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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 fédérales

## Interview Summary: David Morrison

David Morrison was interviewed by Commission Counsel on June 15, 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 hearings held *in camera* in July and August 2024. It discloses the evidence 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.

### Notes to Reader:

- Commission Counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets to assist the reader.

## 1. Witness

- [1] David Morrison is the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was appointed to this position in October 2022. Before this, Mr. Morrison served as the Foreign and Defence Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister from 2018 to 2022 and as Deputy Minister for International Trade from January 2022 until October 2022.
- [2] Mr. Morrison also briefly served as Acting National Security Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister (“**NSIA**”) after Greta Bossenmaier retired in December 2019 until Vincent Rigby assumed the role in January 2020. On June 30, 2021, Mr. Morrison again became Acting NSIA until Jody Thomas assumed the role in January 2022. From July 22 to August 8, 2021, Mr. Morrison took a medical leave of absence. During that period, Michael MacDonald served as Acting NSIA.

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## 2. The “PCO Special Report”

- [3] Mr. Morrison was asked about the “PCO Special Report” referred to in the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (“**NSIRA**”) report.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Morrison explained that the catalyst for the “PCO Special Report” was a July 2021 CSIS Intelligence Assessment (“**CSIS IA**”) [titled “PRC Foreign Interference in Canada: A Critical National Security Threat”], which he received in mid-August 2021. The CSIS IA described the intent, motives, and scope of the People’s Republic of China (“**PRC**”) foreign interference (“**FI**”) efforts in Canada.
- [4] Mr. Morrison discussed the CSIS IA and the issue of foreign interference with PCO colleagues in September 2021. Concerned about the focus of the CSIS IA’s assessments, he asked his team at the Privy Council Office (“**PCO**”) Intelligence Assessment Secretariat to “go further” and prepare a complementary intelligence product. In particular, Mr. Morrison wanted an intelligence product that would give him a global perspective on PRC FI by describing PRC FI-related activities in other jurisdictions and assessing their impact. In particular, Mr. Morrison wanted to know what the United Front Work Department (“**UFWD**”) had managed to accomplish in the decades it has been active, and what was meant by “targeting” of MPs. He was trying to assess how big a problem PRC FI was, vis-à-vis other matters of national security Canada was navigating at the time, such as the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the civil war in Ethiopia, and the amassing of Russian troops along the Ukraine border. So he asked his team to prepare a report putting all the information on PRC FI in one place to allow him to assess how severe the problem was.
- [5] Mr. Morrison also recalled once engaging with CSIS about the line between standard diplomatic activity and FI, given that, in his view, some of what was described in the CSIS reports and intelligence was not in fact FI.

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<sup>1</sup> National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, *Review of the dissemination of intelligence on People’s Republic of China political foreign interference, 2018-2023*, Review 23-07.

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- [6] On December 11, 2021, Mr. Morrison received a draft of the “PCO Special Report”. He had no recollection of this, but did not contest PCO records showing he gave feedback on the draft, which his team was asked to implement. Mr. Morrison had no further involvement with the PCO Special Report: in January 2022, he was appointed Deputy Minister for International Trade and left his position as Acting NSIA.
- [7] Mr. Morrison has now read the final version of the “PCO Special Report”.<sup>2</sup> He stated that, while some of what is described in the report is concerning, some activities are misinterpreted as FI and are more likely standard diplomatic activity. He agreed with the decision by Jody Thomas not to disseminate the “PCO Special Report” to Cabinet Ministers or the Prime Minister’s Office.

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<sup>2</sup> CAN003787.