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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

## Interview Summary: Katie Telford, Jeremy Broadhurst, Brian Clow, Patrick Travers

Senior officials currently or previously employed by the **Prime Minister's Office** (“**PMO**”) were interviewed in a panel format by Commission counsel on February 21, 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.

### 1. 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 in conjunction with the unclassified Institutional Report prepared by the **Prime Minister's Office** (“**PMO**”).

### 2. Background

[1] The PMO supports the **Prime Minister** (“**PM**”) in carrying out his responsibilities as head of government, as well as his leadership of a political party in the House of Commons. The

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PMO staff consist of exempt staff appointed pursuant to section 128 of the *Public Service Employment Act*, rather than career public servants.

[2] **Katie Telford** served as PMO Chief of Staff throughout the relevant period, except when she took unpaid leave during the writ periods of the 2019 and 2021 elections.

[3] **Jeremy Broadhurst** has occupied the following positions since 2018:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Role</b>
Late 2018-March 2019	Minister Freeland's Chief of Staff
March 2019-2019 election	National Campaign Director (on unpaid leave from Global Affairs)
2019 election-August 2021	Minister Freeland's Chief of Staff and senior advisor to the PM
August 2021- 2021 election	Senior advisor to the Liberal Party of Canada election campaign (on unpaid leave from PMO)
2021 election-October 2023	Senior advisor to the PM
October 2023-	National Campaign Manager (on unpaid leave from PMO)

[4] **Brian Clow** has occupied the following positions since 2018:

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Date	Role
January 2017 to January 2019	Director, Canada-US Relations
January 2019 to the 2021 general election	Executive Director, Issues Management, Parliamentary Affairs and Canada-US Relations
The 2021 general election to present	Deputy Chief of Staff

[5] Like Ms. Telford, Mr. Clow took unpaid leave from the PMO during the 2019 and 2021 election campaigns.

[6] **Patrick Travers** has served as the PMO senior global affairs advisor since the fall of 2020. Before that, he served as a policy advisor in the PMO policy team. He was also on the caretaker team during the writ periods for the 2019 and 2021 elections. Within the PMO, he covers all files that relate to international affairs.

### 3. Background and Mandate

[7] Mr. Clow explained that, at the risk of oversimplifying, the PMO's policy advisors work on files from a proactive and forward-looking perspective, whereas the PMO's Issue Management advisors analyze files from a more reactive, short-term perspective, such as in response to developing issues and media interest.

#### a. Information flow to PMO

[8] Ms. Telford explained that the channels to which information was provided to the PMO have evolved considerably. She identified three relevant time periods:

- **Before the COVID-19 pandemic:** the PMO received daily and weekly intelligence packages in paper format. These packages were primarily composed of intelligence summaries, as opposed to raw intelligence. Ms. Telford paid more attention to the weekly packages, which often summarized issues, rather than to the daily packages, which were voluminous, not always relevant, and often repetitive. For urgent matters, where intelligence needed to be brought to the

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attention of the PMO quickly, raw intelligence would be delivered by **client relations officers (“CROs”)** [employees of the Communications Security Establishment that are typically in charge of delivering intelligence to ministerial offices].

- **During the COVID-19 pandemic (from March 2020 to March 2022):** the delivery of daily and weekly intelligence briefs became very sporadic. Generally, the PMO staff were not working from the office. Thus, it was more difficult for them to receive classified materials. Where a specific incident had to be addressed by the PMO, or where the **National Security and Intelligence Advisor (“NSIA”)** asked to brief PMO verbally arrangements would be made to facilitate the dissemination of written intelligence products or to set up an in-person briefing. Ms. Telford indicated that on rare occasions classified material would be delivered to her home and taken away after she read it. Although senior PMO staff already had secure phones, it took some time before select PMO staff were provided with secure screens in their homes through which they could remotely meet to discuss Secret-level information. The witnesses confirmed that they do not have accounts on the **Canadian Top Secret Network (“CTSN”)**.
- **After the COVID-19 pandemic and following the media leaks** [a series of articles published in late 2022/early 2023 that appear to be based on classified documents]: the NSIA began sending CROs to the PMO, at least on a weekly basis, to share selected classified intelligence products. The **Privy Council Office (“PCO”)** also started to track the intelligence that had been provided to PMO, which, Ms. Telford subsequently learned, had not been the case before. Ms. Telford noted that PMO did not track the intelligence it received because it was generally given to them to read and then taken away. Ms. Telford explained that, in this period, she began to be provided with more raw intelligence than previously, even in cases that did not concern a specific issue urgently flagged to PMO.

[9] Ms. Telford stated that the individual practices of the NSIA in office at the time affected the topics or areas that received more time or attention and on which more intelligence would be disseminated to the PMO. These practices could be influenced by the NSIA’s perception of PMO staff’s needs. As well, PMO staff could ask to receive more information on certain topics.

[10] Mr. Travers indicated that PCO is the main channel through which PMO receives intelligence. PMO staff regularly discuss intelligence information with senior PCO staff including the NSIA, the Security and Intelligence Secretariat, and the Foreign and Defence

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Policy Secretariat. Depending on the issue, other departments or agencies might also be involved. Ms. Telford agreed that PCO was PMO's main point of contact for intelligence purposes. PCO could determine whether to include representatives of other agencies in a specific briefing.

[11] Mr. Travers identified an important distinction between intelligence that came in "unfiltered" (*i.e.*, to which PMO's attention was not specifically drawn) and intelligence that was specifically identified by PCO senior staff. He stated that PMO staff rely on PCO to differentiate between the two. He agreed with Ms. Telford that PMO had begun receiving considerably more raw intelligence on a wide range of issues post-pandemic, and that highly relevant intelligence was being flagged more consistently. In response to the media leaks, PMO frequently asked PCO to provide them with the intelligence underlying specific incidents which had not been brought to their attention but had garnered public attention.

[12] Mr. Travers explained that the PCO's **Intelligence Assessment Secretariat ("IAS")** delivers weekly briefings that cover relevant, but non-urgent topics from a global perspective. The PMO can provide feedback to CROs regarding the intelligence being provided.

b. Information flow to the PM

[13] Ms. Telford indicated that the PM also received daily and weekly intelligence packages. When a CRO delivers a given intelligence product to her, she usually asks whether the PM has also been provided with this product. Mr. Travers said that when a CRO gave him intelligence, he would read it and bring it to Ms. Telford's or Mr. Clow's attention if he considered it significant.

[14] Ms. Telford and Mr. Travers both stated that the NSIA, not PMO, was responsible for determining whether a specific piece of intelligence should be brought to the PM's attention. PMO is sometimes briefed on intelligence before the PM, and sometimes identifies issues that should be brought to the PM's attention. PMO had not and could not prevent the NSIA from briefing the PM on a given issue because the NSIA reports directly to the PM. Mr. Clow stated that, if the Clerk or the NSIA wants the PM to see something, it happens. The witnesses mentioned that the NSIA could either send documents directly to the PM via a CRO (in which case PMO staff would typically not be present when the PM reads them) or

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provide information to the PM in a direct verbal briefing (in which case PMO staff would usually be present).

[15] Ms. Telford stated that, the majority of the time, PMO staff is briefed on intelligence and told that no action can be taken. The PM habitually asks what action can be taken based on the information presented in briefings, and has encouraged agencies to take action. Ultimately, however, it is up to the agencies to decide whether and how to act.

#### 4. Relevant briefings or notes

- a. Memorandum for the Prime Minister, People's Republic of China Political Interference in Canada, PCO, June 29, 2017.

[16] When asked about this memorandum from the NSIA at the time, Daniel Jean, Mr. Clow indicated that dozens of memos of this kind are sent to the PM in a typical month. The memos are usually from the Clerk or the NSIA and cover a full range of subjects. Ms. Telford added that these are usually "for information only" memoranda that go to her and to the PM in parallel.

[17] [The document contains high-level information about (1) PRC political interference activities in Canada and elsewhere; (2) advice from the NSIA, including a recommendation to undertake efforts to improve awareness that MPs could be targets of FI; and (3) the fact that public efforts to raise awareness should remain general and not single out specific incidents, to avoid potential bilateral incidents]. Ms. Telford recalled that the advice provided in this memo was reflective of the broader ongoing conversation around the PRC's influence activities. Mr. Broadhurst added that they were told that they themselves could be the targets of foreign influence efforts. Ms. Telford recalled that a briefing along these lines was given to caucus members in advance of the 2018 trip to India.

[18] Ms. Telford recalled that at this time there were many ongoing conversations about how to better collaborate with the provinces, territories, and the private sector to promote awareness of FI. She noted that the risk posed by FI in business is real. While the Government was willing to raise awareness of the risk of FI with companies, the necessary channel for sharing classified information did not exist.

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b. CAN010803 – Katie Telford’s Notes, October 22, 2018 (mislabelled October 27, 2022).

[19] Ms. Telford had no specific memory of this briefing. Based on the notes, Ms. Telford suggested that the briefing with Minister Gould was likely held in the lead up to the development of the “whole of government” Plan to Protect Canada’s Democracy developed by Minister Gould.

[20] In response to an undertaking given to Commission counsel, the witnesses confirmed that, to the best of their recollection, there were no other formal briefings relevant to FI between September 2018 and January 2019.

c. Threat Reduction Measures in 2019

[21] All participants noted that CSIS **threat reduction measures (“TRMs”)** were not generally brought to their attention, because TRMs were within the authority of the Minister of Public Safety, not the PM. Mr. Clow also noted that the PMO staff did not receive much information in the lead-up to the election period.

d. CAN000834 –FI efforts against Dong Han, CSIS

[22] [This document summarizes a briefing given to representatives of the Liberal Party of Canada (“LPC”) on the irregularities reported in the nomination of Han Dong.]

[23] The witnesses did not see this document at the time.

[24] Mr. Broadhurst explained that the Don Valley North nomination contest was precipitated by Geng Tan [at the time, the sitting Member of Parliament in the riding of Don Valley North] stepping aside amidst a series of personal matters that arose in 2019. As a result of those personal matters, it was clear that Mr. Tan would not be green-lit as the candidate for the Don Valley North riding. Mr. Tan withdrew.

[25] Mr. Broadhurst recalled that the 2019 Don Valley North nomination race ultimately became a two-way race between Mr. Dong and another candidate. The race was anticipated to be close, but Mr. Broadhurst said that Mr. Dong was considered the favourite. Ms. Telford added that this was in part due to the fact that Mr. Dong was an experienced politician.

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[26] Mr. Broadhurst explained that Azam Ishmael and Braeden Caley [senior members of the Liberal Party who were cleared to the secret level so that they could receive briefings about electoral matters] were briefed on September 28, 2019 on allegations about the Don Valley North nomination process. This included allegations of buses being used to bring international students to the nomination process, in support of Mr. Dong.

[27] Mr. Broadhurst explained that, as he had Top Secret security clearance, which had survived into the election period, he was updated by Mr. Ishmael and Mr. Caley. Upon receiving this information, Mr. Broadhurst immediately asked a senior government official whether more information was available from CSIS. Through this follow-up conversation, Mr. Broadhurst determined that there was no information that he considered sufficiently reliable and cogent to provide a sound basis for removing a candidate. Mr. Broadhurst also followed up with those within the Party involved in the Don Valley North nomination process and asked if any irregularities had been reported, or complaints made. He was told that they did not uncover anything unusual.

[28] Mr. Broadhurst emphasized that the LPC did not receive any recommendations for action during the briefing or from the intelligence agencies. He would not have considered as appropriate a recommendation from intelligence agencies about who should be the LPC's candidate in a riding. Officials had said that the LPC could not share the information with anyone.

[29] Mr. Broadhurst observed that in the context of a nomination race, bussing groups of people to the polls is a common practice. Further, nobody involved in the nomination process had challenged the process or validity of the result through the procedural channels available under the Liberal Party nomination rules (for example, by way of appeal). Mr. Broadhurst nonetheless concluded that the PM should be informed in his capacity as leader of the LPC.

[30] Mr. Broadhurst added that based on the information available to him, he did not form the belief that the resignation of Geng Tan to make way for Han Dong had been orchestrated to make way for Han Dong.

[31] Mr. Broadhurst told the PM about the Don Valley North allegations approximately two days after the initial briefing to the Liberal Party representatives. Mr. Broadhurst told the



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PM that the Party should not invalidate the result of the nomination meeting because of the lack of evidence and the Party's inability to share any information regarding the allegations with the public. The burden to overturn the outcome of a democratic process should be high, especially when the public and candidate cannot be given an explanation.

[32] Mr. Broadhurst noted that the party had no ability to assess the impact, if any, of any busses on the outcome of the nomination vote. He suggested that the relationship between the presence of busses and the final vote is too indirect and uncertain.

[33] Ms. Telford added that sometimes intelligence agencies lack the requisite understanding of nominations or other political processes to contextualize intelligence. This sometimes makes the intelligence assessments more questionable in her view.

[34] Mr. Broadhurst explained that all registered Liberal Party members in a riding are entitled to vote in the nomination contest. To be a registered Liberal, one does not have to be a Canadian citizen but can be a person "normally residing in Canada" or a citizen living abroad who is entitled to vote in the general election. Similar rules exist in other federal political parties; no party restricts its nomination process to Canadian citizens. According to Mr. Broadhurst, these rules around membership are designed to promote engagement. Mr. Broadhurst further explained that the cut off date for obtaining a membership is a week before the call of the meeting where the vote will ultimately take place. This is designed to prevent the last minute "hoarding" of registered party members. The rules and procedures that govern the nomination process are publicly available on the Liberal Party website. Mr. Broadhurst noted that the party does not publicize whether someone has received a "red light" [the party blocking a would-be candidate from running in a nomination contest] nor do they publish the exact results of the vote.

e. Memorandum for the Prime Minister from NSIA David Morrison, Safeguarding the 2019 General Elections, PCO, January 14, 2020.

[35] Ms. Telford did not specifically recall having seen this document [which summarized the FI threats to the 2019 election and reviewed the safeguards that had been put in place to protect against those threats]. She confirmed that it was consistent with the information she was given at the time, which was that the overall level of foreign interference in the 2019

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election was low (below the anticipated baseline and potentially below the level of overall interference attempts in Canada).

[36] When asked about the interval between the election and the stamped date of January 14, 2020, Mr. Clow expressed that this would have been an appropriate period of time, following the election, for the note to be prepared. He further noted that the existence of the briefing confirms that safeguarding the election was a priority at the time.

f. Secret-Level version of Briefing to the Prime Minister on Foreign Interference, CSIS Director's Speaking Notes, February 10, 2021.

[37] When asked about this briefing [which described the states currently engaging in FI, including PRC, India, Iran, and Russia] Mr. Travers recalled attending this briefing [which occurred on February 9, 2021]. He explained that this briefing was a broad conversation on FI and the range of tactics used by state adversaries. He did not recall what had triggered the briefing, and he said that it was not uncommon to have thematic national security briefings that each covers a broad topic. He recalls the Don Valley North information being raised as one example.

g. CAN001082 Liberal Party Representatives SITE Briefing, CSIS, September 11, 2021.

[38] When asked about this briefing [given to the cleared Liberal Party representatives ahead of the 2021 election], Mr. Broadhurst explained that this briefing occurred in the days immediately preceding the election. Once Mr. Broadhurst was informed of the contents of the briefing, he followed up with PCO. He emphasized that it was clear that once again there were no recommendations included with the briefing. As the Prime Minister was not in Ottawa with easy access to a secure space, and because there was no immediate decision that needed to be made, Mr. Broadhurst made the decision not to brief the PM immediately, i.e. prior to the election. He advised that he discussed the matter with the PM at the next available opportunity, when the PM was back in Ottawa after the election.

[39] Ms. Telford confirmed that within a few days of the election, the Clerk discussed this matter with her and the PM.

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h. CAN015842 Briefing to the Prime Minister on Foreign Interference Threats to Canada's Democratic Institutions, PCO, October 26, 2022.

[40] Mr. Clow and Mr. Travers were briefed on two issues, one of which related to foreign interference and several individuals. Following their briefing, Mr. Clow and Mr. Travers concluded that the PM should be briefed along similar lines. Ultimately, the PM was briefed.

[41] With respect to Ms. Telford's notes from the same period<sup>1</sup>, she recalled a conversation with CSIS Director David Vigneault where he stated that "bragging is not doing." She did not recall the specific context of this comment.

i. Memorandum for the Prime Minister, Claims of Foreign Interference in the 2019 General Election [No date provided but document indicates that it was created in 2022]

[42] [This document provides an overview of the information flow around the threats to the 2019 election, including a description of the work of SITE and the briefings on FI given to the PM]. Mr. Clow<sup>2</sup> explained that this briefing occurred following the leaks. It was intended to provide the PM with the necessary facts to understand and assess the content of the leaks.

j. CAN017674 Mr. Clow's notes from January 18/19, 2023.

[43] Mr. Clow explained that these meetings occurred following the leaks [in November and December 2022]. All interviewees confirmed that they first heard of the allegations involving 11 candidates from the Sam Cooper article. Mr. Clow confirmed that the purpose of these meetings was to prepare for the Cabinet retreat.

k. CAN017675 Mr. Clow's notes from February 23, 2023.

[44] Mr. Clow explained that this meeting was with NSIA Jody Thomas and David Vigneault. It was one of several briefings they received as the leaks were ongoing. Further, he recalled discussing the fact that there was no evidence that the \$250 000 had been sent to any candidates. Further, Mr. Vigneault had explained that had he considered the information on the 11 candidates of sufficient importance he would have briefed it up. During this

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<sup>1</sup> CAN009803 (mislabeled October 22, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> CAN017673 Mr. Clow's notes from this meeting.

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meeting, Ms. Thomas said that officials were re-evaluating how intelligence was presented to elected officials and, in particular, considering whether to make recommendations more often than they had previously. Mr. Vigneault also stated, in respect of certain allegations, that he would not have considered it appropriate to give a recommendation.

I. CAN017676 Mr. Clow's notes from May 18, 2023.

[45] Mr. Clow explained that this meeting occurred following the leak related to MP Michael Chong. All interviewees confirmed that they first heard the intelligence on Mr. Chong through the leaks. He recalled that the NSIA, Mr. Vigneault, and the PM met with Mr. Chong immediately following these leaks.

[46] Ms. Telford added that, during meetings earlier in May, they discussed the options for a response, including the option of expelling a diplomat, which was ultimately done.

[47] Around this time, Mr. Clow recalled that they had also discussed the alleged "transcript" of a conversation Han Dong had with PRC officials regarding the "Two Michaels". Mr. Clow clarified it was a summary, not a "transcript", and characterized the allegation that Han Dong had suggested to the officials to delay the release of the "Two Michaels" as being inaccurate. Ms. Telford added that there were concerns over the quality of the translation of the conversation, but they were unable to resolve these concerns.

m. PRC Political Preferences in 2021 Election

[48] None of the interviewees recalled intelligence regarding PRC Officials' preferred outcome of the 2021 election. Mr. Clow noted that, in the aftermath of the 2021 election, the Conservatives had publicly alleged that they had been the victims of a PRC-backed disinformation campaign online, in particular, regarding Kenny Chiu. Mr. Broadhurst noted that, during the campaign, it was clear that the "tide was turning" against Chiu. He attributed this to the fact that Mr. Chiu was "wearing the Conservative party's shift on China", and to the Conservative Party's opposition to gun control, which were not well received by Chinese Canadians in his riding.

[49] Ms. Telford was surprised to hear allegations that the PRC might have favoured a Liberal minority in the 2021 election: she would have expected the PRC to be more supportive of the Conservatives than the Liberals given the tense relationship between the Government of Canada and the PRC at the time (the negotiations for the release of the Two Michaels

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were ongoing). Ultimately, Ms. Telford noted that the PRC supports the candidate that is in their best interest at a particular moment. Mr. Broadhurst added that China wants to create chaos and undermine democracy first and foremost. He explained that sometimes Consul Generals, who are not high-level PRC officials, may falsely advertise alleged FI activities to gain favour with their superiors back home.

## 5. Role in Challenging Intelligence

[50] Ms. Telford explained that PMO often provides feedback on intelligence and asks the NSIA or intelligence agencies for more information. Intelligence cannot be viewed as gospel because it usually requires analysis within a context. Some contexts are ones that the agency may not fully grasp. While Ms. Telford ultimately defers to the agencies, who have the expertise, she nevertheless regularly challenges intelligence, particularly where this intelligence could have an impact on a politician's career. She views PMO as playing a challenge function. She believed that CSIS could improve its understanding of the political process. For instance, CSIS may view as foreign interference what may in fact be the exercise of influence through legitimate diplomatic or political processes.

[51] Ms. Telford recalled the PM identifying an incorrect fact in a CNSB that CSIS had created in 2019, and he requested a correction. CSIS said that they would note the error as a comment in the intelligence report.

[52] Ms. Telford recalled that an intelligence agency had mistakenly identified a threat linked to an MP. After requesting further verification of the information, the intelligence agency realized its mistake and reversed its assessment. Ms. Telford kept pushing PCO to investigate the matter further and it turned out that CSIS had the wrong person.

## 6. Conclusion

[53] Mr. Travers noted that the government's policy on FI is constantly being developed and is an active part of their agenda.

[54] Mr. Clow emphasized what he considered to be the seriousness of the Buffalo Chronicle article [an article that made serious and false allegations against PM Trudeau]. In his view,

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this incident was an obvious example of FI, but because it could not be directly attributed to a foreign state, the government had no available response.

[55] In the context of trying to determine why certain results occur at the riding level, Mr. Broadhurst noted that between the 2015 and 2021 elections, voter turnout dropped dramatically. He emphasized that the 2021 election was during the pandemic, and that the non-participation of large numbers of previous voters made it difficult to predict/ assess overall voter behaviour.

[56] Ms. Telford underlined that she was never told, either publicly or privately by any government official, that FI had an impact on GE43 or GE44 at any level.