



Foreign Interference Commission

Public Consultation Process

Small Group Consultation Meeting Public Summary

In the summer of 2024, Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue and members of the Foreign Interference Commission's (the "**Commission**") Public Consultation Process ("**PCP**") team met with five individuals belonging to the Chinese Canadian community in a consultation meeting organized with the assistance of the Chinese Canadian Concern Group. This is the summary of the information provided during the consultation meeting.

Notes to reader:

- The Commissioner has not and will not be making any findings about the accuracy of the information shared at the consultation meeting or make any findings of fact based on this information.
- The meeting attendees did not make an oath or swear to tell the truth before sharing information at this meeting.
- The meeting attendees were not subjected to cross-examination.
- The meeting attendees have reviewed and approved the contents of this public summary.
- Meeting attendees were given the option of anonymizing themselves for the purposes of the present public summary. Where meeting attendees opted to anonymize themselves, they are designated as "Participant 1", "Participant 2", etc.
- At each of the consultation meetings, the meeting attendees were asked to answer two questions, which are set out below. The meeting attendees were each given a total of 15 minutes to respond to both questions.
- Where necessary, Commission counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets and in the footnotes to assist the reader.

Executive Summary

- Meeting attendees shared detailed accounts of their personal experiences being monitored, harassed, and threatened due to their advocacy work for Hong Kong, along with information about the impact such experiences had on them and their loved ones. The experiences recounted included detailed, graphic, and harrowing death threats, monitoring and surveillance, and harassment online and in person. The monitoring, harassment, and threats were not only directed at the targets, but also their loved ones in Canada and living in the People's Republic of China (the “**PRC**”).
- One attendee spoke about being featured in Chinese state media, where they were portrayed as, among other things, having been brainwashed and as a person full of prejudice against the PRC.
- One participant described certain approaches that proxies for the Chinese Communist Party (“**CCP**”) may take in seeking to indirectly attract professionals and academics to their cause. That participant also described ways in which Chinese student and researcher associations at major Canadian research institutions attract student members and indirectly message to those student members that they are being watched and their actions may be reported to the Chinese consulate.
- Certain attendees spoke about the chilling effect that such monitoring, harassment, and threats have on the victims' willingness to speak openly about their views and participate in Canada's democratic society. Attendees described living in fear, having to operate under constant stress and anxiety. One attendee described severing ties with family members living in the PRC to protect them for fear of what the CCP may do to them in response to the attendees' advocacy efforts in Canada and elsewhere.
- One attendee explained that, where people do not feel free to express their views and opinions, their elected officials are not able to represent their interests as constituents.
- Certain attendees described how the introduction of Article 23 in Hong Kong¹ has exacerbated the chilling effect on the speech and actions of those in the Chinese Canadian community. Certain attendees explained that Article 23 applies to the

¹ **Note:** Article 23 of the Hong Kong Basic Law is a provision regarding security introduced by the Hong Kong legislature on March 23, 2024.

actions of Canadian citizens in Canada and elsewhere, and described how this extraterritorial criminalization of speech can interfere with the rights and freedoms of people in Canada.

1. Participants' responses to Question 1

The first question posed to the participants was: *How are you, your loved ones and members of your community impacted by foreign interference in Canada's electoral processes and democratic institutions?*

Participant 1

Participant 1 said they immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong in the late 1980s, and described reconnecting with Hong Kong when the 2019 protests [against a new extradition law which would allow extradition to mainland China from Hong Kong] began. Participant 1 said they are an artist who makes music and paintings to raise awareness about the Hong Kong protest movement and has, through their creative efforts, raised funds to support the protest movement.

Participant 1 said that they have been harassed in person and online as a result of their artistic advocacy and fundraising work. Participant 1 said they have received many death threats, and have received anonymous messages to the effect that they are under surveillance, that the police are waiting for them in Hong Kong, and that it is unsafe for them to travel to Hong Kong. Participant 1 said they have also been the subject of coverage by Chinese state media, including articles that allege that they have been brainwashed, that they are full of prejudice against the PRC. Some articles also alleged that Participant 1 had infringed upon the Hong Kong National Security Law, and that they had incited violence and protests in Hong Kong.

Participant 1 recounted an incident in which a community organization refused to rent out their space for Participant 1's artistic performance, alleging that Participant 1's performance would infringe on their policies. Participant 1 believes that this was an incident of self-censorship by the community organization.

Participant 1 described the stress they experience due to the monitoring they appear to be subject to, the inaccurate Chinese media articles about them, and the harassment they experience both online and in person. Participant 1 also described the serious impact of their experiences on their loved ones, explaining that they have chosen to sever ties with certain family members living in China for their safety, and that they have sought therapy along with their life partner to address the stress the harassment and monitoring they have been subject to has caused them.

Participant 2

Participant 2 is a professor at a Canadian university and has also been involved in advocacy on behalf of Hong Kongers.

Participant 2 described an approach that Chinese companies may take to attract skilled professionals and academics – Participant 2 called it the “Feed, Trap, Kill” approach. Participant 2 explained that the “Feed” stage may include offering plentiful resources that would permit professional projects to move forward materially faster than the same projects would likely move outside of that environment; the “Trap” stage may involve slowly making increasingly unreasonable requests of the target; and the “Kill” stage may involve requiring the target to take positions or actions that are directly contrary to their views or to promote ideas that are inconsistent with their position on a matter. Participant 2 said that university professors may also be approached to open non-governmental organizations, operating outside of universities, funded by companies. Participant 2 explained that this approach takes the professor beyond their university’s oversight. Participant 2 explained that they had been the targets of such approaches by Chinese companies, but that they had refused to collaborate with these organizations, despite being offered large sums of money to do so.

Participant 2 explained that students coming to study in Canada through the China Scholarship Council (“**CSC**”) are required to sign a loyalty agreement before coming to study in Canada. Participant 2 said that if a student violates the loyalty agreement, their family in the PRC is forced to repay the scholarship. Participant 2 explained that these

students were attractive hires for academics, as they do not require salaries because of their scholarship grants.

Participant 2 said that the Chinese student unions and researcher unions in universities are well-organized, well-funded and consistently structured across different universities. Participant 2 said that each year, these unions host welcome programs for new students, and that the first event often involves meeting with the Chinese consulate. Participant 2 said that this meeting sends the message to the Chinese students that the PRC is watching them.

Participant 2 described being surveilled at protests and being photographed by Chinese individuals who they believe work for the Chinese consulates or overseas Chinese police stations. Participant 2 also described being the subject of cyberattacks they were confident came from China.

Participant 3

Participant 3 said they have been involved in Chinese Canadian community politics since the late 1970s. Participant 3 spoke about the consequences that may be inflicted on people living in the PRC as a result of the actions of their loved ones in Canada. Participant 3 provided an example of an individual's brother-in-law who lost their job in the PRC due to the actions of their relatives in Canada.

Participant 3 also described threatening and frightening messages they had received, including death threats, threats of retaliation, and images of burning effigies accompanied by messages like "burn in hell".

Participant 3 talked about the fear sparked by the risk that other Canadians may be acting as informants on behalf of or colluding with the PRC.

Participant 3 talked about the psychological fear that accompanies the risk introduced by Article 23, which criminalizes anyone who supports a protest in support of Hong Kong, even non-ethnic-Chinese people. Participant 3 described the resulting environment as a "terror environment". Participant 3 described a Hong Kong student who posted on

Facebook in support of a Hong Kong protest. Participant 3 said that the student was arrested in connection with that Facebook post when they returned to Hong Kong to renew their passport.

Participant 3 described their own experiences with being surveilled.

Participant 3 provided three examples from long-time friends and associates. First, Participant 3 spoke about a person who received an image of themselves as an effigy burning in a fire. Participant 3 said the message was connected to the person's human rights work. Second, Participant 3 described a Canadian-born individual who was involved in Hong Kong protests who checked into a hotel under an alias – despite the alias, that person received a call from someone who said they were being watched. Finally, Participant 3 described Hong Kong asylum seekers in Canada who live in constant fear.

Participant 3 noted that the constant monitoring and surveillance they were under created an atmosphere of pervasive fear and vigilance. Providing an example, they recounted recently calling a ride-sharing service at their home. The Chinese driver recognized Participant 3 and mentioned that they did not know they lived at this address. Participant 3 recalled fearing that their personal address might be shared with Chinese authorities.

Participant 3 noted that Confucius institutes in Canada should be viewed as vectors of Chinese foreign interference.

Participant 3 also mentioned that on their last trip to Hong Kong, they were followed. Participant 3 said that they have vowed not to travel through Hong Kong or to fly with certain airlines, out of fear of being extradited to the PRC.

Participant 3 said that their community organization had sought to erect a statue of a Hong Kong advocate on a Canadian university campus. Participant 3 said that their request was denied because university administration feared that this was a political statement and that they would lose revenue from international Chinese students should the university agree to the statue.

Participant 4

Participant 4 said they are a policy advisor who monitors human rights in Hong Kong and also advocates for the Hong Kong diaspora community in Canada. Participant 4 said the intimidation, threats, and monitoring activities carried out by the CCP and its agents are intended to suppress the speech and activities of those perceived as threats by the CCP. Participant 4 said that intimidation and other forms of transnational repression dissuade the targets from engaging in civil and democratic activities, leading them to censor themselves out of fear. Participant 4 explained that, where people do not feel free to express themselves, this limits the ability of their elected officials to represent them.

Participant 4 said that the chilling effects of the CCP's intimidation, monitoring, and harassment of the Chinese Canadian community are exacerbated by Article 23. Participant 4 explained that, through Article 23, the CCP exerts extra-territorial control over the actions and speech of Canadians by criminalizing acts that are legal in Canada.

Participant 4 shared the following examples from their community:

- Participant 4 described a woman who was an active participant in the Hong Kong protests in Hong Kong who fled to Canada, claiming asylum. Participant 4 said she has continued her advocacy work in Canada and has received threatening messages and insults that reference her advocacy work along with graphic videos, including a video of a woman suffering blunt force trauma to the head, and a video of a beheading sent with the message “Karma for the New Hong Kong Culture Club”. Participant 4 said the woman also received messages with the name of her boyfriend, employer, the address of her workplace, and photos of her family and friends. Participant 4 noted that these events had been reported to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (“**RCMP**”) and the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (“**CSIS**”).
- Participant 4 described a man involved in a pro-democracy organization. Participant 4 said that he received messages on Telegram reminding him to renew his car license, implying that the sender knew where he lived and was watching him. Participant 4 said the man also received threats that he would be beaten in

Chinatown. Participant 4 said those threats were reported to the police and the RCMP.

- Participant 4 described a woman living in British Columbia who had planned a trip to Japan. Participant 4 said that the woman received messages on Telegram reminding her to take care of her young daughter during the trip. Participant 4 said that the woman was shocked to receive this message because her trip was not public knowledge. Participant 4 said the woman reported the messages to the police and the RCMP.
- Participant 4 said that a man who is a Canadian citizen and a member of a pro-democracy organization received a message on Telegram that contained a video of someone being beheaded alongside a video of the man at a protest accompanied by a warning that he and others at the pro-democracy organization would suffer the same fate.
- In respect of the reports made to law enforcement, Participant 4 said that the RCMP and CSIS treated the information as intelligence gathering, rather than subject matter for prosecution, because the messages were sent anonymously. Participant 4 said that there was not much follow-up from law enforcement following the reports.

Participant 5

Participant 5 described receiving a threatening email from an unknown sender that exacerbated their anxiety about their personal safety. The email advised Participant 5, among other things, that they would be punished in heaven and that those who had been hurt by Participant 5 would take their revenge, even if they lose their lives.

Participant 5 said that the intimidation of the Chinese Canadian community raises serious concerns about Canada's democratic process and the safety of those engaged in Canada's politics. Participant 5 said the information and examples shared underscore the urgent need to take action against foreign interference and transnational repression, including in providing protection to diaspora community members.

2. Participants' responses to Question 2

The second question posed to participants was: *What are your suggestions for how you and others in your community who may be vulnerable to foreign interference could be supported and protected, and for how foreign interference could be detected or combated?*

Participant 1

Participant 1 said that the Canadian government needs to take action in respect of the anonymous threats that they and other members of their community are receiving, instead of receiving reports from those who are subject to such threats without providing follow-up or taking action.

Participant 2

Participant 2 said that the Canadian government should provide a list of organizations operating in Canada that Canadian academics should avoid because of their connections with the CCP. This list would complement the list already published by the government of Canada regarding organizations and universities in China that need to be avoided.

Participant 2 said that professors and senior management of academic institutions should receive information and education to increase their understanding and awareness of the dangers of maintaining relationships with the CCP. Professors should also be warned about the potential risks of employing Chinese students who received CSC funding, especially in sensitive fields of research.

Participant 2 said that international students from China should be provided with information and education to help them understand that they should refuse when asked to share information with the Chinese consulate. Participant 2 said these students should be empowered to say no to such requests.

Participant 2 said that Canadian law enforcement needs to take action on the information reported by members of the Chinese Canadian diaspora in respect of threats received, rather than simply treating the reports as part of an information-gathering exercise.

Participant 3

Participant 3 first recommended that CSIS and law enforcement agencies be provided with additional language and cultural training, to be able to adequately assist diaspora community members.

Participant 3 also stressed the importance of clearly defining what foreign interference is, as well as providing clear guidelines for community members in terms of detecting and reacting to foreign interference.

Participant 3 said that the RCMP needs to have more enforcement power so that it can take action against those who are monitoring the actions of Canadians and sending that information to the Chinese consulate.

Participant 4

Participant 4 recommended that a reporting hotline be established and made available in Cantonese, amongst other languages, so Canadian agencies can communicate with people in their native languages.

Participant 4 supports Bill C-70, but stated that transnational repression must be addressed, which Bill C-70 does not do. Participant 4 stated that Canada needs something like the *Transnational Repression Policy Act* in the United States (the “**U.S. Act**”). Participant 4 explained that the U.S. Act requires the President to impose property sanctions and visa restrictions on individuals perpetrating transnational repression. Participant 4 said that providing training about transnational repression to police forces would be helpful.

Participant 4 said that foreign interference will continue to evolve, but it will always be clandestine and covert, and it will continue to occur in various sectors of human life,

including civil, business, academic, and political life. Participant 4 said that we can continue to try to address it in a piecemeal fashion, but foreign interference and transnational repression in all these aspects are interlined and we are most likely to be successful if we address it as a whole.

Participant 5

Participant 5 suggested the creation of community networks to offer support and foster dialogue, providing people with a place to share their experiences with foreign interference.

Participant 5 said that these community networks could collaborate with local law enforcement agencies to raise their awareness about foreign interference and the specific threats associated with it, referencing a man who took a threatening email to the local police and was kicked out.

Participant 5 said the Canadian government should create a trusted reporting mechanism, such as a hotline, facilitated by local law enforcement and community organizations.

Participant 5 said the Canadian government should establish a dedicated task force with law enforcement agencies to investigate and counter foreign interference.

Participant 5 said that a legislative framework offering protection to individuals targeted by foreign interference should be established, and that legal aid should be offered to foreign interference victims.

Participant 5 said that enhanced digital security education should be provided to teach people about secure social media practices and to empower people to express their views online.