

**PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN FEDERAL
ELECTORAL PROCESSES AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Written submissions of the Russian Canadian Democratic Alliance
with respect to Stage 1 hearings
(clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of the Commission's *Terms of Reference*)**

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1. A missed opportunity to investigate Russian interference

[1] Russian interference in the 2019 and 2021 general elections recalls the proverbial tree that falls unheard in the forest. In the case of Russian interference in the last two elections, either the sound went unnoticed, or it was ignored. These submissions identify a missed opportunity and clear indications that Russia did in fact interfere in the 2019 and 2021 elections through sophisticated and impactful disinformation campaigns. Given that these proceedings have raised more questions than answers about Russian interference, these submissions end with a call to action, urging the Commission and the government to rigorously investigate Russian interference in the last two elections, which pose a serious risk to the integrity of our democracy and to the diaspora community.

[2] Pursuant to the Foreign Interference Commission’s (the “**Commission**”) Terms of Reference (“**TOR**”), the Commission must “examine and assess interference by China, **Russia** and other foreign states or non-state actors, including any potential impacts, in order to confirm the integrity of, and any impacts on, the 2019 and 2021 general elections at the national and electoral district levels” and, “examine and assess the flow of information to senior decision-makers, [...] and actions taken in response.”¹ To that end, the Commission conducted 9.5 days of hearings. The Commission heard from a panel of diaspora members regarding the issues their communities face with respect to foreign interference, as well as from public servants, employees of political parties, and elected officials.

[3] The Stage 1 hearings followed the National Security Confidentiality Hearings (“**NSC Hearings**”) which aimed to “identify the challenges, limitations and potential adverse impacts associated with the disclosure of classified national security information and intelligence to the public, for the purposes of fostering transparency and enhancing public awareness and understanding.”² The evidence from these hearings, which excluded diaspora witnesses, revealed that:

- foreign powers disproportionately target members of diaspora communities, notably through “threats, manipulation and coercion”;³
- these actions not only undermine the individual freedoms of diaspora members⁴ but also create an atmosphere of fear and mistrust within these communities;⁵ and

¹ Order in Council P.C. 2023-882, clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B).

² Order in Council P.C. 2023-882, clause (a)(i)(D).

³ CSIS, Foreign Interference and you (RCD0000007), p. 3; D. Vigneault, Transcript – Day 4, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 132.

⁴ See Russian Canadian Democratic Alliance, [National Security Confidentiality Hearings Submissions](#).

⁵ R. Fadden: “members of some diasporas are just plain scared,” Transcript – Day 3, In-Ch (Cameron), p. 62.

- transparency regarding foreign interference empowers diaspora communities, enabling them to personally understand, weigh and respond to foreign threats and participate in democratic processes more securely and informedly.⁶

[4] First, no witnesses specifically knowledgeable about Russian interference were interviewed nor examined during the *in camera* hearings prior to the public hearings. Of all the interview and *in camera* hearing summaries that could be found on the Commission’s website as of April 15, 2024, 45 mention China while only 22 reference Russia, exposing an imbalance in the Commission’s focus. When Russia is mentioned, it is typically in a general sense, often as background relating to Russian interference in other nations which encouraged Canada to develop measures to respond to foreign interference and led it to be more preoccupied about Russian interference specifically.⁷ Yet the Russian Canadian Democratic Alliance (“RCDA”) had explicitly requested on February 28, 2024 that the Commission question all witnesses examined during the *in camera* hearings about Russian interference specifically, in keeping with the words and spirit of the Commission’s TOR. Second, the lack of focus on Russian interference became particularly evident during the public hearings, which raised more questions than provided answers, as explained in detail below. The Commission notably failed to compel the testimony of:

- witnesses with specific knowledge about Russian interference, such as Marcus Kolga, who has extensively written and spoken regarding the last two elections, including an article in which he alleges Russian interference in the 2019 general election;⁸
- social media executives from Facebook, Alphabet, X, TikTok, etc. who could shed light on the methods of Russian interference during the 2019 and 2021 elections, and help attribute the disinformation campaigns addressed in the public hearings to Russian actors;⁹

⁶ D. LeBlanc, Transcript – Day 5, In-Ch (Chaudhury), pp. 12-14.

⁷ See for instance J. Trudeau, *In Camera* Examination Summary (WIT0000067), p. 2, para 5; J. Trudeau, Interview Summary (WIT0000066), p. 2, para 3; A. Sutherland, Interview Summary (WIT000040), p. 2; G. Bossenmaier, V. Rigby, D. Morrison and M. MacDonald, *In Camera* Examination Summary (WIT0000057), p. 6, para 14; K. Gould Interview Summary (WIT0000062), p. 2, para 4.

⁸ Zach Laing, *Canada, Wexit, and the federal election targeted in Russian disinformation campaign, academics say*, Calgary Herald, November 3 2019: <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/canada-wexit-and-the-federal-election-targeted-in-russian-disinformation-campaign-academics-say>.

⁹ As happened in the United States following the 2016 presidential election, see VOA News, *Facebook, Twitter Executives Testify on Capitol Hill; Google Absent*, VOA News, September 5 2018: <https://www.voanews.com/a/facebook-twitter-executives-testify-on-capitol-hill-google-absent/4558705.html>.

- consulting firms like Yonder and the Atlantic Council, which were reportedly hired by the government to monitor and analyze Russian interference, and which raised concerns regarding potential Russian interference in the 2019 and 2021 general elections.

[5] These substantial evidentiary gaps (which only became apparent during the Stage 1 hearings) prompted the RCDA to raise the issue directly with Commission counsel verbally on April 4, 2024 and thereafter by email, approximately at the midpoint of the Stage 1 hearings. The response from the Commission, received on April 8 with just two days of hearings remaining, put off these critical issues to Stage 2 of the Commission’s proceedings. Moreover, the Commission advised that if the RCDA lacked sufficient resources to thoroughly investigate these matters, it should request further resources.

[6] What the Commission apparently failed to understand is that the issues raised by the RCDA are directly related to potential Russian interference in the 2019 and 2021 general elections, which are central to the Commission's mandate for the Stage 1 hearings. Moreover, the Commission seems to have misunderstood the RCDA’s role in the proceedings. It seems that the Commission attempted to shift a significant portion of the Commission’s responsibilities onto an organization – the RCDA – that not only lacks the necessary resources but also the means to conduct a detailed investigation. Specifically, the RCDA: (a) cannot compel the testimony of witnesses or the production of documents; (b) does not influence the Commission’s timeline; (c) was barely involved in the Commission’s preparatory work for the public hearings, which included requesting relevant documents, conducting interviews, and holding *in camera* hearings, leaving it to rely on what the Commission deemed important to investigate; (d) had extremely limited “cross-examination” time during the hearings (compared to up to 90 minutes for Commission counsel); and (e) often received critical documents only the night before key testimonies.¹⁰

[7] Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, who led the government’s efforts to create the Commission, testified that “every word” in the Commission’s TOR had been chosen with care and that all recognized parties in the House of Commons were in agreement with “every word” in the TOR.¹¹ When questioned as to whether parties wanted to

¹⁰ Contrary to Rule 56 of the Commission’s own *Rules of Practice and Procedure*, which mandates that “[i]n advance of the testimony of a witness, Commission counsel shall, with reasonable notice, provide the Parties a list of the documents associated with the witness’s anticipated evidence in chief.” For example, the RCDA was notified that the Panel of Five 2021 interview summary (WIT0000058) and the Panel of Five 2021 public summary of *in camera* examination (WIT0000053) had been uploaded to the party database shortly before midnight on April 7, 2024, the eve of the Panel's testimony, despite the Panel being interviewed by the Commission on February 14, 2024, and a classified version of the summary already being filed as evidence during the *in camera* hearings held between February 28 and March 6, 2024.

¹¹ D. LeBlanc, Transcript – Day 14, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 133 [our translation].

make sure that Russia was investigated by the Commission, Minister LeBlanc testified that he wanted “the Commission, having access to all classified information and all documents and senior officials who are capable of briefing the Commission, [...] to be able, in its judgment, to follow the evidence.”¹² This was also the RCDA’s hope. However, the RCDA is left with more questions about Russian interference than before the Commission’s proceedings began.

[8] What is clear is that with all the evidentiary gaps and substantial indications of Russian interference in the 2019 and 2021 elections discussed below, the Commission simply cannot take the government’s assumption at face value—that there was little to no evidence of Russian interference in these elections. Accepting this assumption would not only likely be incorrect but also dangerous. It would signal to Russia that not only is the government ill-equipped to detect and expose its nefarious attacks against our democracy, but also that an independent inquiry specifically designed for this purpose has failed to do so.

2. Evidence of Russian interference in the 2019 and the 2021 general elections

2.1 Russia has the interest and capabilities to interfere in our elections

[9] The evidence that emerged during the Stage 1 hearings clearly establishes that the government believed that Russia had the capability to interfere in our elections, and assumed that Russia had “little interest” to interfere in the 2019 and 2021 general elections specifically.¹³ Based on the evidence elicited during the Stage 1 hearings and on its knowledge of the Russian regime, the RCDA is convinced that the reason why little evidence of Russian interference has been exposed by the government is not due to a presumed “little interest” on Russia’s part, but rather due to intelligence gaps, also described in a briefing note to the Prime Minister from National Security and Intelligence Advisor (“NSIA”) Jody Thomas (who has not been called as a witness) as “blindspots.”¹⁴

[10] As outlined by Mr. Novodvorskiy, a long-time critic of the Russian regime, and director and founding member of the RCDA, Russian interference largely takes the form of the amplification of divisive Canadian issues to undermine faith in democracy and increase political polarization.¹⁵ This

¹² D. LeBlanc, Transcript – Day 14, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 137 [our translation].

¹³ See for instance, D. Rogers, Transcript – Day 10, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 103; N. Drouin, Transcript – Day 12, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 120.

¹⁴ J. Thomas, Briefing Note to the Prime Minister (CAN014285), p. 3.

¹⁵ Y. Novodvorskiy, Transcript – Day 6, Statement, p. 83.

information is pushed by Russia on multiple channels, and from different accounts, to create “an atmosphere of believability.” The targeted audience is gradually led to believe that this unfounded or biased information justifies extreme positions – making these positions seem “common sense” by relying on an inundation of false or biased presumptions.¹⁶ According to Mr. Novodvorskiy, these efforts are not limited to targeting the Russian diaspora but extend to the broader Canadian public, aiming to polarize society and undermine trust in democratic institutions, with the ultimate goal of making the population “more susceptible to pro-Russian positions.”¹⁷

[11] In response to the anticipated threat of Russian interference, akin to what was observed in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and in the 2017 French presidential election, Canada invested significant resources in developing and implementing the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol (“**CEIPP**”). The CEIPP provides for the creation of a group of experienced senior Canadian public servants (the “**Panel of Five**”), responsible for jointly determining whether a threshold for informing Canadians of the existence of a threat to the integrity of a general election has been met, whether through a single incident or an accumulation of incidents.¹⁸ The government also established the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force (“**SITE TF**”), composed of representatives from the Canada Security Establishment (“**CSE**”), the Canada Security and Intelligence Service (“**CSIS**”), Global Affairs Canada (“**GAC**”) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to coordinate information-sharing on matters related to threats to the security of Canada and its federal election.¹⁹ The SITE TF “is designed to provide the Panel with unfiltered intelligence on electoral threats during the caretaker period.”²⁰

[12] These initiatives were designed to safeguard Canada's democratic processes from foreign interference, underscoring the serious concern regarding potential Russian actions during electoral periods. According to Mr. Sutherland, it was understood that Russia had a geopolitical desire to unsettle democracies, and the government became increasingly aware that this was not necessarily by picking a “winner” in elections but by destabilizing democracies more broadly.²¹ Mr. Sutherland underscored that the electoral period was a time of “particular vulnerability” for such destabilization from Russia,

¹⁶ Y. Novodvorskiy, Transcript – Day 6, Statement, pp. 83-84.

¹⁷ Y. Novodvorskiy, Transcript – Day 6, Statement, p. 83.

¹⁸ K. Gould, Transcript – Day 14, In-Ch (Morgan), p. 5; J. Trudeau, Transcript – Day 14, In-Ch (Chaudhury), p. 158; Panel of Five 2021 *In Camera* Examination Summary (WIT0000053); Panel of Five 2021 Interview Summary (WIT0000058).

¹⁹ Lead officials from SITE TF *In Camera* Examination Summary (WIT0000044), p. 2.

²⁰ Privy Council Office – Democratic Institution (A. Sutherland), Interview Summary (WIT0000040), p. 3.

²¹ A. Sutherland, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 30.

justifying the creation of the structures discussed above.²² According to Mr. Sutherland, Russia’s intent to destabilize Canadian democracy aligns with Russia’s broader geopolitical objectives of undermining democratic institutions in countries that are part of strategic alliances like the Group of Seven (G7), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (“NATO”), or Five Eyes.²³ According to Mr. Sutherland, these concerns remained true for both the 2019 and 2021 general elections.²⁴

[13] The Digital Forensic Research Lab (“DFRLab”) of the Atlantic Council also explains in its Report “Assessing the Canadian Information Environment During the 2019 Federal Election,” (the “DFRLab Report”) that Canada’s outsized diplomatic role through its commitment to international law and human rights, makes Canada a “target for cyber-attacks and information operations” and that Russia has targeted Canada in the information domain “due to Russian-Canadian tensions flowing from a variety of sources, including Canada’s leadership role in NATO and active engagement with Ukraine and Latvia, and Canada’s close military and intelligence relationship with the United States.”²⁵ As stated by then Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan in late 2018, in the context of warning voters of potential Russian interference in the 2019 Canadian election: “When we stand up for human rights, and when we stand up [...] to nations like Russia who are going against the rules-based order [...] you become a target.”²⁶

[14] The fact that Canada’s democratic institutions have been a target of Russian interference is evident from reports from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (“NSICOP”), including the 2020 NSICOP annual report, which states, under the heading of “foreign interference,” that “the Russian Federation also continues to exploit Russian diaspora and compatriot organizations in Canada.”²⁷ Also, the 2022 Special Report on the Government of Canada’s Framework and Activities to Defend its Systems and Networks from Cyber Attack from NSICOP states that:

Russia is a highly sophisticated cyber threat actor. Russia engages in malicious cyber threat activity including *** cyber espionage and foreign interference, to support a wide range of strategic intelligence priorities [including the] identification of divisive

²² A. Sutherland, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 30.

²³ A. Sutherland, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), pp. 29-31.

²⁴ A. Sutherland, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 30.

²⁵ Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 1.

²⁶ The Canadian Press, *Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan warns voters that Russia will meddle in 2019 Canadian election*, The Globe and Mail, November 18 2018: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-nato-report-urges-members-to-prepare-for-more-russian-meddling-in/>

²⁷ NSICOP, 2020 annual report (COM0000156), p. 34.

events and trends in rival states to conduct influence campaigns and undermine liberal democratic norms and values.²⁸

[15] During the Commission’s public hearings, CSIS Director David Vigneault agreed with these assessments from NSICOP and testified that there are “very clear capabilities, very clear interests and an organized approach on the part of Russia to attack democracies, including Canada.”²⁹ Highlighting the evolving nature of the Russian threat, Director Vigneault explained that “Russia specifically, is trying to undermine the world, the international rules based order to create an environment that is more susceptible to benefit their own interests.”³⁰ According to Director Vigneault, in accomplishing this objective, Russia is not as interested in picking specific individuals or parties to win, but rather in undermining democratic processes.³¹ Director Vigneault testified that “there is a very deliberate intent in how Russia executes these actions,”³² which are part of a “well integrated plan with multiple actors that are coordinated” and is “a priority” of the Russian regime.³³ CSIS described in a briefing note to the Prime Minister that “state actors are able to conduct [foreign interference] successfully in Canada because there are no consequences, either legal or political. [Foreign interference] is therefore a low-risk and high-reward endeavour.”³⁴

[16] William Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness from November 2019 to October 2021, and now Minister of National Defence, testified that he saw no evidence of interference by Russia in either the 2019 or 2021 election, but did believe that Russia was working to influence public opinion: “In either election, I’m not aware of any activity by Russia through their disinformation campaigns to influence the outcome of that election. They were influencing other types of public opinion, but I did not see evidence of it directed towards the outcome of our 2019 or 2021 elections.”³⁵ Clearly, influence of public opinion during the 2019 and 2021 electoral periods constitutes foreign interference, regardless of whether it targeted the outcome of these elections. Astonishingly, this information emerged only during the RCDA’s final question in its brief five-minute cross-examination of Minister Blair (the RCDA requested 25 minutes). Indeed, neither Minister Blair’s interview summary

²⁸ NSICOP, 2022 Special Report on the Government of Canada’s Framework and Activities to Defend its Systems and Networks from Cyber Attack (JKW0000007), p. 36.

²⁹ D. Vigneault, Transcript – Day 10, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 225 [our translation].

³⁰ D. Vigneault, Transcript – Day 10, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 224.

³¹ D. Vigneault, Transcript – Day 10, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 224.

³² D. Vigneault, Transcript – Day 10, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 225.

³³ D. Vigneault, Transcript – Day 10, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 225 [our translation].

³⁴ CSIS, October 26, 2022 Briefing Note to the Prime Minister (CAN015842), p. 3.

³⁵ W. Blair, Transcript – Day 14, Cr-Ex (Sirois), pp. 82-83.

nor his *in camera* examination summary discuss any evidence of Russian influence on public opinion during the 2019 and 2021 elections. In fact, these documents do not mention Russia at all, suggesting that Commission counsel did not discuss this country during Minister Blair’s interview or his *in camera* examination, although China is mentioned in both documents.³⁶

[17] Considering the evidence presented above, the assertion that Russia simply put on hold its attempts at interfering in Canada’s democratic institutions during the 2019 and 2021 general elections due to an alleged lack of interest in elections specifically suggests a serious and dangerous misapprehension of the Russian threat. Although Russia’s systemic approach to destabilizing democracies suggests that such threats are not confined to a single election cycle but are part of a continuous effort by Russia to erode the fabric of democratic governance in Canada, this cannot be interpreted as meaning that Russia is not interested and is not interfering in elections particularly, including the 2019 and 2021 general elections.

2.2 Evidence of Russian interference in the 2019 general election

2.2.1 Disinformation campaign “most resembling” the Russian information operations conducted against the United States in 2016

[18] Evidence of Russian interference in the 2019 general election can be found in the DFRLab Report, which constitutes a “forensic analysis of some of the Canadian information ecosystem” in the month before and three months following the 2019 general election.³⁷ During the public testimony of the Panel of Five, no witnesses from the Panel, nor counsel for the Attorney General of Canada, nor Commission counsel were able to provide details about the origins of the document, aside from the fact that it was in the government's possession and pertinent to the Commission's mandate.³⁸ Likewise, this document does not appear to have been raised by Commission counsel with any witnesses prior to the public hearings. Additionally, the Commission failed to question the Atlantic Council—the apparent author of the document—about the document itself or to request the underlying data and documentation that supported the study. These materials would have been crucial for understanding the scope of Russian interference in the 2019 general election. Given the document’s clear relevance, it is astonishing that the Commission has not pursued a deeper inquiry into its content and origins. Instead, the RCDA

³⁶ W. Blair *In Camera* Examination Summary (WIT0000063) and W. Blair Public Interview Summary (WIT0000064).

³⁷ Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 3. It is important to note that this report emphasized content on the less-trafficked Pinterest and Reddit platforms, focused only on the Anglophone content, and only on content related to the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party.

³⁸ Panel of Five 2021, Transcript – Day 12, Cr-Ex (Sirois), pp. 112-113.

was left to undertake this essential work during the live public hearings—a task that should have been addressed well before these proceedings, in line with the Commission’s mandate to examine and assess Russian interference in the 2019 general election. This oversight has resulted in a significant evidentiary gap, and because no witnesses could explain the content of this document, this gap remains unfilled.

[19] In any event, the DFRLab Report focused on two case studies:

The first regards the interchange of virulent, anti-immigrant hate speech over multiple platforms and online communities. The second regards the opportunism shown by Russian state media in its Canadian election coverage. These cases, evidencing coordinated trolling around nativist rhetoric and amplification of domestic political scandal by foreign media, **most resembled the Russian information operations conducted against the United States in 2016.**³⁹

[20] Regarding the first issue, the DFRLab Report notes a “disproportionate volume” of negative content directed at Prime Minister Trudeau and the incumbent Liberal government, with anti-Trudeau hashtags like #TrudeauMustGo “greatly exceeding the volume and intensity of hashtags targeting any political figure associated with the Conservative, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic or Green Parties.”⁴⁰ J. Broadhurst, director of the 2019 Liberal campaign, which saw the Liberal government lose 20 seats and the majority it had held since 2015, was not surprised by that finding in the DFRLab Report and testified that it “certainly felt that way sometimes during the 2019 election.”⁴¹ According to the DFRLab Report, ideologically motivated extremists coordinated to amplify the hashtag #TrudeauMustGo, resulting in approximately 34,000 tweets from about 5,000 accounts.⁴² The DFRLab Report notes that “Canadian citizens and journalists who saw the trending hashtag were left with the impression that this was an organic expression by Canadian voters.”⁴³ This echoes the “atmosphere of believability” that Mr. Novodvorskiy mentioned during his testimony, as discussed above.

[21] Regarding the second issue, the DFRLab Report notes that Russia appeared to be engaged in a “concerted anti-Trudeau editorial campaign that had gained steam since RT [Russia Today] had named Trudeau a year earlier to its list of ‘Top 10 Russophobes of 2018’.”⁴⁴ J. Broadhurst testified that he had never seen “any kind of analysis like that on the government’s side,” but that it did not “shock [him] that

³⁹ Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 10.

⁴⁰ Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 3.

⁴¹ J. Broadhurst, Transcript – Day 13, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 195.

⁴² Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 15.

⁴³ Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 15.

⁴⁴ Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 15.

this would be a conclusion that somebody could reach.”⁴⁵ One notable example is the coverage of the “blackface controversy,” where Russian media “leaned heavily into editorialization,” although reporting of that controversy from other international outlets was generally “accurate and balanced.”⁴⁶ Another example is the publication by Sputnik, a Russian media, on the even of an election, of an article about Wexit, that used “coded language,” such as “Trudeau’s ‘globalist’ agenda” and “Trudeau’s climate change ‘rethoric,’” that is “popular among ideologically motivated extremists.”⁴⁷

[22] J. Broadhurst agreed with the DFRLab Report’s conclusion that the information discussed in the that report and summarized here “most resembled” the “Russian information operations conducted against the United States in 2016,” specifying that: “To the extent that [...] similar feelings were being pushed by, you know, Russian information operations, I have not seen specific evidence of that. I would not be surprised to know that there was evidence of that, however.”⁴⁸

[23] The RCDA would not be surprised either. Regrettably, the DFRLab Report explains that despite “recording a number of suspicious digital phenomena,” it could not “confidently attribute any of these events to the operations of a foreign government,” because it lacked access to essential “technical backend data” and corroborating evidence that was not available in this case.⁴⁹ Although J. Broadhurst expressed worry that such disinformation campaigns could influence voter decisions, and “could imagine scenarios where [similar disinformation campaigns] would impact the outcome” of an election, he did not think that there was “evidence in this case to support saying that our campaign was undermined to that extent [of losing the majority in 2019].”⁵⁰

2.2.2 *The government misapprehended the Russian threat in 2019*

[24] In one of the few instances in which Russian interference is substantially mentioned in the interview summaries, a CSIS representative who was on the SITE TF 2019 indicates that “Russia has the capability to interfere in Canadian democratic structures, but it appears that Russia has little interest in doing so.”⁵¹ This assertion seems to have been accepted at face value by the Commission, as no further details on this apparent “little interest” are provided in the summary, despite clear evidence that

⁴⁵ J. Broadhurst, Transcript – Day 13, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 200.

⁴⁶ Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 15.

⁴⁷ Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 16.

⁴⁸ J. Broadhurst, Transcript – Day 13, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 197.

⁴⁹ Atlantic Council, DFRLab Report (CAN000088), p. 4.

⁵⁰ J. Broadhurst, Transcript – Day 13, Cr-Ex (Sirois), pp. 202-203.

⁵¹ Mr. King, Ms. Denham, Ms. Dobner, Mr. Gordon and CSIS, Public Interview Summary (WIT0000045), p. 8.

interfering in Canada’s democratic institutions, including elections, is one of Russia’s strategic priorities, as described above.

[25] When confronted with this apparent contradiction by the RCDA, both Mr. Lyall King, who was chair of the SITE TF during both the 2019 and 2021 general elections (and CSE representative on the SITE TF during the same period) and the CSIS representative on the SITE TF 2019, conceded that in fact they meant that Russia had “little interest” to interfere in the 2019 election specifically, not in Canadian democratic structures generally, as the summary indicated.⁵² When pushed on the issue of why Russia’s interest would suddenly disappear during the electoral period, a time of increased vulnerability for such interference, Mr. King further conceded that Russia’s “little interest” was only relative to its interest in interfering in the elections of other nations, such as the U.S., and that this “little interest” was not based on an assessment of Russia’s strategic interests, but rather on observations from CSIS and panel members.⁵³ Mr. King and the CSIS representative both recognized that although they “did not observe [from their perspective] this activity happening,” that it was not impossible that this activity did in fact occur.⁵⁴

[26] The question then becomes why the SITE TF could not observe the evidence contained in the DFRLab Report suggesting potential Russian interference. Had the Commission elicited the evidence described in the previous paragraph in advance of the SITE TF 2019’s testimony, it would have been possible for the RCDA to at least try to address this critical issue. Regrettably, the limited time allocated for “cross-examination” by the RCDA prevented further exploration of this matter with the SITE TF 2019 panel. The RCDA surmises that the SITE TF 2019 may not have detected this activity due to the inherent difficulties in identifying such covert actions and recognizing them as foreign interference.

[27] The Panel of Five seems to have accepted the premise that Russia had little interest to interfere in Canadian elections. Ms. Drouin explained that at the time, CSE in particular “was able to demonstrate that Russia had little interest in Canada’s elections.”⁵⁵ However, this assertion seems to conflate “little evidence” with “little of interest,” and as explained by Mr. King during his testimony discussed above, what CSE and CSIS really meant is that there was little evidence or observation of the phenomena. Indeed, numerous witnesses and documents clearly indicate that Russia did, in fact, have a significant

⁵² L. King and CSIS Representative, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), pp. 151 and 152.

⁵³ L. King, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 154.

⁵⁴ L. King and CSIS Representative, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), pp. 152-153.

⁵⁵ Panel of Five 2021, Transcript – Day 12, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 120.

interest in disrupting Canadian elections, directly contradicting the Panel of Five's erroneous assumption.

[28] Furthermore, the use of the adjective “little” to describe Russia's interest is misleading, particularly if it is only considered relative to that state's activities in the U.S. or other countries. While it is obvious that Russia may prioritize and allocate more resources towards influencing elections in the U.S., this does not diminish the relevance or potential impact of its efforts in Canada. The notion that Russian interference in Canada is insignificant or unworthy of attention because it is relatively small compared to its influence in the U.S. is both inaccurate and potentially dangerous. These erroneous assumptions may have caused the Panel of Five to underestimate the threat posed by Russia in the 2019 and 2021 general elections. A forensic analysis of a very limited segment of the media ecosystem conducted post-election revealed significant potential interference consistent with Russian tactics. If the Panel of Five and the SITE TF had been adequately informed about Russia's **interest** to interfere in Canada's elections, they might have taken more seriously the activities detailed in the DFRLab Report and acted upon them.

[29] Although the Panel of Five was briefed on the disinformation activity mentioned in the DFRLab Report, it could not comment on the conclusion that it “most resembled” the “Russian information operations conducted against the United States in 2016,” because “this was not a report that was prepared by the government of Canada for the Panel,” adding, that they would need “more information to comment on those particular conclusions.”⁵⁶ Ms. Morgan from the Panel of Five agreed that the DFRLab or the Atlantic Council would be the proper witnesses to provide this sort of information.

[30] This situation highlights another missed opportunity by the Commission, i.e. to (a) compel the DFRLab and the Atlantic Council to provide more information on the conclusions they reached in their report, and (b) seek to acquire the “technical backend data” or corroborating evidence, either through an informal request or by issuing a subpoena. Unfortunately, the Commission appears to have made no attempts to pursue these avenues.

⁵⁶ Panel of Five 2021, Transcript – Day 12, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 118.

3. Evidence of Russian interference in the 2021 general election

3.1.1 Advertisement campaign apparently backed by Russia

[31] There are two independent governmental agencies responsible for enforcing the *Canada Elections Act*, namely the Chief Electoral Officer and the Office of the Commissioner of Canada Elections (“OCCE”). Together, they are responsible for ensuring the integrity of federal elections.⁵⁷

[32] Despite the significant challenges for diaspora communities to share relevant information regarding foreign interference to Canadian authorities, a brave individual filed a complaint with both the OCCE and Elections Canada on or around September 1, 2021 about a video advertisement that represented false information about Prime Minister Trudeau and that appeared to originate from the Russian federation (the suffix of the URL of the advertisement was .ru).⁵⁸ The individual saw the advertisement on two separate occasions and filed two subsequent complaints.⁵⁹ However, even in that case, where an attempt at foreign influence was clear and documented and complaints filed to the OCCE and Elections Canada,⁶⁰ neither institution was able to take any serious action in response to these allegations. Further, although the OCCE apparently referred the complaint to the Rapid Response Mechanism of Canada (“RRM Canada”), neither the OCCE nor RRM Canada could confirm when such a referral was made, when RRM Canada independently became aware of this advertisement, or what actions RRM Canada took in response. The document suggests there was a discussion on November 18, 2021 (i.e. after the election) between the OCCE and RRM Canada about this advertisement, and that RRM Canada was aware of it. It was not possible for the RCDA to obtain further details, despite repeated questions and a direct follow up with the Commission, which falls squarely within the Commission’s mandate, and specifically clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of its TOR.

[33] Although the Commission indicated in an email on April 3, 2024 that “GAC witnesses will be appearing on Friday and next week to discuss topics related to the Panel of Five, the SITE TF, and RRM Canada in relation to the 2019 and 2021 general elections,” the RCDA was only informed around noon on the day of the SITE 2021 testimony (Friday, April 5, 2024) that in fact no witnesses capable of discussing RRM Canada would be called the following week. Instead, any inquiries regarding RRM Canada’s activities were to be directed to the SITE TF 2021 panel appearing that afternoon. The RCDA

⁵⁷ Stéphane Perrault and Serge Caron Interview Summary (WIT0000020), pp. 1-2; Yves Côté, Mylène Gigou and Al Mathews Interview Summary (WIT0000025), p. 5.

⁵⁸ See Investigator’s Report in OCCE Complaint 2021-0322-1, CCE Intake (CEF0000023_R2), pp. 18-19.

⁵⁹ Both complaints can be found in CCE Intake (CEF0000023_R2), pp. 1 and 10.

⁶⁰ *Canada Elections Act*, SC 2000, c 9, section 282.4.

could not have guessed that the SITE TF 2021 panel would be the only set of witnesses able to speak about the work of RRM Canada, given the much broader scope of the SITE TF’s responsibilities and the critical role RRM Canada played in detecting foreign interference online.

[34] Consequently, the RCDA was unable to give advance notice of the key document concerning the complaint discussed above to the SITE TF 2021 panel and was expecting its “cross-examination” to address broader issues. Since the Commission had seemingly not raised any questions about potential Russian interference raised in the OCCE complaint prior to the SITE TF 2021 testimony, the RRM Canada representative and the panel were, unsurprisingly, unable to provide any substantial additional details on that probable Russian interference during the 2021 general election.⁶¹

[35] On December 23, 2021, the OCCE closed the file and took no action due to “insufficient grounds or evidence” because “the ad could not be located” and because the OCCE could not “determine the source of the ad.”⁶² This is not a surprising outcome considering that it is “almost impossible” for the OCCE to investigate and prosecute foreign interference when it originates from a country like China or Russia.⁶³ It remains unclear how RRM Canada or the SITE TF 2021 panel responded or even whether they had the capability to replicate or investigate this advertisement. Mr. King did indicate that the CSE does not “typically look at this sort of thing.”⁶⁴

3.1.2 Amplification of People’s Party of Canada and divisive content

[36] RRM Canada was tasked with monitoring the digital information environment for signs of foreign state-sponsored disinformation during the 2019 and 2021 general elections. This included analyzing trends and identifying potentially harmful activities that could influence public perception and electoral outcomes. RRM Canada contracted out its social media monitoring to an external private consulting firm, Yonder, and to the Media Ecosystem Observatory, a research initiative hosted by McGill. RRM Canada prepared weekly reports outlining its conclusions, based on the observations of these two contractors. These reports suggest an evolution in that disinformation campaign from initial exploratory actions to a more pronounced and sustained engagement focused on the People’s Party of Canada (“PPC”) and divisive content more generally.

⁶¹ SITE TF, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), pp. 245-246.

⁶² See Investigator’s Report in OCCE Complaint 2021-0322-1 (CEF0000023_R2), pp. 18-19.

⁶³ Y. Côté, Transcript – Day 7, In-Ch (Ferguson), p. 143 [our translation].

⁶⁴ SITE TF, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 246.

[37] RRM Canada’s weekly report #3, for the week of September 2 to 8, 2021 indicates that “RRM Canada did not observe **significant trends** of foreign states-sponsored information manipulation in its monitoring of the broader Canadian digital information ecosystem” during the reporting period.⁶⁵ The report further highlights that Yonder identified “accounts that may be associated with Russian state-sponsored actors.” These accounts, on a “very small scale,” amplified content from two candidates of the PPC focusing specifically on anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown messages. Yonder judged that Russian actors may be testing the Canadian information environment to determine “what narratives may gain traction within broader discussions of Canadian politics.”⁶⁶

[38] RRM Canada’s weekly report #4, for the week of September 9 to 15, 2021 indicates that “RRM Canada did not observe **any clear evidence** of foreign states-sponsored information manipulation in its monitoring of the broader Canadian digital information ecosystem” during the reporting period.⁶⁷ According to that report, during that period, Yonder has seen “less engagement from accounts that generally amplify Chinese state sources but more engagement from accounts that generally amplify Russian state sources.”⁶⁸ According to the summary prepared by RRM Canada, Yonder reports that “both Chinese and Russian state and state-aligned accounts **generally** show low levels of engagement **overall, often** single accounts and only a few tweets.” Again, Yonder notes that “Russia-friendly accounts amplify Peoples [sic] Part [sic] of Canada-related content.”⁶⁹

[39] According to the testimony of the representative of RRM Canada on the SITE TF 2021 panel, the change of terminology from “significant trends” to “any clear evidence” was a deliberate choice and represented a rise in a supposed Chinese disinformation campaign targeting Kenny Chiu, Erin O’Toole and the Conservative Party of Canada (“CPC”).⁷⁰ However, Ms. Gallit Dobner, representative from RRM Canada on the SITE TF 2021 did not think that the change of wording from “on very small scale” to “generally show low levels of engagement overall, often” was deliberate.⁷¹ Ms. Dobner also clarified that RRM Canada did not have access to Yonder’s methodology, which was proprietary information, thereby limiting it’s ability to understand or recreate Yonder’s results.⁷² Due to a lack of “cross-

⁶⁵ RRM Canada’s Weekly Report #3 (CAN000125), p. 1.

⁶⁶ RRM Canada’s Weekly Report #3 (CAN000125), p. 2.

⁶⁷ RRM Canada’s Weekly Report #3 (CAN000125), p. 1.

⁶⁸ RRM Canada’s Weekly Report #3 (CAN000125), p. 2.

⁶⁹ RRM Canada’s Weekly Report #4 (CAN000134), p. 2.

⁷⁰ G. Dobner, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 248.

⁷¹ G. Dobner, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 249.

⁷² G. Dobner, Transcript – Day 11, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 250.

examination” time, it was not possible to address the apparent contradictions surrounding these statements, including the fact that Yonder monitoring seemed to attribute the same level of engagement to both Chinese and Russian backed amplification (with Russian disinformation gaining traction in the final week leading up to the election).⁷³

[40] The Commission’s failure to engage with the Yonder firm, despite a request from the RCDA, or to request the reports, working products, or underlying data associated with the RRM Canada summaries means the RCDA is left in the dark about the exact implications of the vague statements these summaries contain. This oversight represents yet another substantial evidentiary gap.

[41] The evidence above and the testimony from Mr. O’Toole suggest that Russian interference, through the amplification of PPC-related content, may have contributed to the electoral challenges faced by the CPC during the 2021 election. According to Mr. O’Toole, “in the final days leading up to the election, the CPC saw its projected seat count drop,” which Mr. O’Toole attributes to the COVID-19 vaccine issue and vote gains by the PPC.⁷⁴ Mr. O’Toole testified that “there was always a fear that some of the troll farms and some of the Russian influence was boosting some of the messages from the PPC” during the 2021 election, including anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown content.⁷⁵ Mr. O’Toole added that the period of September 9 to 15, 2021, when the Yonder firm and RRM Canada note an increase in the amplification of PPC-related content by Russia-friendly accounts, was when the momentum of the Conservative Party stopped in terms of projected seat counts.⁷⁶

[42] Mr. O’Toole explained that during the 2021 election, the CPC was “very, very strongly opposed to the Putin regime, as was the Trudeau government,”⁷⁷ noting that he and previous leader Andrew Sheer had been banned from Russia. With respect to the PPC, Mr. O’Toole indicated having “a lot of concern of PCC and some of the far-right narratives in the United States, particularly with respect to funding the war in Ukraine being very influenced by Russian propaganda and social media manipulation.”⁷⁸ Mr.

⁷³ RRM Canada’s Report #5, for the week of September 16 to 23, 2021 (post-election) continued to show consistent patterns where Russian-friendly accounts amplify PPC-related content, indicating a sustained attempt to influence Canadian electoral outcome, see RRM Canada’s Weekly Report #5 (CAN000141).

⁷⁴ E. O’Toole Interview Summary (WIT0000024), p. 5, para 24.

⁷⁵ E. O’Toole, Transcript – Day 9, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 56.

⁷⁶ E. O’Toole, Transcript – Day 9, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 57.

⁷⁷ E. O’Toole, Transcript – Day 9, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 59.

⁷⁸ E. O’Toole, Transcript – Day 9, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 60.

O'Toole added "I do think Mr. Bernier tries to harness some of these forces. Whether accidentally or whether it's coordinated I can't speak to."⁷⁹

[43] Asked whether, after having heard this evidence regarding potential Russian interference in the 2021 election for the first time, he still believed that the SITE TF 2021 and the Panel of Five (CEIPP) failed in their "duty to inform and warn,"⁸⁰ Mr. O'Toole, stated: "Yes, absolutely. [...] I never really gave as much thought to the potential for Russian interference or other forms of interference, but that's what I think is a good thing about the mandate of this Inquiry is it can look broader than just the issue of China. Some of what I'm seeing now in the RRM reporting is equally concerning about Russia."⁸¹

[44] This disinformation campaign in 2021 was not only targeted against the CPC, which seems to support the assessment that Russia was not trying to favor any candidate or party, but rather to promote divisive content generally. This assessment is deeply problematic however, as it is underestimating opportunistic political parties that try "to harness some of these forces" (to use Mr. O'Toole's words), like the PPC. Beyond the amplification of divisive content, there are even indications in the RRM Canada reports discussed above that Russia directly supported PPC candidates and narratives, which is perhaps even more troubling.

[45] Prime Minister Trudeau, testified that, in his capacity as leader of the Liberal Party during the election campaigns, he "saw a lot of disinformation campaigns, more in 2021 than in 2019, but that whether at the level of conspiracy theories in relation to vaccination, whether at the level of conspiracy theories in relation to the World Economic Forum or others, or personal attacks against me and my family, yes, there have been misinformation and disinformation during this campaign... these campaigns."⁸² This suggests that a disinformation campaign of greater magnitude than in 2019 (that "most resembled" the "Russian information operations conducted against the United States in 2016") was targeting the Liberal Party in 2021.

[46] Asked whether CSE could determine if a disinformation campaign amplified by "Russia-friendly accounts" could originate or be influenced by Russia, Dan Rogers, who was Deputy Chief, signals intelligence at CSE during the 2019 and 2021 elections and now Deputy NSIA to the Prime Minister,

⁷⁹ E. O'Toole, Transcript – Day 9, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 60.

⁸⁰ E. O'Toole Interview Summary (WIT0000024), p. 10, para 49.

⁸¹ E. O'Toole, Transcript – Day 9, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 61.

⁸² J. Trudeau, Transcript – Day 14, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 255 [our translation].

said that he “can’t rule it out,” as CSE did not have intelligence to confirm that it was not a Russian campaign.⁸³ Mr. David Morrison testified that the online space is “devilishly difficult,” because of the challenges associated with attributing disinformation campaigns to a foreign entity, but also because of the challenges in dissociating authentic political discourse and inauthentic disinformation campaigns.⁸⁴ The RCDA submits that the task's complexity is no reason to neglect this existential threat, and not at least try to assess seriously whether Russia was in fact behind these disinformation campaigns, if not contemporaneously, at least after the facts. While Prime Minister Trudeau carefully avoided confirming clearly that these disinformation campaigns influenced some voters, he did recognize that “certainly social media played an important role in these two elections”⁸⁵ and that “we see that misinformation and disinformation have an impact on a lot of people,” including on the “thousands of Canadians who believed that vaccination was more dangerous than the COVID-19 disease itself.”⁸⁶

[47] All this evidence strongly suggests that Russia may have been responsible for amplifying divisive content during the 2021 campaign, which could have significantly benefited the PPC, which saw its vote share triple from 1.6% to 4.9%. This activity potentially undermined both the CPC, which failed to secure enough seats to form a government, and the Liberal Party, which fell short of a majority.

3.1.3 The government failed to communicate or investigate key information

[48] The September 15, 2021, SITE TF Update describes in general terms Russia's interference efforts.⁸⁷ It appears, however, that the Panel of Five was not briefed on the potential Russian disinformation campaign discussed in the RRM weekly reports. The Panel was therefore not able to give specific information about these reports, with Ms. Morgan suggesting that what the summary meant by “generally,” “overall,” or “often,” would be better asked either to the experts at the RRM or to the Yonder firm.⁸⁸ The RCDA agrees and does not understand why the Commission has not pursued this obvious line of inquiry regarding a potential Russian disinformation campaign.

[49] Nathalie Drouin, who was an observer on the Panel of Five in her capacity as Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council and Associate Secretary to the Cabinet during the 2021 general election,⁸⁹ agreed that

⁸³ D. Rogers, Transcript – Day 10, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 102.

⁸⁴ D. Morrison, Transcript – Day 10, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 26.

⁸⁵ J. Trudeau, Transcript – Day 14, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 255.

⁸⁶ J. Trudeau, Transcript – Day 14, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 255.

⁸⁷ SITE TF Update to the Panel of Five, September 15, 2021 (CAN005824), p. 6.

⁸⁸ Panel of Five, Transcript – Day 12, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 212.

⁸⁹ Panel of Five 2021, Interview Summary (WIT0000058), p. 2.

the potential Chinese amplification campaign mentioned in the weekly report of September 9 to 15 “completely aligned with” the disinformation campaign targeting Kenny Chiu, about which the Panel of Five was informed.⁹⁰ When the Panel members were asked why they had not been informed about the apparent Russian disinformation campaign mentioned in the weekly report, which seems to be of similar magnitude, the Panel could not provide a satisfactory explanation and said that there may have been intelligence coming from other sources, such as the Five Eyes partners, that would have contradicted this summary, even though (1) the Five Eyes do not monitor social media of Canadians, (2) no specific information has been provided about this supposed contradictory intelligence; (3) even if there was contradictory intelligence, RRM Canada was not even aware of Yonder’s methodology, which would have made it very difficult or impossible to judge which information was more reliable; and (4) in any event, the SITE TF was designed to provide unfiltered information to the Panel.⁹¹

[50] Curiously, the SITE TF 2021 reported a Chinese disinformation campaign to the Panel but remained silent about the Russian efforts, which appeared to intensify in the last days of the elections, coinciding with a projected seat count drop from the CPC. The RCDA can only hypothesize that the Chinese campaign was noted because it targeted specific individuals like Kenny Chiu. In contrast, the broader and unspecific Russian disinformation campaign might have been dismissed as part of normal political discourse, indicating a potential oversight or underestimation by the SITE TF and the Panel of Five. It is perhaps unsurprising that in a briefing note dated October 26, 2022 to Prime Minister Trudeau, CSIS reported that “there is much to do on developing effective responses to foreign interference.”⁹²

[51] Despite apparent significant disinformation campaigns likely backed by Russia to amplify content related to the PPC and sow divisiveness, these issues were seemingly overlooked by the Panel of Five and the SITE TF. Prime Minister Trudeau, as chief of the Liberal Party during the 2021 electoral campaign presumed that these groups were effectively doing their jobs of monitoring and countering these disinformation campaigns. This has proven to be a wrong assumption. Meanwhile, Mr. O’Toole was primarily concerned with China at the time, although he acknowledged the seriousness of Russia’s potential interference after being exposed to the RRM weekly reports for the first time during RCDA’s “cross-examination.” Ideally, these issues regarding the 2021 general election would have been

⁹⁰ Panel of Five, Transcript – Day 12, Cr-Ex (Sirois), pp. 213 and 214; RRM Canada’s Report #4 (CAN000134), p. 2.

⁹¹ Privy Council Office – Democratic Institution (A. Sutherland), Interview Summary (WIT000040), p. 3.

⁹² CSIS, October 26, 2022 Briefing Note to the Prime Minister (CAN015842), p. 3.

thoroughly investigated by the Commission before the public hearings, including by questioning the Yonder firm and obtaining the records supporting its conclusions.

4. Call to immediate action

[52] Given the significant threat posed by foreign interference on “our democratic institutions, political system, fundamental rights and freedom under the *Charter* and ultimately, our sovereignty,⁹³ and most significantly on diaspora communities,⁹⁴ it is remarkable that key figures and organizations appear to have underestimated Russian interference during the 2019 and 2021 general elections. A briefing note to Prime Minister Trudeau prepared by CSIS sheds some light on the explanation for this apparent oversight, by stating that the “government’s ability to respond to this threat is currently hampered by the lack of legislation, including criminal law and an intelligence-to-evidence framework, and a whole-of-government approach.”⁹⁵ This note also calls on the government to “do more to protect Canada’s robust democratic institutions and processes.”⁹⁶ The RCDA echoes that call.

[53] Due to the Commission's failure to thoroughly investigate Russian interference in the 2019 and 2021 general elections—a major issue highlighted throughout these submissions and during the Commission’s proceedings—and given that the Stage 1 hearings have generated more questions than answers about potential Russian interference, along with the profound potential impact of such interference on Canada’s democratic institutions and on the diaspora, the RCDA strongly urges the Commission to undertake the following actions: (1) Delay any conclusions regarding Russian interference in the 2019 and 2021 elections in the interim report; (2) Actively seek out and collect evidence from relevant organizations and witnesses knowledgeable about possible Russian interference in these elections, including from Yonder, the Atlantic Council and social media companies; and (3) Convene public hearings focused exclusively on Russian interference, featuring testimony from the aforementioned organizations, government officials, and representatives from RRM Canada. In the alternative, the RCDA urges the government to undertake these crucial steps to restore and enhance the trust of the public and the Russian diaspora in our democratic institutions.

⁹³ CSIS, October 26, 2022 Briefing Note to the Prime Minister (CAN015842), p. 3; D. Vigneault testified that the general conclusions mentioned in this Briefing Note applied equally to Russian interference, see D. Vigneault, Transcript – Day 15, Cr-Ex (Sirois), pp. 44-45.

⁹⁴ Y. Novodvorskiy, Transcript – Day 6, Statement; D. Vigneault, Transcript – Day 4, Cr-Ex (Sirois), p. 132.

⁹⁵ CSIS, October 26, 2022 Briefing Note to the Prime Minister (CAN015842), p. 3.

⁹⁶ CSIS, October 26, 2022 Briefing Note to the Prime Minister (CAN015842), p. 4.