



Interview Summary: Michael Chong (Stage 1 Addendum)

Michael Chong, MP, was interviewed by Commission Counsel on February 15, 2024.

Notes to Readers:

- Commission Counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets to assist the reader.
- Some of the facts mentioned by Mr. Chong during his Stage 1 Interview pertained to aspects of the Commission's mandate under clause (a)(i)(C) of its Terms of Reference, which were outside of the scope of the first phase of the Commission's work. As such, these elements have been incorporated in the present Stage 1 Interview Summary Addendum.

1. Advocacy Efforts

- [1] Mr. Chong's advocacy efforts specific to the People's Republic of China ("**PRC**") and its approach to human rights began following Xi Jinping's ascension to power in 2012 [as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party]. Mr. Chong and other China-watchers noticed things start to change around 2017, with the rise of "wolf warrior diplomacy". He cited as an example the joint press conference between then Foreign Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion and his PRC counterpart Wang Yi where the latter rebuked a journalist for asking a question about China's human rights record.
- [2] Mr. Chong began noting journalists being detained in the PRC as well as changes with the Legislative Council of Hong Kong. He observed the situation in Hong Kong getting worse, and cited as examples the passing of extradition laws that would extradite people from Hong Kong to mainland China without due process. At the time, Mr. Chong voiced criticisms of the PRC government, but he was not going "full bombast" as the situation had not yet deteriorated as it did subsequently. His criticisms were met by a phone call from the Chinese embassy requesting a meeting to exchange views.

- [3] Following his appointment as Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs in September 2020, Mr. Chong escalated his criticisms of the PRC government in response to Mr. Xi's increasing violations of international laws, treaties, and human rights. Alongside violations of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, Mr. Chong pointed to the increasing evidence of detention camps being set up in Xinjiang province. There was the issue of the continued wrongful detention of the 'Two Michaels', Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. There were also threats to national security and theft of intellectual property. As the PRC's violations of human rights increased, so did Mr. Chong's criticisms.
- [4] On November 18, 2020, he introduced an Opposition motion in the House of Commons which called on the Canadian government to make a decision on Huawei's involvement in Canada's 5G network and develop a robust plan to combat PRC's growing foreign interference operations in Canada and its increasing intimidation of Canadians living in Canada. On February 22, 2021, he introduced an Opposition motion that recognized the PRC's actions towards the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims as a genocide. Both motions were adopted, receiving support from members of all parties.

2. Sanctions

- [5] Mr. Chong's motion calling for the recognition of a genocide against the Uyghur population in Xinjiang led to the Canadian government imposing sanctions in coordination with the United States and the United Kingdom on the PRC.
- [6] In response, the PRC counter-sanctioned Mr. Chong personally for the Canadian government's imposition of sanctions. He learned about the sanctions from a Globe and Mail journalist based in China after the news was posted on the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website. The sanctions bar him from entry to the PRC and bar PRC nationals and entities from doing business with him. These sanctions continue to this day. To be sure, he does not consider the imposition of sanctions as foreign interference.

3. China's Targeting of Mr. Chong's Family

- [7] On May 1, 2023, Mr. Chong read reporting in The Globe and Mail that a diplomat working from the PRC consulate in Toronto had been gathering information about him since 2020 to further target him and his extended family in Hong Kong. The Canadian government subsequently confirmed the existence of this information. In response to the public release of this information, the Canadian government declared the PRC diplomat, Wei Zhao, “persona non grata” on May 8, 2023.
- [8] Mr. Chong found this information disturbing. While he considered that there was no “physical threat” to him personally, he was concerned about the well-being of his family in China. He was particularly unnerved about the fact that there was a person working in the PRC consulate, very close to where he often worked in Toronto, gathering information on him and his family and relaying it back to the PRC’s Ministry of State Security.
- [9] This incident made Mr. Chong question, “How well are we [Canadians] being protected?” However, it did not make him less likely to speak out against the PRC. He finds comfort and protection in the fact that he is an MP with a high profile. According to Mr. Chong, others are not so fortunate.
- [10] He broke off contact with his family in Hong Kong before he was sanctioned by the PRC government. He did so in 2018, out of an abundance of caution once security and intelligence officials began publicly warning Canadians about the threat of foreign interference by the PRC. It was never discussed with his family in Hong Kong. They simply stopped communicating. He is not aware of anything his family in Hong Kong has experienced because of his work as an MP in Canada.

3.1 Government of Canada's Response

- [11] On May 2, 2023, the Director of Canadian Security Intelligence Services (“**CSIS**”), David Vigneault, briefed Michael Chong with the National Security and Intelligence Advisor

(“**NSIA**”), Jody Thomas.¹ According to Mr. Chong, the briefing CSIS provided him confirmed the information reported in the Globe and Mail and additional details were provided by CSIS Director David Vigneault.

- [12] Mr. Chong’s understanding is that CSIS sent an IMU to Public Safety Minister Bill Blair in May 2021 about the PRC government’s targeting of Mr. Chong and his family. Mr. Chong finds it not believable that Minister Blair never got the IMU in May 2021. While he says Minister Blair gave explanations relating to an administrative issue with the Canadian Top Secret Network (“**CTSN**”) through which the IMU would have been relayed, Mr. Chong was not satisfied with those answers, stating, “That’s not how the system works”. In Mr. Chong’s view, in light of its importance, government officials should have acted on the IMU.
- [13] Mr. Chong points out that he has never seen the IMU personally, but had he known about the information contained therein, as reported in the media, he would have taken other preventive actions such as recording the Zoom call in the Puslinch all-candidates meeting.

¹ CAN.DOC.000021.