michaels: sources

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Both sources told Global News that Dong allegedly suggested to Han Tao, China's consul general in Toronto, that if Beijing released the "Two Michaels," whom China accused of espionage, the Opposition Conservatives would benefit.

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At the time, the two Canadians had been in Chinese custody for over two years. However, it was widely perceived that they were jailed in retribution for Canada's detention of Meng Wanzhou, the Huawei executive facing extradition to the United States.

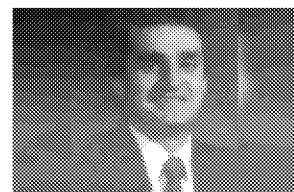
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Han Dong leaving Liberal caucus, will sit as an Independent

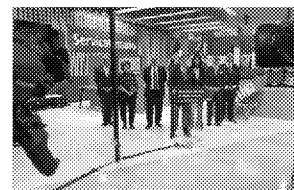
Dong also allegedly recommended that Beijing show some progress in the Kovrig and Spavor cases, the two sources said. Such a move would help the Liberal government, which was facing an uproar over China's inhumane treatment of Kovrig and Spavor.

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Dong, who represents the Toronto-area riding of Don Valley North, was the one to initiate the discussion with the consul general, the two sources said, adding that Dong stipulated at the outset that it was both a personal and a work-related conversation.

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In an emailed statement to Global News sent Tuesday, Dong confirmed that he had a discussion with Consul General Han, but disputed that he initiated it and also denies that he advised Beijing to delay releasing Kovrig and Spavor from prison.

"I raised the status of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig and called for their immediate release," he wrote.

"At every opportunity before they returned home, I adamantly demanded their release to Canada without delay. Any suggestions otherwise are false and are attempts to mislead you and your readers, and slander me."

4:34

MP denies affiliation with China interference

The Prime Minister's Office said it only became aware of the two-year-old conversation following Global News' inquiries about it.

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PMO spokesperson Alison Murphy wrote that her office "only became aware that a conversation took place after Mr. Dong told us, following recent media questions."

Murphy also suggested that the MP was not acting at the behest of his government. "At no time was Mr. Dong ever used as a 'back channel.'"

As Global News reported last month, Dong was already the subject of a CSIS probe started in the summer of 2019, three sources said, because the service

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believed a “subtle but effective” election-interference network directed by the Toronto Chinese consulate had clandestinely supported Dong’s 2019 candidacy.

The network had targeted at least 11 candidates, three sources said, one of whom they allege was Dong.

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Dong has denied all the allegations against him, telling reporters on Tuesday he was not aware of his campaign ever receiving help from the Chinese government or its proxies in Canada.

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Poillievre, Singh and Bloc Quebecois Leader Yves-Francois Blanchet have led ongoing calls for a public inquiry into foreign interference in Canada's society and elections for weeks, amid mounting reports from Global News and the Globe and Mail on the issue.

Former governor general David Johnston, who has been appointed by the government as a special rapporteur to oversee multiple political and national security probes into foreign interference, has until May to determine if an inquiry is warranted.

—With files from Sam Cooper

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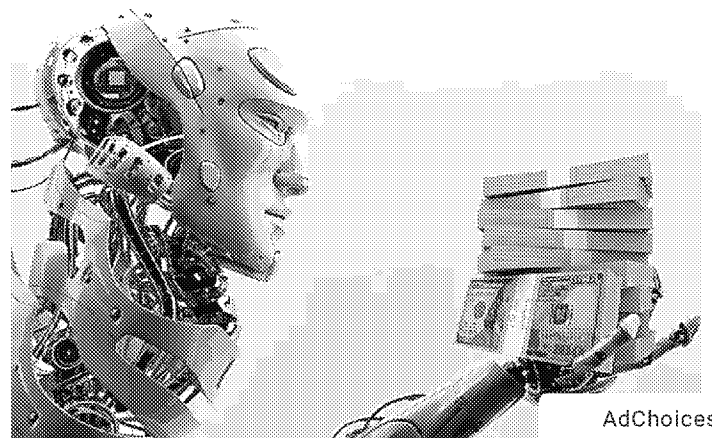
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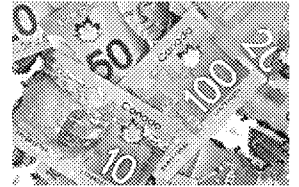
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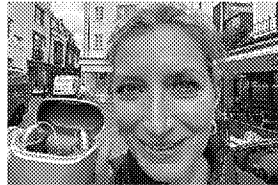
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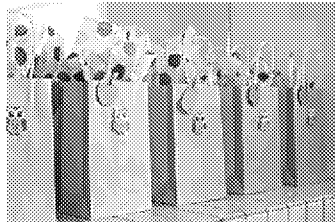
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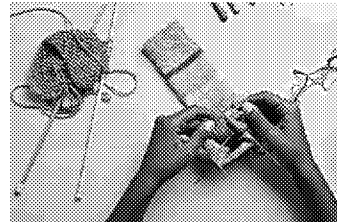


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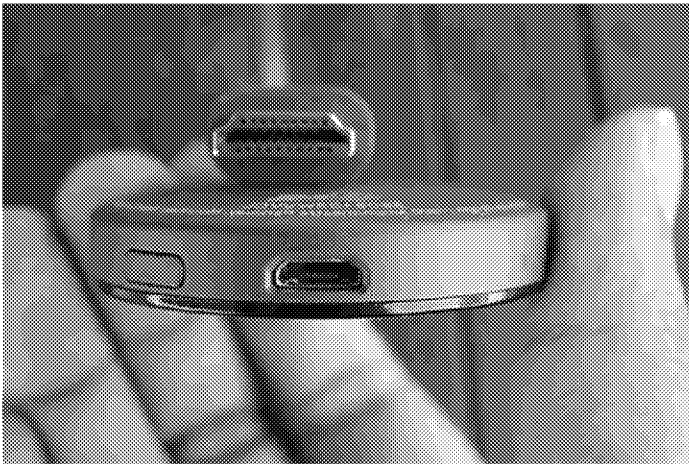
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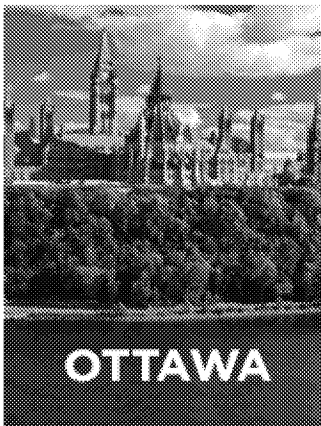
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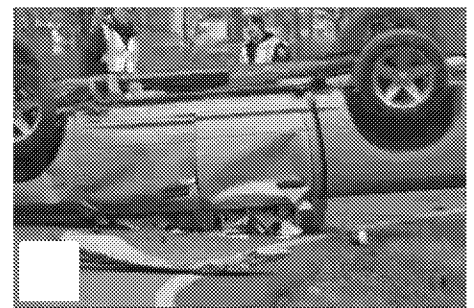
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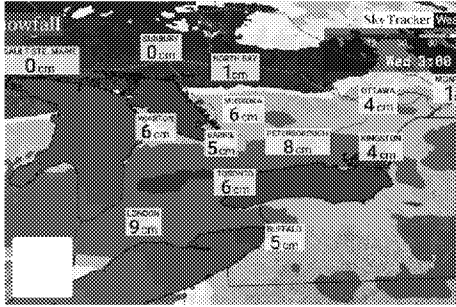
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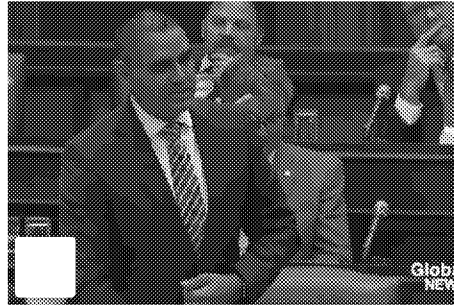
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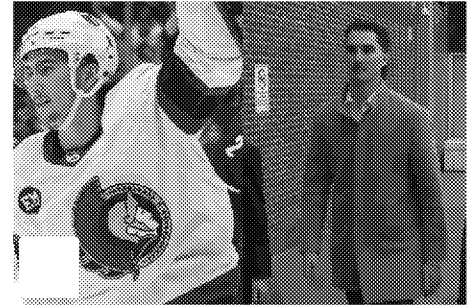
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