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# Ontario legislature member is part of alleged Beijing 2019 election-interference network: sources

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**By Sam Cooper • Global News**

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WATCH: Ontario legislature member is part of alleged Beijing 2019 election-interference network: sources  
– Mar 10, 2023

**A**n election interference network directed by China's Toronto consulate allegedly involved a sitting member of the Ontario legislature, according to sources with knowledge of the investigation into Beijing's covert efforts during the 2019 federal election.

Those sources assert that Vincent Ke, a Progressive Conservative member in Premier Doug Ford's government since 2018, served as a financial intermediary in Chinese

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Communist Party (CCP) interference schemes described in two separate Privy Council Office intelligence reports reviewed by Global News.

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According to those same sources, Ke received around \$50,000, part of a larger disbursement from the Chinese Consulate in Toronto in the \$250,000 range that was channelled through a series of intermediaries.

Ke has denied the allegations.

One of the documents that refer to the funding schemes is a January 2022 Privy Council Office (PCO) report, which asserts that the CCP's Toronto-area network included 11 or more 2019 federal candidates, 13 or more aides, and an Ontario MPP.

The report does not mention Ke by name but described in detail how the alleged network operated.

This high-level, finalized document was produced by the Intelligence Assessment Secretariat — a division of the PCO that regularly provides national security alerts for Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his cabinet.

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Prime Minister’s Office spokeswoman Alison Murphy gave a blanket denial Tuesday that Justin Trudeau was aware of Beijing’s money transfers to the 2019 candidates.

“As the Prime Minister stated last fall, we have no information on any federal candidates receiving money from China,” Murphy wrote in a statement.

The response refers to Global’s reporting last November, which did not state that China gave money directly to candidates. Instead, the story described through documents and intelligence sources how the consulate in Toronto allegedly orchestrated funding through local proxies to fund network members.

The 2022 PCO memo cited in the story maintains that China’s Toronto consulate directed a substantial, covert disbursement into a network comprised of at least 11 federal election candidates and numerous Beijing operatives who worked as their campaign staffers.

“A large clandestine transfer of funds earmarked for the federal election from the PRC Consulate in Toronto was transferred to an elected provincial government official via a

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staff member of a 2019 federal candidate,” the report states.

It did not mention the official’s name or where they served and did not specify <sup>LIGHT</sup> how much money was involved.

Filling in some of the gaps from the memo, sources provided more details about the alleged scheme for the Global News article: they said the consulate transferred around \$250,000 to a pro-Beijing grassroots group, and these funds went to the staff member in question.

In general terms, sources said, CSIS uses intelligence shared from Western allies, human source reporting, electronic interceptions, and Canadian financial intelligence documents to reveal information on transfers from Chinese consular officials into the Canadian political system.

Global News granted its intelligence sources anonymity, which they requested because they risk prosecution under the Security of Information Act.

Several sources, including a senior intelligence official with a detailed awareness of these CSIS investigations, said Ke is the provincial official.

Ke represents the Ontario riding of Don Valley North, a diverse riding where many people of Chinese origin live.



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Premier Doug Ford and MPP Vincent Ke meet with community leaders at a January 2020 Chinese cultural event. **Twitter @vincentkempp**

Another PCO document that sources say was provided to the Prime Minister's Office four months after the 2019 federal election advanced similar intelligence about the financing. "Community leaders facilitate the clandestine transfer of funds and recruit potential targets," the 2020 memo asserted, without identifying any recipients.

In the covert funding scheme, those same sources allege, the consulate disbursed around \$250,000 through a Toronto-based businessman, **Wei Chengyi** — and a pro-Beijing community group called the Confederation of Toronto Chinese-Canadian Organizations — through an aide to a federal candidate running for the 2019 contest. In turn, the aide allegedly provided about \$50,000 of that sum to Ke.

Wei and Ke deny playing any role in the alleged network or receiving direct or indirect funding from the consulate.

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Vincent Ke's lawyer, Gavin Tighe, said that the allegations Global News has collected from national security documents and sources are "patently and maliciously false."

Tighe has previously represented Doug Ford.

Premier Ford has previously defended Ke.

Wei has previously denied being a middleman in the alleged scheme. "Not only is it not true, but it is also a complete fabrication," he said in a **statement** following the Global News report in November.

No charges have been laid, and the transactions could be considered legal under Canada's current laws.

Facing growing concern over reports of foreign interference, Justin Trudeau announced on Monday that two investigations into Chinese interference would be reviewed by a special rapporteur and that the Public Safety Minister, Marco Mendicino, will take further steps toward establishing a foreign agents' registry.

Vincent Ke broke ground for Premier Ford in 2018 by becoming the Ontario Conservative Party's first-ever MPP born on China's mainland.

Frequently cited by party leaders as a strong fundraiser, Ke built his profile as a Toronto community leader before running for office.

A previous media report **by the National Post** questioned Ke's 2013 visit to China, where he allegedly attended a week-long training session for diaspora community leaders organized by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO), an organ of the CCP that has since been probed in Canadian national security cases.

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In response to the National Post story, Ontario Premier Doug Ford's press secretary offered support. "MPP Ke is an important part of the Progressive Conservative caucus and represents his constituents with their best interests in mind," Ivana Yelich said.

In 2022 a federal court judge found "there are reasonable grounds to believe that OCAO engaged in espionage against overseas Chinese communities in Canada."

But Ke said he was unaware of "potential risks" when he attended the OCAO session.

"The 2013 conference took place long before the said 2022 court ruling," Ke said in response to Global News. "Therefore, along with most Canadians, I was not aware of any potential risks associated with the organizer of the conference."

Ford's office said that it could not comment on the allegations and that Canadian police and intelligence agencies have not informed the premier about them.

When approached by a Global News reporter at Queen's Park for comment about his alleged role in the transfer, Ke said he had nothing to do with election interference.

"This is a false accusation. This is racist," he said. "It's racist because I was born in China because I come from China."

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Wei's organization also disputes that it was involved in the scheme.

In a brief phone call with Global News, a man who identified himself as a CTC<sub>CO</sub> <sup>LIGHT</sup> official described allegations that Wei and CTCCO are involved in a Chinese foreign interference campaign as nonsense.

"No, we are never involved in those allegations," the unidentified CTCCO official said. "I don't want to give my name. But don't use those allegations without evidence."

Jack Jia, a Chinese-language journalist who has delved into Ke's previous political activities, says that claims of prejudice can sometimes be used for strategic purposes. "They use racism ... to distract the real issue here."



In 2019, Wei Chengyi of CTCCO is pictured apparently shaking hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping at a meeting for the United Front Work Department in Beijing. **CC Media**

The January 2022 report and another PCO report from 2020 concluded that some of the 11 or more candidates targeted by Beijing in the 2019 election were witting of CCP influence efforts, and some were not. Global News has reviewed both docum. LIGHT

Global News could not independently confirm allegations regarding the financial transfers allegedly handled by Wei and Ke. Moreover, its sources did not provide Global with any further details about how — if at all — the alleged recipients used the funds.

A spokesman for CSIS said the service could not comment on details of its investigations.

“As we have previously discussed, CSIS continues to engage with all levels of government to ensure they are aware of the national security threats facing our country, including foreign interference,” spokesman Eric Balsam said. “With regard to your questions, as you might expect, in order to protect Canada and Canadians, CSIS is unable to comment on specific investigations, methodologies, or activities in order to maintain the integrity of its operations.”

The alleged transactions renew questions among some national security experts about loopholes in the Canadian electoral system that permit sophisticated interference networks from countries such as China, Iran and Russia to influence outcomes.

Subtitled “China/Canada: Subtle But Effective Interference Networks in the Greater Toronto Area,” the February 2020 PCO document explains how Chinese election-interference networks allegedly operate through President Xi Jinping’s United Front Work Department, which seeks “to influence foreign politicians and government officials into taking specific stances on China’s issues of interest.”



**Intelligence Assessment Secretariat**  
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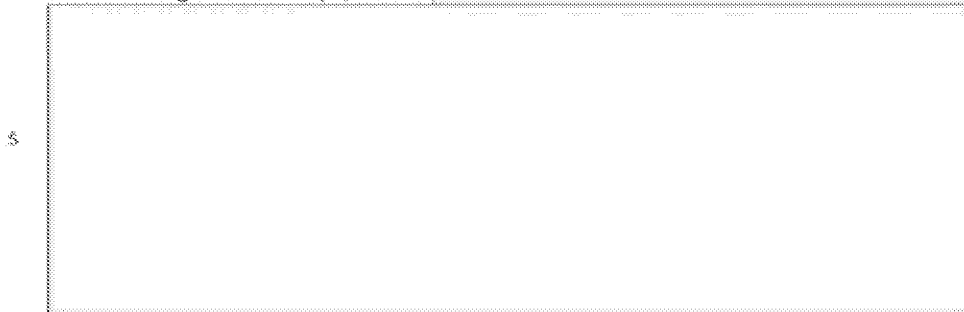
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Daily Foreign Intelligence Brief, 21 February 2020



2. China/Canada: Subtle but Effective Interference Networks

s **CA Assessment:** Investigations into activities linked to the Canadian federal election in 2019, reveal an active foreign interference (FI) network



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A Privy Council Office, Feb. 21, 2020, Intelligence Assessment Secretariat document. This redacted copy was provided to Parliament hearings. **PROC, Obtained by Global News**

According to CSIS, the United Front Work Department is the CCP's global-influence arm, a powerfully resourced organ that facilitates espionage and seeks to mobilize Diaspora communities to meddle in foreign states.

The 2020 PCO document, which does not mention Ke or Wei, also explains the centrality of community networks in the United Front's strategy: local grassr

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groups and allies obscure the CCP's covert financing of election candidates and insulate Chinese consular officials from hands-on meddling.

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"The United Front Work Department's extensive network of quasi-official and local community and interest groups allow it to obfuscate communication and the flow of funds between Canadian targets and Chinese officials," the report says. "Under broad guidance from the consulate, co-opted staff of targeted politicians provide advice on China-related issues, and community leaders facilitate the clandestine transfer of funds and recruit potential targets."

Bill Blair, the former Public Safety Minister, is the only federal official to acknowledge the 2020 PCO briefing — which concluded Xi's United Front election interference was likely to increase in future elections.

Now Emergency Preparedness Minister, Blair declined to elaborate on its allegations. "I'm aware of that memo and received certain information of it," Blair said. "I'm not able to share the details of that."

A 2017 draft memo, intended for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his office more than a year before the 2019 federal election, made a similar allegation, stating that Chinese agents were "assisting Canadian candidates running for political offices."

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The memo did not identify any individuals suspected to be involved in the alleged interference.

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It also alleged that to avoid detection, Chinese officials used local, pro-Beijing community groups as intermediaries to engage Canadian politicians they identified as strategically valuable.

This is the first time that allegations of involvement with the 2019 foreign interference network have pointed to a sitting provincial official with a Conservative background.

Global News reported last month that three weeks before the 2019 election, national security officials allegedly gave an urgent, classified briefing to Liberal Party officials, warning them that one of their candidates, Han Dong, was part of the 2019 **Chinese foreign interference** network.

A former Ontario MPP, Dong is now Don Valley North MP. He has denied allegations that he was one of the eleven or more candidates who participated in the supposed network. "I am unaware of the claims provided to you by alleged sources, which contains seriously inaccurate information," he said in a statement to Global News.

Trudeau publicly supported Dong, and his senior ministers have maintained that the overall integrity of the 2019 and 2021 elections remained intact.

While federal Tories assail the Liberals for not addressing issues of foreign interference, they themselves have appeared reluctant to address possible interference publicly among their own ranks, whether as potential participants or targets.

Several Conservative sources have spoken off the record to Global News and said they were indeed targeted, while former federal leader Erin O'Toole said in August, that the party may have lost as many as nine seats in the 2021 election due to Chinese foreign interference. To date, however, former MP Kenny Chiu is the only alleged target to have spoken publicly about his own experience.

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Global News asked the CPC why several former B.C. and Ontario candidates whom intelligence sources say were targeted in the 2021 election have not stepped forward to share their concerns.

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“To the contrary, Michael Chong is the Conservative Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and has been very outspoken on this issue,” wrote party spokesman Sebastian Skamski in an email. “I would note that the others you mention are no longer MPs and are private citizens who are of course free to speak out as they like — as all Canadians are.”

— with files from Jeff Semple and Colin D’Mello

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