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Hong Kong Canadians question alleged pro-Beijing backing for prominent Liberal candidate



By Sam Cooper • Global News
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Global National

Liberal candidate faces questions about pro-Beijing influence



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ABOVE: Liberal candidate faces questions about pro-Beijing influence – Oct 20, 2019



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An association of Hong Kong Canadians is questioning whether a Toronto-area Liberal candidate is too close to alleged pro-Beijing elements in the party, including Michael Chan, a former provincial Liberal minister who was allegedly investigated by CSIS, Canada's intelligence agency.

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Mary Ng, the minister responsible for promoting trade with China, is a candidate for Markham-Thornhill, a riding heavily populated by Canadian immigrants from both mainland China and Hong Kong that has increasingly become a hotspot for political tensions over the pro-democracy protests currently taking place in Hong Kong.



Mary Ng stands with Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations Chairman Weng Guoning and China's Toronto consulate official Han Tao at the PRC 70th anniversary celebrations. CC Media

Members of the group Torontonians Stand With Hong Kong say they are concerned Ng could hold the same pro-Beijing positions as those allegedly held by Chan, who previously served in the provincial Liberal governments of Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne.

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0:31

Liberal leaflets signed at pro-Beijing rally

In June, Ng announced on her Chinese-language WeChat account that Chan was a co-chair for her campaign.

In a 2015 report, the Globe and Mail alleged CSIS had formally warned Ontario's Liberal government in 2010 that Chan was unusually close to the Chinese consulate in Toronto and that he could be at risk of influence from officials in Beijing. Global News has not verified the claims made in the Globe and Mail report.

According to the report, Chan is a prominent organizer in Ontario and "has been a mentor to a cadre of provincial and federal Liberals running for office, which has triggered both criticism and trepidation among pro-democratic community members."

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The report said McGuinty's government rejected CSIS's allegations and its warning about Chan. Chan also strongly denied the allegations and sued the **Globe and Mail**. The **Globe and Mail** defended its reporting, and the court case is reportedly unresolved. The Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations, a group named along with Chan in the report, also went public to denounce the allegations against him.

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Questions about Chan, the Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations and associated politicians in Ontario have not faded away among some Hong Kong Canadians.

2:09

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“Michael Chan is known to be very close to China, and according to news reports, he was accused of being accessible to Chinese Communist Party influence,” said Ringo Wong, a Markham-Thornhill constituent. “Having him as a key organizer of (Ng’s) campaign worries me.”

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Chan, who was minister of citizenship, immigration and international trade in the Wynne government, stepped down in 2018. But he remains a key organizer and fundraiser in Ontario’s Chinese-Canadian community.

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1:07

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Chan was influential in paving the way for Ng's nomination in the Markham-Thornhill riding in 2017, a Liberal insider told Global News, when former Liberal MP John McCallum stepped down to become ambassador to China.

A Chinese language report on Ng's 2017 nomination victory shows a picture of Chan celebrating with Ng, and hoisting her arm upwards in a victory salute. And at a June 2019 fundraiser for Ng's campaign, Chan was there at her side, as she announced him as a campaign co-chair, Ng's WeChat account shows.



Images from a June fundraiser were posted to Mary Ng's WeChat account. [Mary Ng WeChat](#)

Global News could not reach Chan for comment after repeatedly attempting to contact him through both Ng's campaign and his reported workplace, and on Chan's Twitter account.

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Ng was not made available for an interview, but her campaign provided this statement:

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“To ensure Mary’s federal re-election campaign included the diverse voices from the many cultural communities in her riding, a number of community leaders were asked to be campaign co-chairs. Michael Chan originally accepted this request; however, (he) has never been an active member of the campaign.”

PRC celebration held by Confederation

Ringo Wong and members of the Hong Kong democracy group say they want Ng to answer why she attended a People’s Republic of China 70th-anniversary celebration on Sept. 29, which included Chinese consulate officials and Chinese-Canadian associations with strong pro-Beijing positions.

The event was organized by the Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations. Chinese-language reports showed that Ng attended the event and gave a speech.

Attending Chinese government-related events has become increasingly controversial for Canadian politicians due to tensions in Hong Kong and Beijing’s detention of two Canadians in the wake of Canada’s role in Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou’s extradition case.



Mary Ng speaks at a People's Republic of China 70th-anniversary celebration on Sept. 29. CC Media News

"I found that (Ng) attended the event on Sept. 29 and I see a problem because, at this stage, we are not in a good relationship with China," said Eric Cheung, a constituent in the Markham-Thornhill riding.

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After Global News contacted Mary Ng's campaign with questions for this story, Ng emailed a response to Ringo Wong, addressing some of his questions about the Sept. 29 event.

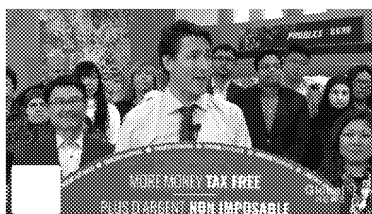
"I would point out, also in attendance was the Conservative Party of Canada Candidate for Markham-Thornhill," Ng's response to Ringo Wong says. "As the Member of Parliament for Markham-Thornhill, one of Canada's most diverse ridings, it is important to support inclusiveness in our community. As a proud Canadian, I will always celebrate the many cultural traditions and heritages that make up this wonderful riding."

1:18

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Federal Election 2019: Detained Canadians in China to be at forefront of his government's relationship with China, says Scheer



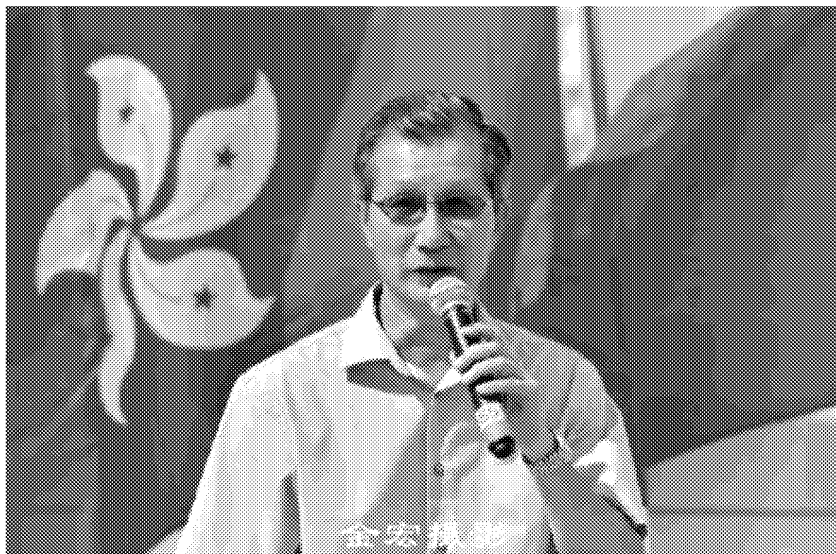
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Ng's response added: "Canada and Hong Kong share the mutual values of freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, but we do not condone violence of any kind and we urge demonstrations to be done peacefully. Canada has a deep and long-standing relationship with China, and even in difficult moments, we can and must continue to have dialogue."

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And Ng's campaign provided a transcript of her speech to Global News, and said she "advocated on behalf of the detained Canadians."

"For decades, the Confederation of Toronto Chinese Canadian organizations has supported Chinese-Canadians as they immigrated to Canada and settled in this new land, preserving tradition and language for the next generation," a copy of Ng's speech says. "The people-to-people ties between Canada and China are rooted in tradition, history and mutual respect. Lately, there have been tensions between our two countries. Our government's top priority is the well-being and safety of Canadians detained in China, and we will continue to work towards their safe and immediate release."



Michael Chan gives a speech at a counter-rally organized by the Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations in August. **CC Media News**

But there is an added concern that Chan also spoke at a counter-rally in August organized by the Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations, according to Eric Cheung and other Hong Kong democracy advocates interviewed by Global News. At the rally, Chan reportedly echoed Beijing's messages against the pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong.

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"We support Hong Kong's police strictly handling unrest, Hong Kong's government carefully defending the rule of law, China's government carefully observing Hong Kong," Chan said, according to a Chinese language news site

that posted video and text of his speech. "Hong Kong people have always been descendants of the Yellow Emperor. We overseas Chinese insist on unity, stability and prosperity."

According to the report, in a speech, a Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations leader said he did not want Hong Kong to become a "dirty place."

Prominent slogans shouted at the pro-Beijing rally, according to the Chinese language report, included; "Stop the storm and restore order!; Support the "one country, two systems" major policy!; Oppose foreign forces to intervene and destroy Hong Kong!; Violence should be severely punished!"

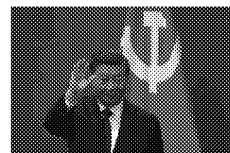
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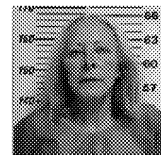
And a video from the rally obtained by Global News shows that in the crowd during the speeches, young men were seen holding and signing forms with the Liberal Party's branding.

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The party has reportedly said the Liberal Party leaflets seen at the rally appear to be old membership forms, that would not be valid today.

After the rally, Chan again denounced the Hong Kong protesters in September, the *Globe and Mail* reported, echoing Beijing's message that "outside" forces

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are fomenting the Hong Kong protests in an interview with a Chinese state-backed news site.

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Michael Chan and Weng Guoning, chairman of the Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations, are among those shown in a photo from the August rally. **CC Media News**

"I have been thinking, why are these young people so radical, so passionate [and] committed to do these things? And why so many people?" the *Globe and Mail* quoted Chan as saying. "If there is no deeply hidden organization in this, or deeply hidden push from the outside, there is no way that such large-scale turmoil would happen in Hong Kong in a few months."

While Chan could not be reached for comment about his alleged pro-Beijing views or backing of Ng, on Sept. 6, he reacted to a story in the *National Post* that linked another Ontario provincial politician to pro-Beijing interests and the Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations.



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“First the @globeandmail did it to @Michael_KC_Chan now (National Post) is doing it to (another provincial politician),” Chan tweeted. “Just because you’re born somewhere else doesn’t mean you can’t serve with dignity in a Canadian legislature.”

“The covert level is very difficult to prove”

According to a deputation filed with the Toronto District School Board in 2014, there should be concern that groups including the Toronto Confederation of Chinese Canadian Organizations had advocated for a Chinese government school program called the Confucius Institute.

Global News could not reach the Confederation for comment for this story, and calls to its listed number over several days were not answered.

2:14

Toronto flag raising greeted by protest, John Tory boycott

The 2014 deputation noted that a Chinese government website said:
 “Whenever there is something against China’s interests, the [confederation] will organize parades to protest or use media to protect the image of China.”

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Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Minister of the United Front Work Department, Yi Qian, attended the meeting and delivered a speech at the fifth session of the China Overseas Friendship Association held in the morning. The meeting fully affirmed the achievements of the Fourth Council of the China Overseas Friendship Association, deeply analyzed the opportunities and challenges faced by Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan and overseas networking work, and called on the directors of the Haihan Association to take the guidance of Xi Jinping's new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics as the guide and unite. Unite and work together to make greater contributions to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, deepening a new round of opening up to the outside world, promoting the peaceful reunification of the motherland, and advancing mutual understanding of human civilization.

The confederation's leaders have also trumpeted their repeated trips to Beijing in 2019 at the invitation of Chinese president Xi Jinping, according to Chinese language reports.

One report posted multiple photographs from different angles of a Toronto confederation leader shaking hands with Xi at a May 2019 meeting.

In the meeting "overseas" Chinese leaders were reportedly exhorted to support Xi's foreign policies in jurisdictions such as Hong Kong.



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Ward Elcock, former director of CSIS, said he could not comment on allegations contained in the Globe and Mail report that CSIS investigated Chan in 2010.

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However, Elcock said that generally speaking, he believes it is fair for Hong Kong Canadians to question whether Chan has influence in Ng's campaign,

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considering Chan's public statements against the Hong Kong democracy protests.

Elcock said China currently presents the greatest national security threat to Canada.

"You have to think about it on a number of levels because China has two or three vastly capable intelligence networks," Elcock said. "They will do things of a political nature entirely through covert means."

Elcock said that for CSIS, it is difficult to detect whether pro-Beijing activists in Canada are directed covertly or, rather, just citizens motivated by a sense of patriotism for mainland China.

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"The trouble is you don't know what is going on behind the scenes," he said. "The (covert) level is very difficult to prove."

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However, Elcock said he believes all Canadians should be concerned about whether political candidates are being influenced by foreign powers.

“They should have been asking those questions for a long time and not just with Chinese candidates,” he said. “The reality is that there have been a number of countries over time seeking to influence diaspora communities and not just China. Some countries are more aggressive than others.”

On the campaign trail on Sunday, Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer said Canadians need to be vigilant about the possibility of outside influence in elections.

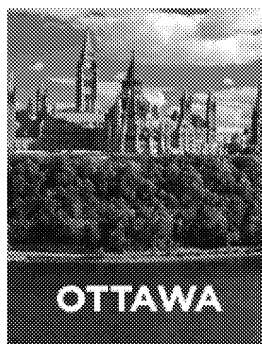
“We were very disappointed that the Liberal government did not take this seriously,” he said. “During the study of their bill for electoral reform, we raised the alarm about how there is still the possibility of foreign funds coming into Canada through advocacy groups to have a presence in multiple countries. That’s something that we highlighted and they did not take adequate steps to address.”

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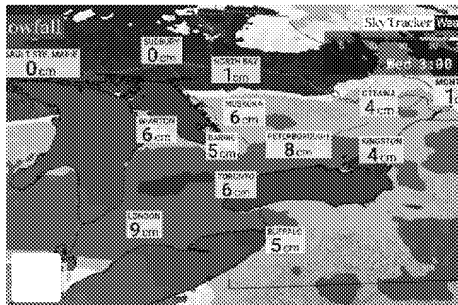
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