

UNCLASSIFIED



Public Inquiry Into Foreign Interference  
in Federal Electoral Processes and  
Democratic Institutions

Enquête publique sur l'ingérence étrangère  
dans les processus électoraux et les  
institutions démocratiques fédéraux

## Public Interview Summary: the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc

The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc was interviewed by Commission counsel on February 22, 2024. The interview was held in a secure environment and included references to classified information. This is the public version of the classified interview summary that was entered into evidence in the course of the Commission's in camera hearings held in February and March 2024.

### Notes to Reader:

- Commission Counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets to assist the reader.
- This summary has been prepared pursuant to subclause (a)(iii)(C)(II) of the Commission's Terms of Reference. It discloses the evidence pertinent to clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of the Commission's Terms of Reference that, in the opinion of the Commissioner, would not be injurious to the critical interests of Canada or its allies, national defence or national security.
- This summary contains information that relates to the Commission's mandate under clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of its Terms of Reference. Information provided during the interview that relates to other aspects of the Commission's Terms of Reference has been omitted from this summary, but may be adduced by the Commission at a later stage of its proceedings.
- This summary should be read with the Institutional Reports prepared by the Government of Canada.

UNCLASSIFIED

## 1. Background

- [1] Minister LeBlanc has held various Cabinet positions since 2015. From November 4, 2015, until August 2016, Minister LeBlanc was the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. In May 2016, he was also appointed the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. He ceased being the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons in August 2016. In August 2018, he was appointed Minister of **Intergovernmental Affairs (“IGA”)**, Northern Affairs and Internal Trade. He served in this position until the 2019 election.
- [2] After the 2019 election, Minister LeBlanc was appointed President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada, which included responsibility for democratic institutions. In the summer of 2020, he was appointed Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. He served in these offices until the 2021 election.
- [3] After the 2021 election, Minister LeBlanc was appointed Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities and also retained responsibility for democratic institutions. He was appointed Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs in July 2023.

## 2. Roles in the Government efforts against Foreign Interference (“FI”)

### 2.1 Role as President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada

- [4] Minister LeBlanc explained that the President of the Queen’s Privy Council is a statutory Cabinet position. In previous Ministries, the role has been used for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.
- [5] The AGC undertook to provide a list of the Cabinet Committees that Minister LeBlanc chaired or sat on that are relevant to the Commission’s mandate. The AGC advises that Minister LeBlanc chaired or was a member of a number of Committees during the relevant time period, including:

UNCLASSIFIED

- Chair of the Cabinet Committee on Operations
- Chair of the Sub-Committee on Intergovernmental Coordination
- Member of the Cabinet Committee on Agenda, Results and Communications
- Member of the Cabinet Committee on Economy, Inclusion and Climate “B”
- Member of the National Security Council
- Member of the Cabinet Committee on Global Affairs and Public Security

## 2.2. Role as Minister of IGA

[6] As Minister of IGA, Minister LeBlanc was supported by a Deputy Minister and the corresponding Secretariat in the **Privy Council Office (“PCO”)**. The IGA portfolio is mainly concerned with domestic issues and does not directly implicate issues of FI.

## 2.3. Information flow to Minister LeBlanc

[7] It was extraordinarily rare for Minister LeBlanc to receive intelligence in his responsibilities for DI or IGA. He only became a regular consumer of intelligence when he became Minister of Public Safety in 2023. Prior to 2023, he did not receive daily or weekly intelligence packages. However, because the Government was moving forward with the Plan to Protect Canada’s Democracy, he frequently discussed issues with PCO officials at a high level from a global perspective.

## 3. 2019 Election

[8] Minister LeBlanc’s first exposure to the FI threat as it related specifically to the 2019 election was during the preparation of the Plan to Protect Canada’s Democracy [launched by then Minister of Democratic Institutions the Honourable Karina Gould in 2019, ahead of the 43<sup>rd</sup> federal elections, this Plan advances four pillars to strengthen the electoral system and protect it against cyber and other threats, including FI]. He was also aware of the FI threat to elections from public media reporting on FI incidents, such as in the 2016 US Presidential elections and the “Brexit” referendum in the United Kingdom.

**UNCLASSIFIED**

- [9] Minister LeBlanc recalled a briefing that was delivered to him by the NSIA on March 9, 2020. The main purpose of this briefing was to report back on the functioning of the measures that had been put in place ahead of the 2019 election, and to identify possible areas for improvement. This briefing was delivered for his awareness, and did not address any specific candidates or ridings.
- [10] Minister LeBlanc received fewer briefings than Minister Gould, in part because his tenure coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, he was recovering from a serious illness. Because of this, he was largely based in New Brunswick and travel to Ottawa was difficult.
- [11] Minister LeBlanc was asked to comment on intelligence briefings during the writ period. He explained that it would be exceedingly rare that a Minister would be briefed during the writ period. He noted that he had almost no contact with his DMs during writ periods.
- [12] Minister LeBlanc recalled a briefing from October 2020 which was high-level and focussed on FI threats to democratic processes rather than specific incidents.
- [13] Minister LeBlanc had no knowledge of the alleged irregularities in the nomination process in Don Valley North in 2019 until these allegations were reported by the media. He was not aware that cleared representatives of the **Liberal Party of Canada (“LPC”)** were briefed by the **Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Taskforce (“SITE TF”)** during the writ period.

#### 4. 2021 Election

- [14] Ahead of the 2021 election, PCO officials gave Minister LeBlanc high-level insight into the threats posed primarily by the PRC, as well as other actors. He recalled an emphasis on the threat posed by disinformation and social media platforms. He was aware of the measures taken by the Government of Canada to address these threats. He did not recall receiving any specific threat assessments. Minister LeBlanc was also briefed after the writ period, in the course of the review of the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol.
- [15] Minister LeBlanc was not aware that cleared representatives of the LPC were briefed on a potential FI matter during the 2021 election. He was briefed on this issue in the spring

**UNCLASSIFIED**

of 2023, in a meeting where the Prime Minister had asked that four Ministers be informed of intelligence relating to foreign state actors.

- [16] Minister LeBlanc had not been briefed on another matter of potential FI.. Minister Leblanc explained that he had only been briefed on specific instances of potential FI from this state in 2023.

## 5. After the 2021 Election / Media Leaks

- [17] While Minister LeBlanc was aware in general terms of the FI threats posed by the PRC and other actors, he was not familiar with the specific allegations that were reported in the media until the leaks occurred.