

Western Canada: Former B.C. MP reacts to revelation that China tried to influence the 2021 election

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VANCOUVER AND CALGARY

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This article was published more than 6 months ago. Some information may no longer be current.

Good morning. Wendy Cox in Vancouver today.

For Kenny Chiu, reading that Canada's spy service believes Chinese diplomats and their proxies employed a sophisticated campaign to distort the 2021 federal election and, among other things, ensure his defeat wasn't much of a surprise.

The Globe and Mail's Robert Fife and Steven Chase quoted from secret and top-secret Canadian Security Intelligence Service documents that detailed how the orchestrated machine operated in Canada with two purposes: to ensure a minority Liberal government in 2021 and to ensure that specific Conservative candidates were defeated.

Mr. Chiu was among them.

He had served as Conservative MP for Steveston-Richmond East beginning in 2019, but he lost the 2021 federal election to Liberal candidate Parm Bains. Mr. Chiu was attacked during the campaign for proposing a public registry to track foreign influence.

Mr. Chiu, who was born in Hong Kong, was accused on Chinese social media with a post on WeChat suggesting the registry was an effort to target all people of Chinese origin. The post claimed that normal Chinese-Canadian economic, cultural and technological exchanges "should be suppressed" and have a "profound negative

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The U.S. has a long-standing registry. Canada is studying the matter.

The attacks also called Mr. Chiu “anti-China” because of his opposition to Beijing’s crackdown on dissent and protest in Hong Kong.

Mr. Chiu told The Globe’s Xiao Xu on Friday that the disinformation campaign was effective.

“If you are an ordinary Canadian, you will find [the allegations] ridiculous and you may potentially be able to fact-check this information. But some of my constituents, they exclusively rely on the source of information being circulated on social media like WeChat.”

Mr. Chiu represented a riding with a large Chinese population. He slammed the federal Liberals for ignoring signs that China was meddling in Canadian politics.

“I’m frustrated and worried,” he said. “ ... Why are the Liberals, after so many years of warning lights and alarms on this subject ... there has been so little done.”

The CSIS documents note that a month after the 2021 vote, the Chinese consul-general in Vancouver, Tong Xiaoling, boasted about how she helped defeat two Conservative MPs. The CSIS documents say Ms. Tong, who returned to China last summer, described a Vancouver-area Conservative as a “vocal distractor” of the Chinese government. A national security source told The Globe that person was Kenny Chiu.

According to the CSIS documents, Ms. Tong said Mr. Chiu’s loss proved China’s “strategy and tactics were good, and contributed to achieving their goals while still adhering to the local political customs in a clever way.”

In mid-November, CSIS reported that an unidentified Chinese consular official said the loss of Mr. Chiu and fellow Conservative MP Alice Wong substantiated the growing electoral influence of mainland Chinese-Canadians.

Former federal Conservative leader Erin O’Toole has alleged that foreign interference by China in the 2021 election campaign, using disinformation, cost the party eight or



In a statement to Xiao on Friday, the Chinese consulate in Vancouver excoriated The Globe's reporting as a smear and expressed "strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to it."

The consulate said China has always stuck to the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

"We urge the relevant media to abide by provincial ethics, immediately stop smearing and attacking China and the Consulate General, and do more good deeds that are conducive to mutual understanding and friendly exchanges between the governments and peoples of China and Canada."

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