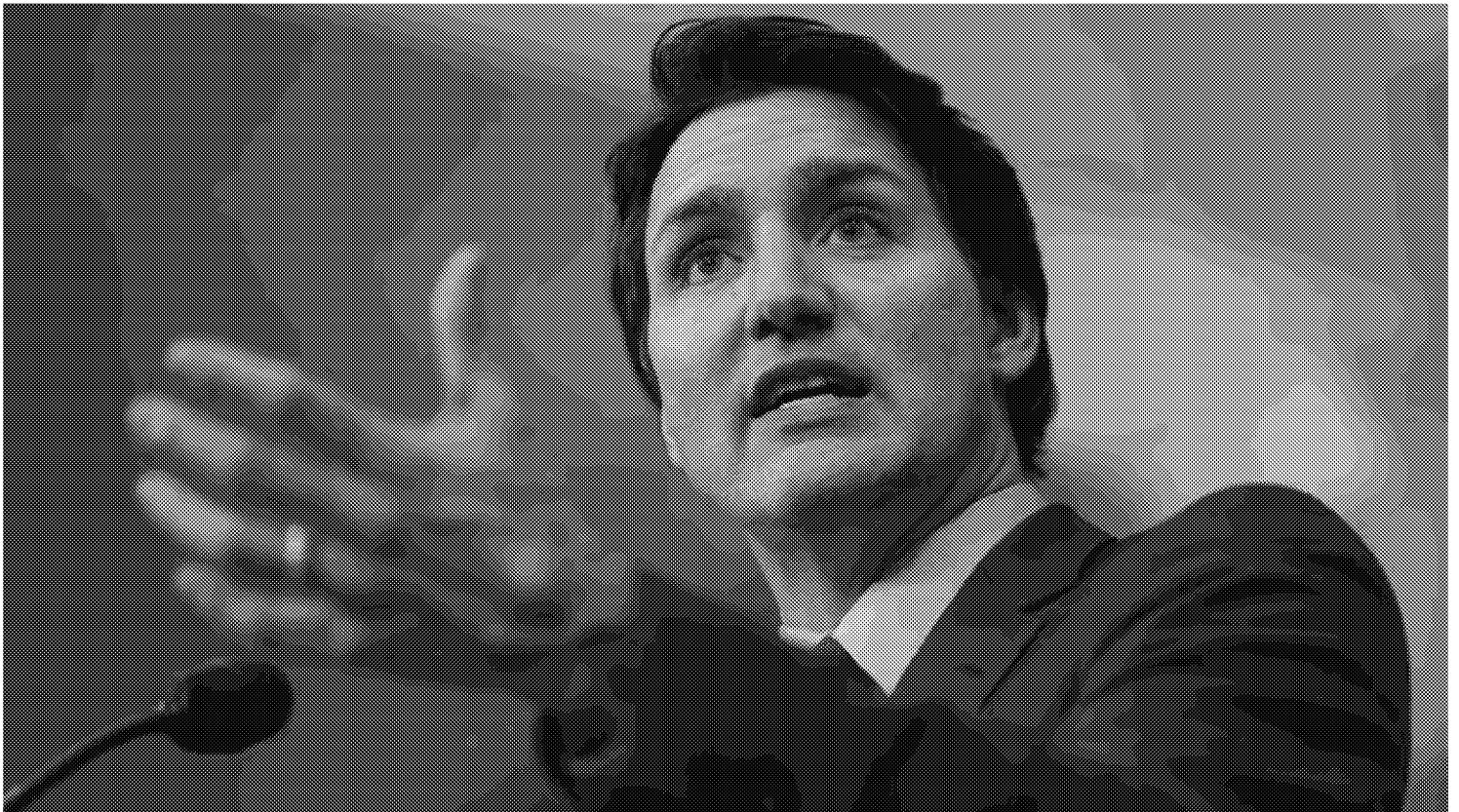


Politics

PM briefed at least 6 times on foreign election interference since 2018, says PCO document

Document tabled as PM's chief of staff testifies before a Commons committee

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A document tabled before a House of Commons committee reports Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been briefed on foreign election interference at least six times since October 2018. (Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press)

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A document tabled before a House of Commons committee Friday says that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has received at least six briefings on foreign election interference since October 2018.

The Privy Council Office (PCO) tabled the document, entitled "Briefings on Foreign Election interference," just before the prime minister's chief of staff Katie Telford began her testimony before the procedure and House affairs committee (PROC). The document lists those who have been briefed on foreign interference since 2018, when they were briefed and who provided the briefing.

"Specific topics are not included in the list below to protect their classification, though briefings may address specific threats or adverse activity, as well as broader policy proposals and approaches related to foreign interference in elections," the document says.

The PCO document says that its lists are not exhaustive because they report only formal briefings, or briefings for which records are available.

"Given the nature of national security issues, many of these briefings are conversations which are not formally scheduled," the document says.

"They can occur on the margins of other briefings, during foreign and domestic travel, and on an urgent basis to meet the prime minister's needs for information and advice to enable responses to address threats to national security."

The first list in the document details briefings to the prime minister; it starts with a briefing on Oct. 22, 2018 by the national security and intelligence adviser (NSIA).

The most recent briefing of the prime minister listed in the document happened on March 20, 2023, and was delivered by the NSIA and the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS).

The document says Trudeau was also briefed on Feb. 9, 2021, June 14, 2022, Oct. 27, 2022 and Nov. 30, 2022. Those briefings all came from either the NSIA or the director of CSIS.

David Vigneault has been the CSIS director since 2017. Jody Thomas is the current NSIA; she assumed the role in January 2022. Greta Bossenmaier was the NSIA when the October 2018 briefing occurred.

A series of recent media stories about Chinese government meddling — specifically in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections — reported a wide range of alleged interference activities by Beijing. They include the spread of disinformation, campaign finance fraud and efforts to pressure members of Parliament.

- [Trudeau's top aide says election interference allegations 'don't add up' to her](#)
- [EXCLUSIVE Canadian MP felt 'shadow of doubt' after spy agency warned him about diplomat](#)

One story from the [Globe and Mail](#), citing an unnamed intelligence official, said the Chinese government sought a Liberal minority government in 2021 and worked against Conservative candidates it saw as critical of China.

Opposition parties [have demanded that the government call a public inquiry](#) into the matter, but Trudeau has resisted. Instead, the prime minister appointed former governor general David Johnston as a special rapporteur on foreign interference.

Johnston can recommend a public inquiry as part of his mandate, and the government [has said it will call one if he does](#).

Ministers, PMO and parties also briefed

The document also details briefings to the cabinet, individual ministers, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and political party representatives who are authorized to be

briefed on classified information.

Cabinet as a whole received eight briefings since 2018, according to the document. It does not say when the briefings happened or who delivered them — only that they came from "senior public servants."

Karina Gould, then the minister of democratic institutions, got the most individual briefings — ten of them, all between 2018 and 2019 (the government dropped the portfolio in 2019).

The minister of public safety got three briefings — two went to former public safety minister Bill Blair and one to the incumbent, Marco Mendicino. Mary Ng, the minister of international trade, export promotion, small business, and economic development, got one, as did Dominic LeBlanc, the minister of intergovernmental affairs, infrastructure and communities.

LeBlanc's briefing is the most recent one on the list — it happened on Feb. 24, 2023. The briefings came from both the director of CSIS and the chief of the Communications Security Establishment (CSE).

The PMO as a whole was briefed on Sept 28, 2022 and Feb. 23, 2023. Both briefings came from the NSIA and the director of CSIS.

The last list tabled before the committee cites briefings given to political party representatives the PCO cleared to receive classified information.

There are 13 such briefings listed, dating from June 17, 2019 to Oct. 22, 2021. Most were given to cleared political party representatives.

Two were given only to Liberal Party representatives and three — the most recent briefings, which were delivered shortly after the 2021 federal election — were given only to Conservatives. The document does not say who gave the briefings.

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