



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

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

Public Hearing

Audience publique

**Commissioner / Commissaire
The Honourable / L'honorable
Marie-Josée Hogue**

VOLUME 6

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II Appearances / Comparutions

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III

Appearances / Comparutions

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Ukrainian Canadian Congress	Donald Bayne Jon Doody
Government of Canada	Gregory Tzemenakis Barney Brucker
Office of the Commissioner of Canada Elections	Christina Maheux Luc Boucher Nancy Miles
Human Rights Coalition	Hannah Taylor Sarah Teich
Russian Canadian Democratic Alliance	Mark Power Guillaume Sirois
Michael Chan	John Chapman Andy Chan
Han Dong	Mark Polley Emily Young Jeffrey Wang
Michael Chong	Gib van Ert Fraser Harland
Jenny Kwan	Sujit Choudhry Mani Kakkar

IV Appearances / Comparutions

Churchill Society

Malliha Wilson

The Pillar Society

Daniel Stanton

Democracy Watch

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Nick Papageorge

Canada's NDP

Lucy Watson

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Nando de Luca

Chinese Canadian Concern Group on
The Chinese Communist Party's
Human Rights Violations

Neil Chantler

Erin O'Toole

Thomas W. Jarmyn
Preston Lim

Senator Yuen Pau Woo

Yuen Pau Woo

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Ottawa, Ontario

--- L'audience débute le mercredi 27 mars 2024 à 9 h 30

The hearing begins Wednesday, March 27, 2024 at 9:30 a.m.

THE REGISTRAR: Order, please. À l'ordre, s'il vous plait.

This sitting of the Foreign Interference Commission is now in session. Commissioner Hogue is presiding.

Cette séance de la Commission sur l'ingérence étrangère est maintenant en cours. La commissaire Hogue préside.

The time is 9:30 a.m. Il est 9 h 30.

COMMISSAIRE HOGUE: Alors, bonjour à toutes et à tous. Alors, aujourd'hui marque l'ouverture de la deuxième série d'audiences publiques de la Commission d'enquête sur l'ingérence étrangère dans les processus électoraux et les institutions démocratiques fédérales.

Je tiens à souligner que ces audiences se tiennent sur un territoire traditionnel du peuple algonquin anichinabé.

Je suis Marie-Josée Hogue. Certains d'entre vous le savent déjà, et j'ai été nommée commissaire pour présider les travaux de la Commission et les mener à bon port, étant, bien évidemment, assistée d'un groupe de professionnels compétents et aguerris.

L'équipe d'avocats et d'avocates est dirigée par Me Shantona Chaudhury que plusieurs d'entre vous ont déjà rencontrée.

1 Où que vous soyez, je vous souhaite la
2 bienvenue et je vous remercie de l'intérêt que vous portez
3 aux travaux de la Commission. Il témoigne de l'importance que
4 vous accordez à notre démocratie et aux valeurs qui sont les
5 nôtres.

6 Après avoir tenu plus tôt cette année des
7 audiences publiques préliminaires portant sur les enjeux
8 découlant de l'obligation de maximiser la transparence tout
9 en protégeant la confidentialité des informations liées à la
10 sécurité nationale, la Commission entame aujourd'hui des
11 audiences publiques portant sur des questions qui sont au
12 cœur de son mandat. Il s'agit d'abord d'évaluer et d'examiner
13 l'ingérence étrangère ayant possiblement eu lieu lors des
14 élections générales de 2019 et de 2021 et, le cas échéant,
15 les répercussions que cette ingérence a pu avoir sur
16 l'intégrité de ces élections.

17 Cet aspect de nos travaux est fondamental
18 puisqu'il permettra de mieux comprendre les menaces
19 auxquelles nos processus démocratiques ont pu être
20 confrontés, ce qui nous sera utile notamment lorsque viendra
21 le temps de formuler des recommandations pour renforcer la
22 protection de ces mêmes processus démocratiques.

23 Il s'agit ensuite d'examiner et d'évaluer, le
24 cas échéant, la façon dont l'information relative à cette
25 ingérence étrangère a circulé au sein de l'appareil
26 gouvernemental fédéral et vers les élus durant les périodes
27 électorales et au cours des semaines qui ont suivi les
28 élections, ainsi, évidemment, que les mesures qui ont été

1 prises en réaction à cette information. Ce volet est aussi
2 très important puisqu'il ne suffit pas d'identifier les
3 menaces, il faut aussi y répondre efficacement.

4 Les constats que nous tirerons à l'issue de
5 ces audiences seront également fort utiles lorsque, dans une
6 phase ultérieure des travaux, nous étudierons l'ingérence
7 étrangère dans les processus électoraux et les institutions
8 démocratiques de façon plus large, ainsi que la capacité de
9 l'appareil gouvernemental à la détecter et à y faire face.

10 Je compte d'ailleurs sur les avocats pour
11 respecter le cadre que la Commission a mis en place et ne pas
12 empiéter sur ce qui fera l'objet du second volet des travaux.

13 During the preliminary hearings, we had the
14 opportunity to discuss at length the challenges of
15 reconciling the principles of openness and transparency that
16 characterize a Commission of Inquiry with the need to protect
17 Canada's national security interests. I think it is
18 appropriate to highlight some of the findings reached through
19 this exercise.

20 I am well aware that some people will feel
21 that too much information is being kept secret while others
22 may feel that too much information is being disclosed. I
23 would ask the public to remember that although it may be
24 difficult, if not impossible, to strike the perfect balance,
25 the Commission is constantly striving to maximize the
26 transparency of its work.

27 On the one hand, no one can reasonably
28 challenge the fact that the public and journalists who work

1 to inform the public have a vested interest in knowing
2 whether Canada's democratic process have been targeted by
3 foreign actors and whether their actions had an impact on the
4 election integrity.

5 The process adopted by this inquiry must,
6 therefore, be as transparent as possible and lead to a report
7 that can be reviewed, understood and weighed by the public.
8 Many have stressed this point, and I share this view.

9 On the other hand, it is clear that both the
10 government and the public clearly have a compelling interest
11 in preserving and protecting the confidentiality of
12 information, the disclosure of which could damage our
13 national interest and that a public inquiry that will reveal
14 highly sensitive information could, depending on the
15 circumstances, do more harm than good. Some witnesses have
16 explained why.

17 The lesson here is that if openness and
18 transparency are virtues, so is secrecy in certain
19 circumstances. Let me explain.

20 Lorsque le secret vise des informations
21 détenues par le gouvernement, le secret est souvent considéré
22 avec suspicion. Pourtant, il faut reconnaître qu'il existe un
23 intérêt public très grand à protéger certaines formes de
24 secret. Ainsi, les audiences préliminaires ont notamment
25 démontré qu'il peut être nécessaire d'empêcher la divulgation
26 de certains types d'informations pour que le Canada puisse
27 poursuivre des activités qui sont vitales pour assurer sa
28 sécurité nationale ou encore pour respecter ses engagements

1 internationaux.

2 Elles ont aussi démontré que cela est
3 particulièrement vrai dans le domaine de l'ingérence
4 étrangère puisqu'il est possible que des acteurs étatiques
5 étrangers sophistiqués soient eux-mêmes engagés dans la
6 collecte d'informations sur le Canada et sur ses citoyens.

7 Il faut en effet être conscient que toute
8 information divulguée publiquement dans le cadre de la
9 présente enquête deviendra connue, non seulement des
10 Canadiens, mais aussi d'états et d'organisations ayant des
11 intérêts opposés à ceux du Canada. Il s'agit d'une réalité
12 dont la Commission doit tenir compte. Les informations
13 susceptibles de révéler les sources de renseignements, les
14 moyens de collecte ou les cibles des enquêtes sont, dans un
15 tel contexte, particulièrement sensibles. Leur divulgation à
16 des acteurs hostiles pourrait causer de graves préjudices à
17 la fois aux citoyens et au Canada dans son ensemble.

18 Cela pourrait diminuer notre capacité à
19 détecter et à répondre à l'ingérence étrangère.

20 Cela ne veut toutefois pas dire que toutes
21 les informations liées à la sécurité nationale sont
22 intrinsèquement secrètes ou doivent être tenues à l'écart du
23 public. Loin de là. Informer et renseigner la population, au
24 contraire, m'apparaît primordial puisque cela lui permettra...
25 nous permettra de reconnaître les tentatives d'ingérence
26 étrangère et de mieux y faire face. Cela augmentera ainsi sa
27 résilience, ce qui permettra de diminuer l'impact de
28 l'ingérence étrangère.

1 Cependant, ceux qui ont témoigné lors des
2 audiences préliminaires, tout comme les participants qui ont
3 formulé des observations à l'issue de celle-ci, s'accordent
4 généralement à dire qu'au moins certaines informations liées
5 à la sécurité nationale doivent être tenues secrètes, et cela
6 inclut certaines informations qui sont pertinentes pour le
7 mandat de la Commission.

8 Je ne suis certes pas la première commissaire
9 à devoir prendre en compte les intérêts de la sécurité
10 nationale dans le cadre d'une enquête publique, mais il
11 existe peu d'exemples, voire aucun, d'une enquête dont le
12 mandat est aussi étroitement lié au secret d'État que celle-
13 ci.

14 Certains témoignages nous ont aussi permis de
15 comprendre que d'autres motifs peuvent également justifier le
16 secret et devoir être mis en balance avec l'intérêt public
17 pour de la transparence.

18 The first reason stems from concerns
19 expressed by members of certain diasporas communities and by
20 others who may be the targets of foreign interference
21 activities. People who are subject to transnational
22 repression by foreign regimes may have very real fears in
23 speaking publicly about their experiences and, as a result,
24 the Commission will likely have to offer some witnesses
25 protections that are at odds with fully open proceedings.

26 The second reason is the need to protect
27 ongoing criminal investigations or proceedings or any other
28 investigation. I am not referring to the present inquiry,

1 but to other potentially open investigations. Here again,
2 the necessity of following the investigation to conclude may
3 justify keeping some information confidential.

4 The Commission's Terms of Reference expressly
5 require it to carry out its duties in such a way as not to
6 jeopardize any ongoing criminal investigation or proceedings
7 or any other proceeding. Thus, throughout these hearings, I
8 will take all these interests into account and endeavour to
9 balance them fairly and effectively.

10 I want to emphasize that, up to now,
11 confidentiality related to national security issues has in no
12 way hindered my ability to search for the truth. The
13 Commission has had access to a large number of classified
14 documents in their entirety, meaning without the redaction
15 needed to protect national security. In fact,
16 confidentiality imperatives has so far not prevented us from
17 doing the work we have been tasked to do, but they do pose
18 real difficulties as I endeavour to keep the process
19 transparent and open.

20 The Commission must walk a very fine line in
21 its work. As such, the present public hearings following
22 other hearings that held to be held recently *in camera*.
23 Essentially, the Attorney General of Canada requested that
24 certain evidence be received in the absence of the
25 participants and the public since, in his view, it contained
26 information that will be detrimental to national security if
27 disclosed.

28 After hearing *in camera* the submissions from

1 counsel for the Attorney General, I concluded that I should
2 allow the request and agreed to receive the evidence via *in*
3 *camera* hearings. I issued a ruling to this effect, which can
4 be read on the Commission's website where it is published in
5 full.

6 The Commission recently held six days of *in*
7 *camera* hearings where evidence was led. As part of our
8 ongoing commitment to transparency, the Commission is
9 preparing summaries of these hearings held *in camera* which
10 will be produced in the course of the present public
11 hearings.

12 In addition, when I felt that some of the
13 information provided during these *in camera* hearings could be
14 made public without unduly jeopardizing national security and
15 that this information will be useful for the public to
16 understand what happened during the last two elections, I
17 asked Commission counsel to ensure that this information is
18 reintroduced in evidence at these public hearings.

19 The Commission is making and will continue to
20 make every effort to ensure that the public has access to as
21 much information as possible.

22 C'est dans ce contexte et compte tenu de ces
23 impératifs que la Commission a opté pour des règles de preuve
24 et de procédures souples qui, je l'espère, lui permettront
25 d'atteindre certains de ses objectifs : rechercher la vérité,
26 entendre des points de vue différents, voire divergents,
27 informer adéquatement le public et protéger la sécurité
28 nationale et la sécurité personnelle de certaines personnes

1 vulnérables. Ainsi, vous constaterez au cours des prochains
2 jours que la preuve ne sera pas toujours administrée selon
3 les règles généralement applicables devant les tribunaux.

4 J'estime en effet que les règles habituelles,
5 qui sont pourtant essentielles dans d'autres forums, seraient
6 trop rigides dans le cadre de la présente Commission.
7 Certains acteurs hostiles sont en effet susceptibles de
8 s'intéresser à certains de ceux qui témoigneront, ce qui
9 nécessite la mise en place de mesures protectrices, et
10 plusieurs des documents et des informations qui doivent être
11 examinés sont des documents classifiés, ce qui empêche de les
12 divulguer intégralement et nous oblige à être créatifs pour
13 néanmoins communiquer le maximum possible de leur contenu.

14 Les parties, via leurs avocats, ont déjà été
15 informées des règles de preuve qui seront applicables et
16 Me Chaudhury en exposera les grandes lignes dans quelques
17 minutes.

18 Je souligne toutefois dès maintenant que
19 certains témoins travaillant au sein du Service de
20 renseignement ne seront pas identifiés. Compte tenu des
21 enjeux de sécurité que cela peut soulever, il est inhabituel
22 que des employés de ce service qui sont inconnus du public
23 témoignent publiquement. Les avocats de la Commission leur
24 ont demandé de le faire, mais pour écarter les risques que
25 cela pose à leur sécurité, j'ai permis que leur identité soit
26 protégée. Ils ont, dans ce contexte, accepté de témoigner.

27 Cela dit, ceux qui occupent les plus hautes
28 fonctions au sein des agences de renseignement témoigneront

1 et seront, eux, identifiés.

2 Comme je l'ai déjà mentionné à quelques
3 reprises, la Commission doit réaliser ses travaux dans un
4 délai serré, et c'est un euphémisme. Ainsi, le temps qui sera
5 accordé aux parties pour contre-interroger les témoins est
6 nécessairement limité. Voulant être juste et équitable, la
7 Commission a opté pour la règle du 1 pour 1, c'est-à-dire que
8 les parties et les intervenants auxquels j'ai accordé le
9 droit de contre-interroger auront collectivement le même
10 temps pour interroger... pour contre-interroger un témoin –
11 pardon – que le temps dont les avocats de la Commission ont
12 bénéficié pour interroger ce même témoin.

13 Usant de son meilleur jugement, la Commission
14 déterminera la façon dont ce temps de contre-interrogatoire
15 sera partagé par l'ensemble des parties. Elle invite
16 toutefois les parties et les intervenants concernés à se
17 concerter pour identifier lesquels parmi eux auront le plus
18 grand intérêt à contre-interroger un témoin donné et elle
19 leur permet de convenir d'un partage différent de celui que
20 la Commission prévoira. Il s'agit là, bien évidemment, d'une
21 suggestion, mais qui a comme objectif d'éviter qu'une
22 multitude de contre-interrogatoires courts et superficiels
23 soient menés pour plutôt favoriser un petit nombre de contre-
24 interrogatoires, certes plus longs, mais plus efficaces et
25 plus utiles. Évidemment, seuls les avocats des participants
26 pourront faire en sorte que cet objectif soit atteint.

27 En travaillant avec les avocats de la
28 Commission à la préparation des présentes audiences, j'ai

1 d'ailleurs réalisé à quel point la Commission doit pouvoir
2 compter sur la collaboration de tous les participants pour
3 assurer la transparence et maximiser l'information qu'elle
4 fournira au public.

5 J'en appelle donc à votre créativité et à
6 votre flexibilité à tous, pour nous permettre de combiner
7 tous les intérêts en jeu. Bien qu'en dernière analyse, il
8 m'appartiendra évidemment de déterminer si les processus
9 permettent d'atteindre l'équilibre nécessaire entre le fort
10 intérêt du public pour l'ouverture et la transparence et la
11 nécessité de préserver la sécurité nationale et la sécurité
12 personnelle de certaines personnes, je compte sur vous tous
13 pour m'appuyer dans l'atteinte de cet équilibre.

14 I now turn to what's on the menu for the next
15 coming days.

16 Today, after short presentations by
17 Commission counsel, we will be hearing the perspectives of
18 representatives from various diaspora communities who will
19 provide insights essential to our work. In a panel
20 discussion, they will give us a better understanding of
21 certain sociopolitical issues, and the way in which foreign
22 interference manifest itself towards some of their members.
23 In particular, they will share their experiences and what the
24 consequences have been.

25 We will then hear from some 40 witnesses,
26 including representatives of intelligence agencies; current
27 and former elected officials; political parties'
28 representatives; Elections Canada; the Office of the

1 Commissioner of Canada Elections; senior public servants;
2 Cabinet Ministers; and from the Prime Minister.

3 These witnesses will first be questioned by
4 Commission counsel. Then they will be cross-examined by all
5 or some of the participants' counsel, based on the agreed
6 allocation of time.

7 Counsel representing a witness will also have
8 the opportunity to examine this witness, and Commission
9 counsel will have the right to re-examine if they see fit.

10 Following these hearings, participants will
11 be invited to make submission. The time allotted for this
12 will be short, which is inevitable given the tight deadlines
13 imposed on the Commission, but it will, nevertheless, allow
14 everyone to share their point of view.

15 I would like to thank the participants and
16 their counsels who, dealing with strict time constraints
17 stemming from these same tight deadlines, have rolled up
18 their sleeves, and so far have shown remarkable availability.
19 These are demanding conditions for all concerned, but they
20 are justified by the importance of the subject matter and the
21 need to draw valuable conclusions and make recommendations as
22 quickly as possible.

23 Everyone here has shown a great willingness
24 to cooperate and to help rather than hinder the Commission.
25 This professionalism is a credit to you, counsel, and I thank
26 you.

27 I now give the floor to lead counsel,
28 Shaudhury.

1 Thank you.

2 --- OPENING STATEMENT BY/DÉCLARATION D'OUVERTURE PAR Ms.

3 SHANTONA CHAUDHURY:

4 **MS. CHAUDHURY:** Thank you, Commissioner.

5 Good morning. My name is Shantona Chaudhury,
6 and I am lead counsel to the Foreign Interference Commission.

7 Bonjour à tous, je m'appelle Shantona
8 Chaudhury, et je suis procureur en chef de la Commission sur
9 l'ingérence étrangère.

10 I'm going to take the next few minutes to
11 outline what you can expect to see over the next weeks as
12 these hearings unfold. Let me begin by addressing the scope
13 of the hearing.

14 As the Commissioner explained, these hearings
15 and the Commissioner's first report, are about clauses
16 A(1)(A) and A(1)(B) of the Commission's Terms of Reference;
17 that is to say, allegations of foreign interference in the
18 2019 and 2021 general elections and their impact, as well as
19 information flow to senior decision-makers and actions taken
20 in response in the periods leading up to the elections and the
21 periods immediately following the elections. Thus, the
22 evidence that will be adduced in the coming weeks will
23 pertain specifically to these matters, and the examinations
24 of witnesses will likewise focus specifically on them.

25 Issues and evidence that don't fall squarely
26 within the parameters of the 2019 and 2021 general elections,
27 will be left to Stage 2 of the Commission's investigation.

28 As a reminder, Stage 2, which corresponds to

1 Clause A(1) (C) of the Commission's Terms of Reference, asks
2 the Commission to examine more broadly Canada's ability to
3 detect, deter, and counter foreign interference.

4 So what happens over the next few weeks
5 should really be seen as a step in the Commission's ongoing
6 investigation and work.

7 Je vais maintenant vous donner un bref aperçu
8 du déroulement des deux prochaines semaines d'audience qui
9 nous attendent. Aujourd'hui, nous commencerons par trois
10 présentations des avocats de la Commission, lesquelles sont
11 destinées à fournir un contexte et à aider les participants
12 et le public à comprendre la preuve qui sera administrée lors
13 de ces audiences.

14 La première présentation portera sur un
15 nombre de définitions qui figureront dans le mandat de la
16 Commission. Par exemple, quelles sont les différentes
17 définitions de l'ingérence étrangère? Que signifie les
18 expressions *Institutions démocratiques*, et *Processus*
19 *démocratiques* ?

20 La deuxième présentation donnera une vue
21 d'ensemble du processus électoral canadien, afin que le
22 public et les participants puissent se familiariser avec
23 certains des concepts dont il sera question lors des
24 audiences.

25 La troisième présentation décrira les entités
26 du gouvernement fédéral impliqués dans les questions
27 d'ingérence étrangère. Et donnera un aperçu de la structure
28 du gouvernement canadien de la communauté nationale de la

1 Sécurité et du Renseignement et de l'infrastructure
2 électorale du Canada, ainsi que d'autres concepts qui seront
3 explorés plus en profondeur à mesure que la preuve est
4 dévoilée.

5 Ensuite, cet après-midi, comme l'a indiqué la
6 commissaire, nous entendrons un panel de représentants de
7 nombreux groupes et communautés issus de la diaspora. Ceux-ci
8 nous feront part de leur expérience en matière d'ingérence
9 étrangère et des défis auxquels ils ont été confrontés.

10 Il y a deux choses importantes à retenir à
11 propos de ce panel. Premièrement, il s'agira d'une discussion
12 animée par une avocate de la Commission, et non d'un
13 interrogatoire. Les panélistes partageront de l'information
14 qui aidera à contextualiser le travail de la Commission. Ils
15 ne sont pas appelés à témoigner sur des faits précis.

16 Ainsi, bien que les avocats des parties
17 puissent suggérer des questions pour les membres du panel, il
18 n'y aura pas de contre interrogatoire.

19 Deuxièmement, la discussion avec le panel
20 portera sur les expériences des communautés issues de la
21 diaspora en général et non des élections fédérales de 2019 et
22 2021 en particulier. Il s'agira donc de la seule partie des
23 présentes audiences qui n'est pas spécifiquement liée aux
24 divisions A et B du mandat.

25 Comme la commissaire l'a mentionné
26 précédemment, cette partie est destinée à fournir un contexte
27 et un aperçu pour aider la Commission dans l'ensemble de son
28 travail.

1 Bon, après ça, les témoignages commenceront
2 demain. Avec un premier panel de témoins d'Élection Canada,
3 suivi d'un second panel des témoins du Bureau de la
4 commissaire aux élections fédérales.

5 The hearing will then resume after the Easter
6 long weekend next Tuesday, when we will hear from a panel of
7 political party representatives who were security cleared to
8 received briefings from intelligence agencies in the 2019 or
9 2021 elections, as well as individual witnesses.

10 Next Wednesday, we will hear from current and
11 former members of Parliament. The last five days of the
12 hearing will then consist of calling a number -- and when I
13 say "A number" I mean a large number -- of witnesses from the
14 federal government, including current and former Deputy
15 Ministers and other senior public officials from the Canadian
16 Security and Intelligence Service, CSIS; the Communications
17 Security Establishments, CSE; the RCMP; Global Affairs
18 Canada, GAC; Public Safety Canada, and the Privy Council
19 Office.

20 Notably, the Commission will be calling as a
21 panel the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol Panel,
22 commonly known as the panel of five, for both the 2019 and
23 the 2021 election, as well as key members of the Security and
24 Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force, commonly known
25 as the SITE Task Force, for each of those elections.

26 The Commission will also call a number of
27 Cabinet Ministers, representatives from the Prime Minister's
28 Office, and the Prime Minister.

1 As you can imagine, this will make for five
2 very busy hearing days, but with the cooperation of the
3 parties and their counsel, we will manage.

4 Let me now take a moment to explain some of
5 the particularities of how the Commission will be addressing
6 the issue of national security confidentiality within the
7 context of these hearings.

8 Those of you who participated in or watched
9 the Commission's preliminary National Security Hearings in
10 late January or early February will recall that most of the
11 information that has been produced to the Commission by the
12 Government of Canada is highly classified and, as the
13 Commissioner explained, the Commission is required by virtue
14 of its Terms of Reference and the law to prevent the
15 disclosure of information that would be potentially injurious
16 to national security in the course of its proceedings.

17 The Commission has therefore developed a
18 protocol that will apply when a question posed to a witness
19 would elicit information protected by national security
20 confidentiality. This has been shared with counsel for the
21 participants and I will share it with you now and hope that
22 you will forgive me the foray into legalese.

23 When a witness is asked a question and the
24 witness or their counsel object or advise that the question
25 cannot be answered in the public hearing for reasons of
26 national security confidentiality:

27 One. The witness or their counsel will make
28 a statement to the effect that the question can't be answered

1 on the public record for reasons of national security
2 confidentiality. No precise form of words will be required,
3 as long as the position is made clear.

4 Two. When such a statement is made, it will
5 be deemed to be A, a statement that the answer to the
6 question would disclose information that could be injurious
7 to the critical interests of Canada or its allies, national
8 defence, or national security, and B, an objection to the
9 question on those grounds.

10 Three. Subject only to ensuring that the
11 question is clearly recorded, counsel who asked the question
12 shall then move on to their next question.

13 Four. After the examinations of the
14 witnesses have been completed, the Commissioner will review
15 the matter to determine whether further investigation is
16 necessary and appropriate in order to obtain information that
17 would be responsive to the question or questions that were
18 objected to.

19 Five. If further investigation is conducted
20 and further information is obtained by the Commission, it
21 will be summarized or otherwise disclosed to the maximum
22 extent possible without injury to the interests identified in
23 the Commission's Terms of Reference.

24 This protocol will allow the hearings to
25 proceed smoothly, despite the challenges that arise, given
26 the nature of the information at issue.

27 So with that out of the way, we can now move
28 on to the more substantive and probably more interesting

1 parts of the hearing, starting with the introductory
2 presentations. Thank you.

3 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Merci, maitre Chaudhury.

4 **--- OVERVIEW REPORT : DEFINITIONS BY/APERÇU DE RAPPORT:**

5 **DÉFINITIONS PAR Me JEAN-PHILIPPE MacKAY :**

6 **Me JEAN-PHILIPPE MacKAY:** Bonjour, Madame la
7 Commissaire.

8 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Bonjour.

9 **Me JEAN-PHILIPPE MacKAY:** Bonjour également
10 aux participants, membres du public. Mon nom est Jean-
11 Philippe MacKay. Je suis avocat de la Commission. Et
12 aujourd'hui, je suis accompagné de maitre Siobhan Morris qui
13 va partager le podium avec moi pour faire une partie de la
14 présentation sur le premier rapport sommaire, intitulé :
15 « Définitions de termes clés du mandat de la Commission ».
16 En anglais, « Definitions of key terms and the Commission's
17 terms of reference ».

18 Donc, avant de commencer la présentation en
19 tant que tel, vu que je suis le premier.. ceci fonctionne,
20 c'est déjà une bonne chose. Donc, je suis le premier à
21 présenter un rapport sommaire. Donc, je vais vous expliquer
22 essentiellement ce que représente ce rapport sommaire aux
23 fins des travaux de la Commission.

24 Donc, comme Madame la Commissaire l'a
25 mentionné, comme maitre Chaudhury l'a mentionné également,
26 les délais de cette Commission sont serrés et, dans ce
27 contexte, les avocats de la Commission doivent faire appel à
28 certains outils qui permettent la mise en preuve d'une vaste

1 quantité d'information sans le besoin d'appeler des témoins
2 pour introduire chacun de ces éléments d'information.

3 Donc, par le passé, des commissions d'enquête
4 comme celle-ci ont développé un outil appelé le rapport
5 sommaire, « Overview Report » en anglais, pour présenter des
6 vastes quantités d'information lorsqu'il n'est pas nécessaire
7 ou strictement nécessaire d'appeler des témoins pour se
8 faire.

9 L'objectif de ces rapports est de présenter
10 ces informations de manière concise et synthétique dans un
11 rapport qui contient également des références en notes en bas
12 de page. Donc, dans le rapport sommaire que je vous présente
13 aujourd'hui, qui va être bientôt disponible sur le site Web
14 de la Commission, il y a une série de notes en bas de page
15 qui explique les sources, des sources publiques, qui sont
16 utilisées par les avocats de la Commission dans le rapport.

17 Et c'est le même processus qui a été appliqué
18 aux autres rapports sommaires qui vous seront présentés par
19 mes collègues un peu plus tard. Donc, la raison de ce
20 rapport, comme je viens de vous le dire, est d'éviter la
21 tenue d'audience indument long.

22 Pour celles et ceux qui veulent se référer
23 aux règles, ce sont les règles 42 à 44 des règles de
24 procédure de la Commission qui explique le processus par
25 lequel ces rapports sont produits.

26 Et donc, dans les règles, ce qu'on peut voir,
27 c'est le processus qu'on a suivi ici. Les avocats de la
28 Commission ont produit les rapports et les rapports ont été

1 partagés avec les parties pour obtenir leurs commentaires.

2 Et certaines des parties ont partagé avec la
3 Commission des commentaires. Commentaires qui sont précieux,
4 sans nécessairement qu'ils soient reflétés ou intégrés dans
5 les rapports. Ces commentaires permettent aux avocats de la
6 Commission de préparer et de produire un rapport de grande
7 qualité.

8 Et donc, à partir du moment où les rapports
9 sont finalisés, les parties ont soumis leurs observations,
10 nous produisons le rapport, comme nous le faisons
11 aujourd'hui. Et à partir de ce moment-là, les participants,
12 la commissaire peuvent utiliser, peuvent s'appuyer sur le
13 contenu de ces rapports dans le cadre des travaux de la
14 Commission.

15 Bien entendu, ces rapports ne sont pas... on ne
16 prétend pas qu'ils soient exhaustifs. Et, de cette manière,
17 il est possible pour les parties, tout comme pour les avocats
18 de la Commission, de compléter le contenu de ces rapports au
19 courant des audiences de la Commission.

20 Par le fait même, la commissaire n'est pas
21 obligée... ce n'est pas parce que ce sont des avocats de la
22 Commission qui ont produit les rapports... la commissaire n'est
23 pas obligée de retenir ces rapports. Il est toujours... la
24 commissaire est toujours libre, comme pour tout élément de
25 preuve, de choisir les éléments sur lesquels elle va
26 s'appuyer dans le cadre de la... dans le cadre de ses travaux
27 et de la rédaction du rapport.

28 Et sur... dans la même veine, les parties

1 peuvent être en désaccord avec certains aspects des rapports
2 sommaires. Et il leur est également loisible de compléter
3 l'information au courant de la phase factuelle de l'enquête
4 de la Commission.

5 Donc, avant de céder la parole à ma collègue
6 maitre Morris, la présentation d'aujourd'hui concerne le
7 rapport sur les définitions clés. Les définitions,
8 évidemment, ne sont pas exhaustives et l'intention est de
9 plutôt explorer certains termes, certaines notions qui se
10 retrouvent dans le mandat de la Commission pour permettre une
11 meilleure compréhension de la preuve qui va être administrée
12 au courant des prochaines semaines. Parce qu'évidemment, la
13 preuve qui va être présentée au public lors de ces audiences
14 publiques concerneront les notions d'ingérence étrangère, de
15 processus démocratiques, d'institutions démocratiques, et de
16 processus électoraux.

17 Le mandat de la Commission, vous voyez ici
18 sur l'image, deux extraits des termes de la... du mandat. Et
19 dans ce mandat, on voit... et c'est pas nécessairement limité
20 aux divisions A et B pour lesquelles nous sommes réunis
21 aujourd'hui, mais lorsqu'on regarde l'ensemble du mandat de
22 la Commission, on peut voir ces notions qui se... qui sont
23 mentionnées dans le décret qui crée la Commission.

24 Donc, j'inviterais maitre Morris à prendre le
25 podium pour continuer cette présentation. Je reprendrai le
26 micro dans quelques instants.

27 **--- OVERVIEW REPORT : DEFINITIONS BY/APERÇU DE RAPPORT:**
28 **DÉFINITIONS PAR MS. SIOBHAN MORRIS :**

1 **MS. SIOBHAN MORRIS:** Good morning,
2 Commissioner.

3 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Good morning.

4 **MS. SIOBHAN MORRIS:** Good morning, everyone.
5 As my colleague stated, my name is Siobhan Morris and I am
6 Commission Counsel.

7 Today I'm going to walk us through various
8 definitions of foreign interference set out in the overview
9 report. These definitions come from various bodies,
10 including federal government departments and institutions
11 like Public Safety Canada or the Canadian Security
12 Intelligence Service. They also come from academia, Canadian
13 legislation, and parliamentary committees, and from
14 international sources.

15 I will begin by reviewing the definitions
16 coming from Federal Government set out in the first part of
17 the report. Then I will move on to discuss definitions from
18 legislation, as well as definitions from international
19 sources, before inviting my colleague to present on the
20 definitions of democratic processes and democratic
21 institutions.

22 At the outset, it's worth noting that the
23 primary elements of the foreign interreference tend to be
24 consistent across definitions coming from the federal
25 government.

26 These elements are drawn from section 2 of
27 the *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act*, which defines
28 threats to the security of Canada as including:

1 Government of Canada [decisions or]
2 policies, officials or democratic
3 processes in support of foreign
4 political agendas.”

5 It should be noted that the *CSIS Act*
6 distinguishes foreign influenced activities from espionage,
7 which is defined separately in the same section.

8 The Communications Security Establishment,
9 which you have heard is Canada’s national cryptologic agency,
10 defines foreign interference in a similar way to section 2 of
11 the *CSIS Act*, that specifies the activity is directed against
12 a democratic process and is used to advance strategic
13 objectives.

14 This definition is specific to CSE’s focus on
15 cyber threats to Canada’s democracy. Other federal
16 institutions may use a similar definition, but apply it
17 differently, depending on the context.

18 The National Security and Intelligence
19 Committee of Parliamentarians is a body composed of Members
20 from the House of Commons and Senate which reviews the
21 activities of the Government of Canada’s National Security
22 and Intelligence Agencies.

23 The Committee’s definition of foreign
24 interference is foreign state action meeting the same three
25 requirements of foreign influenced activities set out in the
26 *CSIS Act*.

27 According to the committee, foreign
28 interference activities can include:

1 "...using clandestine or deceptive
2 methods to influence or manipulate
3 Canadian immigrant communities,
4 [government officials, and] political
5 parties, [among other entities]."

6 The Independent Special Rapporteur on Foreign
7 Interference also defines foreign interference with reference
8 to those three elements set out in section 2 of the *CSIS Act*,
9 but specifies that foreign interference involves state or
10 state proxy action.

11 And for its part, Public Safety Canada
12 defines foreign interference as:

13 "...covert, deceptive and sometimes
14 threatening means [by foreign states]
15 to advance their own strategic
16 objectives, to the detriment of
17 Canada's national interests."

18 Once again, we see elements of both the CSE
19 and CSIS definitions here. Under this definition, examples
20 of foreign interference include threats, harassment, or
21 intimidation by foreign states or those acting on their
22 behalf against anyone in Canada, Canadian communities, or
23 their loved ones abroad.

24 It may also include attempting to interfere
25 in Canadian democratic institutions and processes such as
26 elections. It may include stealing Canadian intellectual
27 property, know-how, or imposing market conditions to gain an
28 economic advantage over Canada; or targeting officials at all

1 levels of government to influence public policy and decision
2 making in a way that is clandestine, deceptive, or
3 threatening.

4 On to some elections related bodies, the
5 Security and Intelligence Threats to Election Task Force,
6 also known as SITE, is an information sharing body designed
7 to help safeguard Canadian elections from foreign
8 interference.

9 The SITE definition of foreign interference
10 also involves the three elements from the *CSIS Act* definition
11 of foreign influenced activities, but specifies that:

12 "In the context of Canadian
13 [electoral processes], the objective
14 of [such] interference is to affect
15 electoral outcomes or [to] undermine
16 public confidence in Canadian
17 democratic institutions..."

18 Related to SITE, the Critical Elections
19 Incident Public Protocol is a mechanism for communicating
20 with Canadians during federal elections in the event of a
21 critical election incident.

22 A 2021 review of the Protocol notes that:

23 "...`interference' is not defined in
24 the Protocol [but] is generally
25 understood to mean involving oneself
26 in a situation where one's
27 involvement is not wanted or [...]
28 helpful."

1 For the Protocol, foreign interference
2 includes activities aimed at affecting the electoral process,
3 shaping narratives around strategic interests, reducing
4 public trust and democratic processes, decreasing social
5 cohesion, weakening confidence in leaders, lowering trust in
6 the media, and dividing international alliances.

7 Canada is also a part of the G7 Rapid
8 Response Mechanism, which is a coordination initiative among
9 G7 countries to identify and respond to foreign threats to
10 democracy.

11 The G7 RRM defines foreign interference as:

12 "...the attempt to covertly influence,
13 intimidate, manipulate, interfere,
14 corrupt or discredit individuals,
15 organizations, and governments [...] to
16 further the [views] of a foreign
17 country..."

18 In 2021, to capture constantly evolving
19 activities in the information environment by state actors and
20 their proxies, the G7 RRM focused on Foreign Information,
21 Manipulation, and Interference, termed FIMI. This term:

22 "...describes patterns of behaviour
23 that negatively impact or have the
24 potential to negatively impact
25 values, procedures and political
26 processes."

27 "It includes all tactics used to
28 manipulate information [...] and

1 encompasses activities conducted in
2 an intentional and coordinated manner
3 by a range of actors from state to
4 non-state, including proxies.”

5 Foreign interference and certain types of
6 foreign influence also feature in Canadian legislation. The
7 overview report describes two pieces of legislation touching
8 on these concepts: the *Canada Elections Act*; and the *Security*
9 *of Information Act*.

10 The *Canada Elections Act* does not explicitly
11 define foreign interference, but it sets out various
12 prohibitions aimed at preventing foreign persons from
13 interfering or influencing Canadian electoral processes by
14 funding parties, candidates, electoral district associations,
15 or leadership and nomination contestants, from using a
16 broadcasting station outside of Canada to try and influence
17 the electoral process, from incurring expenses to promote or
18 oppose a candidate, a registered party, or a leader of a
19 registered party, and committing an offence under Canadian
20 law to influence the choice of an elector in a federal
21 election.

22 Meanwhile, subsection 20(1) of the *Security*
23 *of Information Act* makes foreign influence, threats, or
24 violence an offence. The offence is limited to circumstances
25 where someone uses threats or violence to cause a person to
26 commit an act that is meant to increase the capacity of a
27 foreign entity to harm Canadian interests or where the act is
28 reasonably likely to harm Canadian interests.

1 It is worth noting that this definition does
2 not encompass non-violent foreign interference, including
3 interference with democratic processes.

4 Finally, the overview report collects a
5 number of definitions set out by other countries and by the
6 European Union.

7 For example, Australia has enacted laws that
8 criminalize foreign interference and define it as an
9 activity:

10 "...by, or on behalf of, a foreign
11 power, [which] is coercive,
12 corrupting, deceptive or clandestine,
13 and contrary to Australia's
14 sovereignty, values and national
15 interests.

16 It involves [a] foreign [power]
17 trying to secretly and improperly
18 interfere in Australian society to
19 advance their strategic, political,
20 military, social or economic goals,
21 at [Australia's] expense."

22 The Australian definition predominately
23 targets interference in the political or government sphere,
24 or interference prejudicial to national security, rather than
25 interference with market processes or with individuals.

26 The United States Department of Homeland
27 Security defines foreign interference as:

28 "Malign actions taken by foreign

1 governments or [...] actors designed to
2 sow discord, manipulate public
3 discourse, discredit the electoral
4 system, bias the development of
5 policy, or disrupt markets for the
6 purpose of undermining the interests
7 of the United States and its allies.”

8 The Federal Bureau of Investigations
9 similarly describes foreign influence operations as:

10 “Covert actions by foreign
11 governments to spread disinformation,
12 sow discord, and ultimately undermine
13 confidence in our democratic
14 institutions and values.” (As read)

15 For the European Union, a staff working
16 document has defined foreign interference as:

17 “Acts carried out by, or on behalf
18 of, a foreign state-level actor,
19 which are coercive, covert, deceptive
20 or corrupting, and contrary to the
21 sovereignty, values, and interests of
22 the European Union.” (As read)

23 At this stage, I would like to invite
24 my colleague to speak on the definitions of democratic
25 institutions and democratic processes set out in the report.

26 Thank you.

1 **Me JEAN-PHILIPPE MACKAY:** Bonjour à nouveau.
2 Ma tâche est facilitée par le fait que les termes
3 *institutions démocratiques* et *processus démocratiques* sont
4 utilisés de manière interchangeable et couvrent
5 essentiellement une même réalité. Et, évidemment, quand on
6 regarde les, euh... les termes du mandat de la Commission, on
7 voit que les processus électoraux également, qui sont
8 mentionnés, et comme nous le verrons, les processus
9 électoraux sont assimilés à une institution démocratique et à
10 un processus démocratique.

11 Donc bien entendu, et c'est le point de
12 départ de cette partie de la présentation, le Parlement et
13 le... la... la... le pouvoir exécutif constitue, bien
14 entendu, euh... un processus démocratique et des institutions
15 démocratiques et, euh... le même, euh... la même chose peut
16 être dite pour le processus électoral.

17 Évidemment, euh... la Commission s'intéresse
18 à la... à la perspective, euh... les Agences de Renseignement
19 sur, euh... l'ingérence étrangère, mais aussi sur la manière
20 dont les, euh... ces Agences perçoivent et, euh... décrivent
21 ces processus.

22 Donc, dans les rapports publics du SCRS, qui
23 sont publiés annuellement, le, euh... le Service affirme que
24 le processus électoral, que ce soit en dehors ou pendant les
25 élections, euh... constitue une institution et un processus
26 démocratique.

27 Selon cette perspective du Service Canadien
28 du Renseignement de sécurité, le processus électoral comprend

1 les éléments suivants, soit les élections, à tous les niveaux
2 de gouvernement. Les, euh... les politiciens et les partis
3 politiques et les médias.

4 Quant au Centre de la Sécurité des
5 télécommunications, CST, le, euh... le CST dans son premier
6 rapport public sur les cybermenaces, en 2017, auquel il est
7 fait référence dans le rapport sommaire, se concentre sur
8 trois aspects du processus démocratique, donc les élections,
9 partis politique et politiciens et, euh... les médias. Médias
10 qui doivent être entendus sens large, que ce... donc une
11 notion qui comprend autant les médias conventionnels que,
12 euh... les médias sociaux.

13 Plus récemment, en 2019, une, euh... le... le
14 Centre canadien... le CST a, euh... modifié le dernier
15 élément pour, euh... parler des, euh... des électeurs. Pour
16 mettre davantage l'accent sur la cible de l'ingérence
17 étrangère plutôt que par le moyen par lequel la communication
18 de certains renseignements qui peuvent être associés à une
19 forme d'ingérence étrangère peut se manifester.

20 Et donc, ce que le CST indique, dans le
21 rapport de 2019, c'est que les électeurs interagissent avec
22 les partis politiques, les candidats et entre eux-mêmes, au
23 moyen des médias sociaux et traditionnels, d'où cette
24 modification au dernier (inaudible).

25 Le CST ajoute que les menaces qui pèsent sur
26 les élections consistent, notamment, à empêcher les électeurs
27 de voter, à falsifier les résultats des élections, à voler
28 les bases de données des électeurs et à manipuler les médias

1 traditionnels et sociaux, afin d'influencer le débat
2 politique ou de réduire la confiance envers le processus
3 démocratique.

4 Donc, ce sont là des, euh... des moyens
5 possibles qui sont décrits par le CST.

6 Sur cette question, euh... des personnes ou
7 des entités qui peuvent être ciblées par l'ingérence
8 étrangère. Le rapport sommaire, au paragraphe 48, discute de
9 la perspective du, euh... et je n'ai seulement l'acronyme en
10 anglais qui me vient à l'esprit, *in a side code*, le Comité
11 parlementaire sur la sécurité nationale et le renseignement,
12 donc, c'est déjà difficile de maîtriser les acronymes dans
13 une seule langue, essayer de les maîtriser dans deux langues,
14 c'est une tâche qui est, euh... qui est assez monumentale.

15 Ceci étant dit, donc, le comité explique que
16 l'ingérence étrangère vise les élus, les fonctionnaires et le
17 personnel de tous les paliers de gouvernement, ainsi que les
18 gouvernements autochtones, évidemment, qui sont inclus dans
19 cette, eh... dans cette description.

20 Donc, sous cet angle, le pouvoir législatif
21 est également compris dans le... dans les institutions
22 démocratiques.

23 Maintenant, et encore là on voit une série
24 d'acronyme, et je vais parler de... de *sith* pour parler du
25 groupe de travail, euh... sur les menaces à la sécurité et
26 sur le renseignement, concernant les élections. Euh... et,
27 euh... pour ce qui est du protocole public.

28 Donc, selon le groupe de travail, euh... le

1 processus électoral canadien est une institution démocratique
2 et les examens qui ont été faits de l'ex... des exercices du
3 protocole pour 2019 et 2021, euh... expliquent que le
4 processus électoral canadien, évidemment, euh... est une
5 institution démocratique.

6 Donc, comme je vous le disais au départ, ce
7 sont des notions qui s'assimilent les unes aux autres et
8 décrivent une même réalité. L'aspect intéressant, ici, c'est
9 l'élément d'écosystème, donc que le processus électoral est
10 décrit comme un écosystème dans lequel un ensemble de de
11 composantes interagissent entre elles.

12 Et dans cet écosystème se trouvent les
13 électeurs, les partis politiques, le monde universitaire, la
14 société civile, les médias et les médias sociaux, Élection
15 Canada, le commissaire... le commissaire aux élections, la
16 commissaire, excusez-moi, aux comm... aux élections fédérales
17 et les organismes de sécurité et de renseignement.

18 Pour ce qui est du rapport spécial sur
19 l'ingérence étrangère, la, euh... dans le rapport qui a été
20 produit en 2023, le rapport spécial souligne que les
21 élections en tant que tel et les partis politiques sont des
22 institutions et des processus démocratiques. Le rapporteur
23 ajoute que les institutions démocratiques incluent certaines
24 institutions gouvernementales, tel que le pouvoir exécutif,
25 l'assemblée législative, les institutions indépendantes que
26 sont Élections Canada et le commissaire aux élections
27 fédérales. Et enfin, le comité permanent de l'accès à
28 l'information et la protection des renseignements personnels

1 et d'éthique, inclue également les politiques et les
2 programmes gouvernementaux dans les institutions
3 démocratiques.

4 Et pour conclure, une note, euh... sur,
5 euh... des éléments qui nous proviennent du Secrétariat aux
6 institutions démocratiques du Bureau du conseil privé. Le,
7 euh... les institutions démocratiques comprennent le
8 processus électoral, la formation même du gouvernement, la
9 séparation des pouvoirs, la Chambre des communes, le Sénat,
10 et le gouverneur général.

11 Donc, ceci termine la première présentation,
12 euh... concernant un rapport sommaire. Et j'inviterais
13 maintenant mon collègue, maître Sheppard à prendre la parole.

14 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE** : Merci maître MacKay,
15 merci maître Morris.

16 **--- PRESENTATION: CANADA'S ELECTORAL PROCESS BY/PRÉSENTATION:**
17 **PROCESSUS ÉLECTORAL CANADIEN PAR MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD:**

18 **MR. DANIEL SHEPPARD**: Good morning, Madam
19 Commissioner.

20 The next presentation from Commission Counsel
21 is an overview of Canada's electoral process.

22 For the benefit of the parties and
23 participants, there is no overview report associated with
24 this presentation. So this does not, in and of itself, form
25 evidence before the Commission. Rather, the purpose of this
26 presentation is to ensure that participants, and perhaps more
27 importantly, member of the public are able to engage with the
28 work of the Commission with a common baseline understanding

1 of the democratic process.

2 I will be splitting my time today with my
3 colleague, Mr. Mohamadhossen, and we will be discussing
4 issues such as why it is that we hold elections in a
5 democracy, and the nature of free and fair elections; how
6 Canada's electoral map is established; the rules respecting
7 when elections are held; the role of different participants
8 in the electoral process; how candidates are chosen; the
9 electoral period itself; a brief introduction to the
10 political financing regime, and then a description of the
11 basic mechanics of election day from voting through to the
12 announcing of results.

13 So the most fundamental question we can ask
14 about the electoral process is why we have elections in the
15 first place, and the answer is that it is one of the core
16 defining elements of a vibrant democracy. It is what
17 distinguishes political orders like the one that exists in
18 Canada from other non-democratic states.

19 Elections serve a number of critical
20 functions. At a very practical level, it is the mechanism by
21 which individuals and communities select their political
22 representatives. Members of Parliament are elected, they
23 assemble in Parliament and perform critical functions like
24 scrutinizing legislation, voicing community concerns and
25 holding the government to account.

26 At a broader level, elections are the means
27 by which the community voices its political aspirations, its
28 views about how Canada should function and its hopes about

1 future change.

2 Throughout these proceedings, people will use
3 -- will make reference to the concept of free and fair
4 elections. After all, simply having an election, the mere
5 act of casting a ballot, is not in and of itself sufficient
6 to guarantee that vibrant democratic order that we all aspire
7 to. People who think about and discuss elections use the
8 concept of a free and fair election to describe the type of
9 electoral process that guarantees us a true democratic order.

10 It is a complicated and multi-faceted
11 concept. It involves narrow and broad concepts.

12 Some of the components to free and fair
13 elections include universal suffrage, that is to say, who is
14 allowed to vote, meaningful competition between political
15 parties, which is to say that electors have a genuine choice
16 in terms of who they wish to cast their ballots for.

17 It includes fair and transparent
18 administration of elections, which is to say that the rules
19 that govern the electoral process are fair, they are applied
20 in a fair manner, and they're applied in a way that is
21 transparent so that members of the public can be satisfied
22 that they have been applied fairly.

23 Security also forms a part of free and fair
24 elections. It describes the circumstances in which
25 individuals feel as though they are practically able to cast
26 a ballot in favour of their preferred candidate to express
27 their authentic political voice. Components of security can
28 include measures like ballot secrecy.

1 And underlying the notion of free and fair
2 elections is the concept that the rights established are
3 enforceable and are protected, that what we say about how we
4 run our elections, in fact, matches the reality of the
5 elections as they are administered.

6 I should note that even this definition that
7 I've described is a limited one. There are even broader ways
8 in which we can understand the necessary preconditions to
9 free and fair elections. Things like freedom of the press
10 can be understood to be a critical and necessary component of
11 a democratic order, albeit one that exists outside the strict
12 confines of the electoral process itself.

13 So I'd like to move to a different topic, and
14 that is how it is we divide up the electoral map. We speak
15 of having federal elections, but in a very real sense, we
16 have 338 elections that take place simultaneously.

17 Canada is divided into electoral districts,
18 more commonly known as "ridings", and the residents of each
19 of those districts elect their representative to Parliament.
20 How it is that we go about deciding on what those districts
21 are can be a somewhat complicated process, but boiled down to
22 its basics, three considerations inform how ridings are
23 drawn.

24 The first is the concept of voter equity or
25 parity. It is the idea that every elector's ballot should be
26 worth roughly the same as every other elector's. In practice
27 what this means is that the population of electoral districts
28 ought to be roughly equal. However, I say "roughly" because

1 there are other considerations that justify departures from
2 the principle of voter equity and parity.

3 Community of interest is the concept that
4 there can be groupings or communities that share certain
5 common aspirations, a certain stake in particular issues, and
6 that it may be appropriate to group such communities into
7 electoral districts so that they can jointly deliberate and
8 decide on who will be their representative.

9 Equally so, geography can play a significant
10 role in how electoral districts are formed. In a country as
11 large and diverse as Canada, there are portions of the
12 country that are very densely populated and other portions
13 sparsely populated. For practical reasons, it may be
14 difficult for a single representative to represent a very
15 broad geographic area, and on that basis we also see
16 departures from the equity or parity principle.

17 In practice, these principles play out
18 through an independent Boundaries Commission that is
19 established every 10 years following the census in order to
20 assess and determine whether electoral boundaries need to be
21 redrawn, and this is the result. As it stands now, this is
22 Canada's current electoral map and, indeed, the picture above
23 shows the results of the 2021 general election.

24 And it's important to recognize that the
25 amount of colour you see spread across this map is not
26 necessarily indicative of the actual results of the election.
27 What matters are the number of ridings which, as you can see,
28 vary dramatically. The size of a riding in northern

1 Saskatchewan is fundamentally different in size and scope
2 than a riding in downtown Toronto.

3 The next topic I'd like to discuss is the
4 timing of elections.

5 Historically, elections were held largely at
6 the discretion of the Crown and, in more modern times, at the
7 discretion of the government of the day. The Prime Minister,
8 who is the head of government, advises the Governor General,
9 who's the head of state, when an election ought to be held
10 and, as a matter of convention, the Governor General accepts
11 such advice and directs the Chief Electoral Officer to
12 prepare to administer an election.

13 Over time, however, legal restrictions or
14 rules have come into effect that constrain the discretion
15 about when elections can be held. Importantly, the *Charter*
16 *of Rights and Freedoms*, a component of the *Constitution of*
17 *Canada*, requires that elections be held at least every five
18 years. More modern legislation has further impacted how
19 elections are called.

20 Currently, elections exist under a fixed
21 election date system. The *Canada Elections Act* provides that
22 elections are to occur on the third Monday of every fourth
23 October.

24 However, it is important to note that due to
25 the nature of a parliamentary democracy, elections can occur
26 more frequently. And indeed, that explains why it is in this
27 inquiry we're looking into elections that took place in 2019
28 and then again in 2021.

1 The next thing I'd like to discuss are some
2 of the actors or participants in the electoral process. Many
3 different types of participants play a role in how elections
4 take place in this country. Electors, those who cast votes,
5 obviously play one of the most fundamental.

6 Today I'd like to discuss briefly the role of
7 two other types of actors: political parties and third
8 parties.

9 Political parties are registered entities
10 that exist to, amongst other things, contest elections. They
11 are the vehicle by which individuals who share a common set
12 of political commitments, beliefs, and aspirations can come
13 together and attempt to express their political voice through
14 contesting elections, trying to convince electors to cast
15 votes in favour of them, and ultimately through the
16 democratic process to gain and then wield political power.

17 In practice, political parties endorse
18 candidates, coordinate campaigns, and attempt to win as many
19 votes as possible.

20 Third parties are a different actor in the
21 political system, one that shares some characteristics with
22 political parties, but also important differences.

23 Third parties are essentially anyone other
24 than political parties, candidates, electoral district
25 associations, or other specific defined categories of
26 participants in the electoral process. These are independent
27 entities that try to influence the results of elections.
28 They too go and try to raise awareness about issues, convince

1 people to take particular positions on issues in elections,
2 and ultimately put forward their own community's voice as to
3 political questions and ideals about how Canada should run.

4 Examples of third parties include industry
5 associations, trade unions, community groups, and indeed,
6 individuals who choose to go out in the electoral process and
7 try to convince people on particular political topics.

8 With that, I'd like to turn the podium over
9 to Mr. Mohamadhossen, who will continue with the
10 presentation.

11 **--- PRESENTATION: CANADA'S ELECTORAL PROCESS BY/PRÉSENTATION:**
12 **PROCESSUS ÉLECTORAL CANADIEN PAR Me HAMZA MOHAMADHOSEN:**

13 **Me MOHAMADHOSEN:** Merci Daniel.

14 Bonjour, Madame la Commissaire.

15 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Bonjour.

16 **Me MOHAMADHOSEN:** Bonjour tout le monde.

17 Nous poursuivons la présentation en discutant
18 comment les candidats sont-ils choisis.

19 Les élections et le régime électoral, de
20 manière plus large, sont strictement règlementés. Cette
21 réglementation comprend également les partis politiques.

22 Néanmoins, les partis politiques disposent
23 quand même d'une grande liberté pour gérer leurs affaires
24 internes. Par exemple, la sélection des candidats est un
25 domaine dans lequel les parties disposent d'une grande marge
26 de manœuvre. Il appartient aux partis politiques de décider
27 s'ils veulent organiser des courses à l'investiture ou de
28 tout simplement nommer un candidat.

1 S'ils décident d'organiser une course à
2 l'investiture, les partis peuvent choisir le délai dans
3 lequel elle se déroulera à condition que ça ait lieu au moins
4 21 jours avant une élection prévue.

5 Les partis politiques peuvent aussi mettre en
6 place des critères relatifs à qui aura le droit de voter lors
7 d'une campagne d'investiture. Cependant, du côté de
8 financement, les campagnes d'investiture sont soumises à une
9 réglementation de financement politique. Et, bien sûr, un
10 individu peut se présenter aux élections sans affiliation à
11 un parti, soit en tant qu'un candidat ou une candidate
12 indépendant.

13 Passons à « Qu'est-ce que la période de
14 campagne électorale? » Les élections comportent une période
15 de campagne électorale qui s'étend de la dissolution du
16 Parlement jusqu'au jour du scrutin. Selon les règles en
17 place, cette période dure entre 36 et 50 jours, pendant
18 laquelle des règles spéciales s'appliquent, notamment en
19 matière de financement politique.

20 De plus, au cours de cette période, le
21 Parlement est dissous et ne se réunit pas. Il y a donc pas
22 de chambre élue pouvant accorder sa confiden... sa confiance au
23 gouvernement, ni d'organe à tenir responsable le
24 gouvernement.

25 Le gouvernement fonctionne alors en mode
26 transitoire, suite à la Convention de transition. Cette
27 convention exige au gouvernement de faire preuve de retenue
28 et de se limiter aux affaires courantes non controversées ou

1 urgentes, et le tout dans l'intérêt public. Il faut surtout
2 éviter de poser des gestes irréversibles pendant la période
3 d'affaires intérimaire.

4 Pendant la période de campagne électorale,
5 les partis, les candidats et les tiers discutent l'élection.
6 Ils cherchent à gagner l'appui de la population à travers des
7 publicités, des activités communautaires, des débats, et du
8 porte-à-porte.

9 Je vais maintenant toucher sur les limites
10 des contributions politiques. Un élément important de la
11 réglementation électorale est le régime de financement
12 politique vu que se porter candidat aux élections coute de
13 l'argent, par exemple avec les dépenses sur les publicités,
14 les déplacements, l'hébergement, la location des bureaux, et
15 les impressions.

16 De ce fait, le régime de financement
17 politique limite la manière dont les partis, les candidats et
18 les autres peuvent dépenser de l'argent. De l'autre côté, le
19 régime de financement établit aussi des limites autour des
20 contributions politiques provenant de la population. Par
21 exemple, seul un particulier qui est citoyen canadien ou
22 résident permanent du Canada peut apporter une contribution,
23 et ce dans le respect des plafonds des contributions.

24 Pour l'année 2024, le plafond annuel des
25 contributions est à 1 725 \$ et s'applique à l'égard des
26 contributions versées à chaque parti politique, à chaque
27 candidat enregistré, aux associations de circonscription, aux
28 candidats à l'investiture, ainsi qu'aux candidats à une

1 course à la direction.

2 Je vais passer maintenant sur le jour de
3 l'élection, le jour du scrutin, où... là où les bureaux de vote
4 sont ouverts pour que les électeurs puissent exercer leur
5 droit de vote.

6 En outre, il existe d'autres moyens de voter.
7 Par exemple, par bulletins spéciaux, c'est-à-dire le vote par
8 la poste ou en votant à un bureau local d'Élections Canada et
9 par la (sic) vote par anticipation.

10 À la fin de la journée, les bureaux sont
11 fermés et tous les votes exprimés sont comptés, y compris les
12 votes par bulletins spéciaux et les votes par anticipation.

13 Pendant le dépouillement, les résultats de
14 chaque circonscription sont annoncés par les médias au fur et
15 à mesure qu'ils reçoivent des rapports provenant d'Élections
16 Canada. Et en général, nous sommes en mesure de savoir dès
17 le soir de l'élection qui sont les députés élus dans chaque
18 circonscription et ainsi quel parti politique formera le
19 prochain gouvernement. Il est bien sûr possible qu'il y ait
20 des retards ou des délais.

21 Qui peut être électeur? Alors, afin de
22 pouvoir voter, les électeurs doivent être citoyens canadiens,
23 doivent avoir au moins 18 ans le jour de l'élection, et
24 doivent pouvoir prouver leur identité et leur adresse. Il
25 est important à noter qu'il n'y a plus d'obligation de
26 résidence. Ainsi, les Canadiens résidents ou habitant à
27 l'étranger peuvent voter quel que soit la durée de leur
28 séjour à l'étranger.

1 Et finalement, comment décide-t-on qui a
2 gagné une élection? Le système électoral du Canada est un
3 système où un scrutin uninominal majoritaire à un tour. Ce
4 qui veut dire que chaque circonscription fait l'objet d'un
5 concours, chaque électeur vote pour un seul candidat parmi la
6 liste des candidats de sa circonscription. Le candidat ayant
7 obtenu le plus grand nombre de voix emporte la
8 circonscription, sans avoir à recueillir une majorité de
9 voix. Et finalement, le parti politique ayant gagné le plus
10 grand nombre de circonscriptions et ainsi de députés est
11 accordé ou conféré le droit de former le prochain
12 gouvernement.

13 Voici ce qui met fin à ce bref aperçu du
14 système électoral du Canada. Merci, merci beaucoup.

15 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE** : Merci beaucoup à vous
16 deux. Alors je pense qu'on est au moment approprié pour
17 prendre la pause. Alors, ce sera une pause de 15, 20 minutes.
18 Alors, il est 11 heures moins 10, de retour à 11 heures 10.

19 **THE REGISTRAR**: Order, please. À l'ordre,
20 s'il vous plaît.

21 This hearing is in recess until 11:10.

22 --- Upon recessing at 10:50 a.m.

23 --- L'audience est suspendue à 10 h 50

24 --- Upon resuming at 11:13 a.m.

25 --- L'audience est reprise à 11 h 13

26 **THE REGISTRAR**: Order please. À l'ordre,
27 s'il vous plaît.

28 This sitting of the Foreign Interference

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(Dann)**

1 Commission is back in session.

2 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So I will invite the
3 next counsel. Maître Dann and Lazare.

4 **--- OVERVIEW REPORT: FEDERAL ENTITIES BY/APERÇU DE RAPPORT:
5 ENTITÉS FÉDÉRALES PAR MS. ERIN DANN :**

6 **MS. ERIN DANN:** Thank you.

7 Good morning, Commissioner; good morning,
8 everyone.

9 In our next presentation, we'll review some
10 of the information contained in the overview report on
11 federal government entities involved in foreign interference
12 matters.

13 The content of our presentation today is not
14 evidence, the overview report, the written material in the
15 overview report is.

16 I forgot to mention but my name is Erin Dann,
17 and I'm one of the Commission counsel. I'm joined today by
18 Hannah Lazare, and we will together briefly review the
19 various government entities that play a role in relation to
20 potential foreign interference in federal democratic
21 processes and institutions, sort of a federal government 101.

22 We expect that throughout the hearings you
23 will hear about many of the institutions that are listed on
24 the screen. Our goal in the next half hour or so is to
25 provide a high-level description of the mandates, roles, and
26 interactions of these various entities and institutions.

27 We'll start with the Governor-in-Council.

28 The Governor-in-Council refers to the

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1 Governor-General acting by, and with the advice of the King's
2 Privy Council for Canada.

3 The King's Privy Council is a -- in its
4 totality is a sort of ceremonial body that rarely meets
5 altogether. Its constitutional functions are performed by
6 Cabinet; Cabinet Ministers are members of the King's Privy
7 Council.

8 By constitutional convention, powers held by
9 the Governor-in-Council are exercised on the advice of
10 members of the King's Privy Council and Members of Cabinet.
11 Decisions of the Governor-in-Council are often formally
12 expressed through Orders in Council.

13 Next we turn to the Prime Minister, which as
14 you likely know is the head of government, and the leader of
15 the party that has the confidence of the House of Commons.
16 In almost all cases that is the party that was elected with
17 the largest number of Members of Parliament.

18 The Prime Minister selects members for
19 Cabinet, or perhaps more precisely, the Prime Minister makes
20 recommendations, and the members of Cabinet are formally
21 appointed by the Governor General.

22 The Cabinet is a political decision-making
23 body. Cabinet Ministers are usually elected members of the
24 House of Commons, and in particular, generally elected
25 members of the governing party. Cabinet is a forum for
26 Ministers to discuss which policies the government should
27 pursue, and how its priorities should be advanced. The Prime
28 Minister sets the agenda for Cabinet, and is the ultimate

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1 decision maker.

2 Several Cabinet committees support the work
3 of Cabinet. The Prime Minister establishes their membership
4 and mandates, most decisions are made at the committee level,
5 although Cabinet must ratify these decisions.

6 The powers, duties, and functions of Cabinet
7 Ministers are set out in various legislation. They are also
8 derived from royal prerogative, and in addition, the Prime
9 Minister will provide to Ministers mandate letters. These
10 mandate letters outline the objectives the Prime Minister
11 wants each Minister to accomplish. They will also identify
12 pressing challenges for the various ministries.

13 All Cabinet Ministers swear an oath of
14 secrecy on joining the King's Privy Council -- excuse me, on
15 joining the King's Privy Council.

16 Cabinet secrecy requires Ministers and any
17 officials attending Cabinet meetings not to disclose the
18 substance of deliberations in Cabinet.

19 Ministers preside over various federal
20 departments, and we'll review a number of the federal
21 departments relevant to the Commission's work throughout this
22 presentation.

23 The -- while Ministers formally preside over
24 these various federal departments, the day-to-day operation
25 of the federal departments is carried out by officials who
26 report to the Deputy Minister. The Deputy Minister, in
27 contrast to the Minister, is a non-partisan position. These
28 are the most senior members of the public service. They are

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(Dann)**

1 not political staff.

2 We'll turn now to two offices that play a key
3 role in supporting the Prime Minister, Ministers, Cabinet,
4 and the Government. You'll hear about both of these offices
5 throughout the course of the Inquiry.

6 The Privy Council Office is part of the
7 public service, it's not a political office, provides non-
8 partisan advice.

9 The Prime Minister's Office, in contrast, is
10 made up of political staff who are not members of the public
11 service.

12 To go through these and further describe
13 these two offices, I'll hand the clicker over to Ms. Lazare.

14 **--- OVERVIEW REPORT: FEDERAL ENTITIES BY/APERÇU DE RAPPORT:**
15 **ENTITÉS FÉDÉRALES PAR Me HANNAH LAZARE:**

16 **Me HANNAH LAZARE:** Merci. Bon matin.

17 Alors, comme expliqué par mon collègue, je
18 vais vous parler en plus de détails des deux bureaux qui
19 portent ce soutien au gouvernement, au Premier ministre, et
20 au Cabinet.

21 Pour commencer par le Bureau du Conseil
22 privé, comme expliqué par mon collègue, c'est un soutien qui
23 est fourni de façon non-partisan au Cabinet lorsque le
24 Cabinet du Premier ministre est composé de personnel
25 politique. Alors, le rôle principal du Bureau du Conseil
26 privé, c'est vraiment la coordination de l'administration
27 gouvernementale.

28 Pour cette raison, on le qualifie souvent de

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(Lazare)**

1 ministère du Premier ministre. Les fonctions du Bureau du
2 Conseil privé incluent fournir des conseils non-partisans au
3 Premier ministre, au Cabinet et au Comité du Cabinet, de
4 soutenir le processus décisionnel du Cabinet, et d'assurer la
5 mise en œuvre de la politique gouvernementale et des
6 programmes législatifs dans l'ensemble des ministères et
7 agences fédéraux.

8 Le Bureau de Conseil privé comprend plusieurs
9 secrétariats, dont le Secrétariat des institutions
10 démocratiques, qui appuie le ministère de Sécurité publique,
11 des Institutions démocratiques, et des Affaires
12 intergouvernementales. Le Premier ministre a chargé le
13 ministre de veiller au renforcement des institutions
14 démocratiques canadiennes. Par exemple, en luttant contre la
15 désinformation.

16 Le ministre est également chargé de continuer
17 à diriger une réponse gouvernementale intégrée pour protéger
18 les institutions démocratiques au Canada.

19 Un des rôles essentiels à souligner, qui fait
20 partie de Bureau du Conseil privé et relève du greffier,
21 c'est le conseiller à la sécurité nationale et au
22 renseignement auprès du Premier ministre. Celle-ci travaille
23 au sein du Bureau de Conseil privé. Le CSNR fournit au
24 Premier ministre et à son Cabinet des conseils en matière de
25 sécurité nationale et sur le renseignement.

26 En ce qui concerne l'ingérence étrangère, le
27 CSNR s'appuie principalement sur deux secrétariats : le
28 Secrétariat de la sécurité et du renseignement, le SSR, et le

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1 Secrétariat de l'évaluation du renseignement, le SER.

2 Passons maintenant au deuxième bureau qui
3 porte ce soutien essentiel au Premier ministre et au Cabinet.
4 C'était le Cabinet du Premier ministre. Le Cabinet du
5 Premier ministre est composé de personnel politique. Les
6 membres du Cabinet de Premier ministre sont souvent appelés
7 le personnel ex honoré, parce qu'ils ne font pas partie de la
8 fonction publique et ne sont pas assujettis aux règles de
9 neutralité et d'impartialité qui s'appliquent aux
10 fonctionnaires.

11 Le Cabinet du Premier ministre aide le
12 Premier ministre à exercer ses fonctions de chef du
13 gouvernement, de dirigeant d'un parti politique reconnu à la
14 Chambre des communes, et de député. Le Cabinet du Premier
15 ministre fait également le lien entre les intérêts politiques
16 partisans du Premier ministre et les activités du
17 gouvernement.

18 Je vais maintenant vous parler de sécurité
19 publique du Canada. Le ministère de Sécurité publique et de
20 la Protection civile est responsable des questions de
21 sécurité publique, de sécurité nationale, et de gestion des
22 urgences. Le ministère agit notamment comme un forum
23 centralisé pour la coordination du travail portant sur des
24 questions de sécurité nationale, dont la lutte contre
25 l'ingérence étrangère.

26 Le portefeuille du ministre de la Sécurité
27 publique et de la Protection civile inclut la supervision du
28 SCRS et de la GRC. Les Services canadiens du renseignement,

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1 le SCRS, ou le Service, est un service civil de renseignement
2 de sécurité. Le directeur du SCRS en est le chef et il est
3 secondé par le sous-directeur des opérations et le sous-
4 directeur polidique (phon.)... politique, excusez-moi, et
5 partenariat stratégique.

6 Le sous-directeur des opérations participe le
7 plus directement aux enquêtes sur la menace que représente
8 l'ingérence étrangère pour le Canada. Notamment, l'ingérence
9 dans les élections fédérales et les processus démocratiques.

10 Le sous-directeur politique et partenariat
11 stratégique est responsable du cadre général de politiques
12 stratégiques du Service. Ceci inclut le développement des
13 politiques permettant au Service de répondre aux menaces
14 d'ingérence étrangère.

15 Le mandat principal du SCRS est d'enquêter
16 sur les menaces à la sécurité du Canada et de conseiller le
17 gouvernement à ce sujet. La *Loi sur le SCRS* précise les
18 activités sur lesquelles le Service peut enquêter et inclut
19 une définition particulière de ses activités, qui a été
20 soulignée par mes collègues tout à l'heure, mais qui mérite
21 plus d'attention : les activités influencées par l'étranger
22 qui touchent le Canada ou s'y déroulent et sont
23 préjudiciables à ses intérêts et qui sont d'une nature
24 clandestine ou trompeuse ou comportent des menaces envers
25 quiconque.

26 Le pouvoir du SCRS de recueillir de
27 l'information et du renseignement sur les menaces à la
28 sécurité du Canada reposent principalement sur l'article 12

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1 de la *Loi sur le SCRS*. Mais, en vertu de la loi... de
2 l'article 12.1, le Service peut prendre des mesures pour
3 répondre... pour réduire ces menaces dans certaines
4 circonstances.

5 Je vais maintenant passer au Centre de
6 sécurité des télécommunications, le CST, qui est l'organisme
7 national de cryptologie du Canada. Celle-ci fournit au
8 gouvernement du renseignement électromagnétique étranger, la
9 cybersécurité et l'assurance de l'information. Le chef, sous
10 la direction du ministre de la Défense nationale, est chargé
11 de la gestion et du contrôle du CST.

12 Le CST intercepte et analyse les
13 communications électroniques étrangères afin de fournir au
14 gouvernement du Canada de l'information sur les menaces
15 étrangères à la sécurité et prospérité du Canada. Le CST peut
16 entreprendre des cyber opérations défensives ou actives s'il
17 obtient les autorisations nécessaires. Le Centre canadien
18 pour la cybersécurité du CST aide à protéger les
19 infrastructures fédérales jugées importantes pour le
20 gouvernement, contre les cyber activités malveillantes.

21 Le CST assiste également les organismes
22 fédéraux contre, comme le SCRS et la GRC dans l'exercice de
23 leurs fonctions.

24 Je vais maintenant vous parler des affaires
25 mondiales canadien. C'est un des plus, euh... c'est un
26 ministère fédéral chargé de promouvoir les relations
27 internationales du Canada. Le AMC est l'un des plus gros
28 consommateurs du renseignement du gouvernement fédéral. Le

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1 AMC produit également des rapports diplomatiques spécialisés
2 et des rapports de sources ouvertes sur des questions liées à
3 l'ingérence étrangère, ainsi que des évaluations du
4 renseignement stratégique.

5 Il est important de noter que le AMC héberge
6 le Secrétariat du mécanisme de réponses rapides du Canada, le
7 MRR, qui coordonne le MRR du G7. Le MMR du G7 renforce la
8 coordination entre les pays du G7, pour déceler les menaces
9 étrangères qui pèsent sur la démocratie.

10 Au Canada, le MMR surveille l'environnement
11 de l'information numérique à l'aide d'analyses de données de
12 sources ouvertes, pour détecter des indicateurs de
13 manipulation d'informations provenant des États étrangers.

14 La GRC, ou la Gendarmerie Royale du Canada,
15 comme vous le savez probablement déjà est le service de
16 police nationale du Canada. Dans le cadre de ses fonctions
17 d'application de la loi, la GRC a comme responsabilité de
18 prévenir, de détecter et de décourager les menaces
19 criminelles liées à la sécurité nationale au Canada et d'y
20 réagir.

21 Pour ce faire, elle enquête sur les activités
22 illégales ciblant des institutions démocratiques du Canada,
23 pour protéger le processus électoral.

24 Je vais maintenant repasser la parole à mon
25 collègue, maître Dann.

26 **--- OVERVIEW REPORT: FEDERAL ENTITIES BY/APERÇU DE RAPPORT:**
27 **ENTITÉS FÉDÉRALES PAR MS. ERIN DANN(cont'd/suite):**

28 **MS. ERIN DANN:** We'll move, then, from the

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(Dann)**

1 RCMP to electoral officials.

2 Federal Elections, as we heard earlier this
3 morning, are governed by the *Canada Elections Act*, which
4 contains provisions that could be relevant to foreign
5 interference, including financing -- those about financing
6 rules, and also prohibitions against undue influence by
7 foreigners.

8 During the hearings, you'll hear about two
9 different electoral bodies, Elections Canada and the Office
10 of the Commissioner of Canada Elections. These two entities
11 have distinct mandates and carry out their work independently
12 from one another.

13 The Chief Electoral Officer heads Elections
14 Canada. The Chief Electoral Officer is an officer of
15 Parliament, directly responsible to Parliament itself and not
16 to the government.

17 Elections Canada administers federal
18 elections. The mandate of Elections Canada covers both
19 electoral operations; that is, running the election, and
20 regulatory compliance, ensuring others comply with electoral
21 rules such as third-party financing provisions.

22 Elections Canada works to ensure the
23 integrity of federal elections, that can include working to
24 identify and respond to misinformation or disinformation
25 about elections.

26 The Office of the Commissioner of Canada
27 Elections is headed by the Commissioner of Canada Elections.
28 The CCE is the independent officer who is responsible for

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(Dann)**

1 ensuring the *Canada Elections Act* is complied with and
2 enforced. The CCE is appointed by the Canada Elections
3 Officer after consulting with the Director of Public
4 Prosecutions of Canada.

5 Although the office of the Commissioner of
6 Canada Elections sits within the Office of the Chief
7 Electoral Officer -- now I'm getting my own -- I need my
8 acronym cheat sheet as well. So it sits within that body and
9 carries out its compliance and enforcement work independently
10 from Elections Canada.

11 The Commissioner of Canada Elections may
12 launch an investigation of their own initiative, or following
13 a complaint from the public, or a referral made by the Chief
14 Electoral Officer, or from another government department or
15 agency.

16 The Office of the Commissioner of Canada
17 Elections maintains a relationship and communications with a
18 range of security and intelligence partners, who we heard
19 about today, including CSIS and the RCMP. It may also
20 cooperate with the RCMP in conducting investigations.

21 We'll turn now to an entity that we've heard
22 about earlier this morning.

23 In January of 2019, the Minister of
24 Democratic Institution announced the government's plan to
25 protect Canada's democracy. That plan sets out four pillars:
26 First, enhancing citizen preparedness; second, improving
27 organizational readiness; third, combatting foreign
28 interference; and fourth, building a healthy information

1 ecosystem.

2 The Security and Intelligence Threats to
3 Elections Task Force was created as part of this plan. And
4 you will continue to hear of that task force being referred
5 to as SITE, or the SITE Task Force throughout these hearings.

6 The SITE Task Force has representatives from
7 CSE, the RCMP, GAC, and CSIS. Its role is to help safeguard
8 Canadian federal elections from foreign interference. It
9 does so by providing a point of engagement with the security
10 and intelligence community for government partners doing
11 related work; by reviewing and focusing intelligence
12 collection, assessment, and open-source analysis related to
13 foreign interference in a coordinated manner; providing
14 situational awareness for government partners, senior public
15 servants and other relevant partners; and promoting the use
16 of intelligence, assessment, and open-source information
17 analysis in the protection of electoral processes; there may
18 be sharing with partners, and where the respective mandates
19 of the individual entities that make up the SITE Task Force
20 take actions to mitigate particular threats.

21 Next we'll turn to the Critical Election
22 Incident Public Protocol, which we also heard about earlier
23 today. This was created in 2019. It is a mechanism for
24 senior public servants -- you'll hear them referred to as
25 "The panel" or "The panel of five" -- to communicate with
26 Canadians during an election if there is an incident that
27 threatens the integrity of a federal election.

28 The panel is made up of five senior public

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1 servants: The Clerk of the Privy Council, the National
2 Security and Intelligence Advisor, which is the Prime
3 Minister, that is the NSIA; the Deputy Minister of Justice
4 and Deputy Attorney General; the Deputy Minister of Public
5 Safety, and finally the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

6 The panel considers issues of electoral -- or
7 of election interference generally, not just foreign
8 interference. The protocol is only initiated to respond to
9 incidents occurring during the caretaker period, the writ
10 period, which we heard about earlier this morning. It does
11 not cover incidents within Election Canada's responsibility.

12 The caretaker period, as we heard in an
13 earlier presentation, is the time between the dissolution of
14 Parliament and the election. During this period, the routine
15 business of government continues, but there is a convention
16 that more -- that other, more intensive decision-making
17 should wait until the new government is in place.

18 During this period, this caretaker period,
19 national security agencies provide regular briefings to the
20 panel. If informed of interference in a general election,
21 the panel will evaluate the incident or incidents and
22 consider all options to address those incidents or incident.

23 One of the tools available to the panel is to
24 make a public announcement or to ask an agency head to issue
25 a statement to the Canadian public if an incident or an
26 accumulation of incidents threaten Canada's ability to have a
27 free and fair election. This is what's described as the
28 panel's threshold.

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1 And in making that consideration, the panel
2 considers, first, the degree to which the incident or
3 incidents undermine Canadians' ability to have a free and
4 fair election. Second, the potential of the incident or
5 incidents to undermine the credibility of the election. And
6 third, the degree of confidence officials have in the
7 intelligence or information about the incident of
8 interference.

9 The threshold for making a public statement
10 is high. After each general election, the protocol requires
11 an independent assessment of its implementation.

12 During election periods, an election security
13 architecture is established such that multiple departments
14 and agencies are able to ensure that intelligence and
15 information about possible foreign interference is gathered,
16 assessed and shared as rapidly as possible. The Election
17 Security Coordinating Committee, or ESCC, is a key component
18 of this architecture.

19 The committee can meet at the Deputy
20 Minister, Assistant Deputy Minister or Director-General
21 levels. It is co-chaired by the Privy Council Office, PCO,
22 and by Elections Canada. Its purpose is to help ensure a
23 coordinated approach among the security and intelligence
24 community, Elections Canada and the Commissioner of Canada
25 Elections.

26 Operational coordination between the ESCC,
27 the task force, the Panel of Five allows -- or the goal is to
28 allow key players to coordinate, assess and verify threat-

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1 related information regarding potential interference
2 activities. I note that the ESCC meets -- also meets outside
3 of election periods.

4 Finally, there are a number of inter-
5 departmental standing committees of senior public servants
6 involved in coordinating responses to foreign interference.
7 These are comprised of national security operational and
8 policy committees that exist at the Deputy Minister,
9 Assistant Deputy Minister and Director-General levels. The
10 names of some of those committees are on the screen in front
11 of you and I will not read them all out.

12 This concludes our review of the federal
13 entities involved in matters of foreign interference. You
14 will be glad to know there is no quiz at the end of this
15 presentation and it is our last presentation this morning,
16 Commissioner.

17 **COMMISSAIRE HOGUE:** Alors, merci beaucoup.
18 Vous aurez compris qu'il s'agissait de mettre la table, en
19 quelque sorte, pour permettre à ceux d'entre nous, incluant
20 certaines personnes, probablement membres du public, qui
21 suivent les travaux de la Commission d'être en mesure par la
22 suite de bien comprendre ce à quoi nous ferons référence,
23 mais nous aurons le bénéfice dès cet après-midi de plonger
24 dans le cœur du sujet en ayant le privilège d'entendre parler
25 d'ingérence étrangère directement de la part de certaines
26 personnes qui peuvent en être victimes.

27 Alors, on reprend à 13 heures et on en a pour
28 l'après-midi avec le panel composé de membres des diasporas.

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(Dann)**

1 Merci.

2 **LE GREFFIER:** Order, please. À l'ordre, s'il
3 vous plait.

4 This hearing is in recess until 1 o'clock
5 p.m.

6 La séance est en pause jusqu'à 13 heures de
7 l'après-midi.

8 --- Upon recessing at 11:43 a.m.

9 --- L'audience est suspendue à 11 h 43

10 --- Upon resuming at 12:59 p.m.

11 --- L'audience est reprise à 12 h 59

12 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order please. À l'ordre,
13 s'il vous plaît.

14 This sitting of the Foreign Interference
15 Commission is back in session. Cette séance de la
16 Commission sur l'ingérence étrangère est reprise.

17 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** So good afternoon. I'm
18 going to turn to the panel for the rest of the afternoon, so
19 just forgive me.

20 Bonjour.

21 --- PANEL DISCUSSION: DIASPORA EXPERIENCES WITH ELECTORAL
22 INTERFERENCE/DISCUSSION DES PANÉLISTES: EXPÉRIENCES DIASPORA
23 AVEC L'INTERFÉRENCE ÉLECTORALE :

24 --- PANEL INTRODUCTION BY/INTRODUCTION DES PANÉLISTES PAR MS.

25 KATE McGRANN:

26 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** My name is Kate McGrann;
27 I'm a member of the Commission counsel team.

28 This afternoon's panel is representatives of

1 diaspora groups; they'll be sharing their experiences and
2 those of their communities to provide information and context
3 through the Commission's Stage 1 hearings.

4 I'll introduce our panellists, and then we'll
5 begin with today's panel presentations.

6 Dr. Hamed Esmaeilion is a novelist, dentist,
7 human rights activist, and Director and spokesperson for the
8 Association of Families of PS752 Victims. Flight PS752 was
9 shot down in the early morning of January 8th, 2020, three
10 minutes after taking off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini
11 International Airport, by at least two missiles -- pardon me;
12 two missiles of Iranian's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

13 The Association of Families of PS752 Victims
14 seeks to unite grieving families; keep the memories of the
15 passengers alive; and seek justice.

16 Yuriy Novodvorskiy is a long-time critic of
17 the Russian regime, and a Director and founding member of the
18 Russian Canadian Democratic Alliance. The Russian Canadian
19 Democratic Alliance seeks to unite the Russian community in
20 Canada and to advocate against the Russian Regime.

21 Jaskaran Sandhu is a lawyer and cofounder of
22 Baaz News, which is a news outlet of record for Sikh and
23 Punjabi diaspora communities. Mr. Sandhu has been actively
24 involved in the Sikh community, with a particular focus on
25 advocacy for the last 15 years, including as a board member
26 and Executive Director of the World Sikh Organization.

27 Mehmet Tohti is a Uyghur-Canadian activist,
28 the Executive Director of the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project

1 and cofounder and former Vice-President of the World Uyghur
2 Congress.

3 Grace Dai Wollensak is a National Director of
4 the Falun Dafa Association of Canada. She is the coauthor of
5 a report released by the Association, titled, *Foreign*
6 *Interference and Oppression of Falun Gong in Canada*. This
7 report details the instances of oppression experienced by
8 Falun Gong at the hands of foreign state actors of the
9 People's Republic of China.

10 She's also a member of the Canadian Coalition
11 on Human Rights in China, an initiative led by Amnesty
12 International. She's advocated for the human rights of Falun
13 Gong practitioners since 1999, and acts as a government media
14 contact on behalf of the Falun Gong community in Canada.

15 Unfortunately, Mr. Cheuk Kwan is prevented
16 from joining us today by unexpected circumstances.
17 Fortunately for us, we are instead joined by Ms. Winnie Ng,
18 who is a long-time advocate for the Chinese-Canadian
19 community, and, among other things, serves as co-chair of the
20 Toronto Association for Democracy in China.

21 With those impressive introductions out of
22 the way, turn to our first panellist, Dr. Esmaeilion.

23 Would you please describe your community or
24 communities?

25 **--- STATEMENT BY/DÉCLARATION PAR DR. HAMED ESMAEILION :**

26 **DR. HAMED ESMAEILION:** Thank you very much.

27 On behalf of the Association of Families of
28 Flight PS752 Victims, I want to thank the Madam Commissioner

1 and her team for their efforts in this all-important
2 endeavour and giving me the opportunity to offer my
3 testimony.

4 Like many in the Chinese and Russian and
5 Indian communities, several hundred thousand Iranians have
6 made Canada their home. They're deeply concerned by the
7 increasing threat posed to Canadian democracy, our civil
8 society, and the communities who strive to participate in the
9 cultural mosaic that makes this country so special.

10 I would like to first start by emphasizing to
11 this Commission the urgent importance of officially include
12 Islamic Republic of Iran in the terms of events in the
13 mandate of this Commission. But this inclusion, this
14 Commission will be able to garner the cooperation and input
15 of other security, diplomatic, and intelligence organizations
16 in order to reach a more accurate and comprehensive view of
17 the extent of the threat the Islamic regime poses to Canadian
18 society and the Iranian-Canadian community.

19 As we all know, Iran is fundamentally a
20 diverse, multiethnic society with people of different faiths
21 and ethnicities making up the rich cultural tapestry of
22 Iran's national identity.

23 The first immigrants from Iran are reported
24 to have arrived in Canada in 1901. By 1979, the Iranian
25 community in Canada was no more than a few thousand scattered
26 around the country. In aftermath of the revolution and
27 Islamic takeover of the government, the Iranian community in
28 Canada has grown exponentially. Current estimates indicate

1 that there are over 400,000 Iranians residing in Canada with
2 a high concentration of Iranian-Canadians in Ontario.

3 While initially most Iranians are refugees
4 that fled the brutal repression and persecution of the
5 Islamic Republic regime over the past four decades, Iranian
6 residents of Canada include students, academics,
7 entrepreneurs, and skilled workers from all walks of life.

8 The Islamic regime has not been oblivious to
9 these facts, and since the 1980s, the Islamic regime has
10 focused on Canada for various reasons, including, among
11 others, Canada's vicinity to the United States and the
12 opportunities they may seek in the political and clandestine
13 agenda.

14 In the aftermath of what became known as the
15 Woman, Life, Freedom uprising in September 2022 that was
16 sparked by the brutal murder of Mahsa Jina Amini, Iranian-
17 Canadians made history by coming together in the largest
18 gathering in a political rally organized by my association
19 and other activists in Toronto. On October 1st, 2022, over
20 50,000 people came together in Richmond Hill to express their
21 solidarity with the brave young men and women in Iran and
22 their opposition to the brutal Islamic regime in Iran.

23 While the majority of Iranians who have
24 immigrated to Canada are secular, they have not demonstrated
25 a clear tendency to organize around ideological or partisan
26 institutions. Despite the growing number of immigrants from
27 Iran, engagement in the Canadian democratic institutions has
28 been sporadic at best, with only a handful of Iranians

1 finding their way into provincial or federal political
2 positions. Ontario has had a few MPPs and provincial
3 ministers from among Iranian Canadians, and so far only two
4 MPs have reached the federal Parliament. We are yet to have
5 any ministers in the federal government from members of our
6 community.

7 Behind the political arena, Iranians have
8 made remarkable progress in academia, business, arts and
9 culture, medicine, and many other fields in Canada. This,
10 unfortunately, has brought Canada and the Iranian community
11 in this country squarely in the crosshairs of the Islamic
12 regime and its nefarious plan to not only cause division and
13 mayhem in the Iranian-Canadian community but to also disrupt
14 the Canadian political system in an effort to peddle
15 influence in favour of its policies. I will talk about these
16 in my next comments.

17 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Before I turn to our next
18 question, I have been reminded that I need to slow down so
19 that the translators who are assisting us can follow us and
20 translate along. So I'm reminding myself, and I'll also take
21 this moment to remind our panellists that if you could slow
22 down, that would be very useful.

23 Turning back to you, would you please
24 describe the forms of foreign interference that your
25 community experiences?

26 **DR. HAMED ESMAEILION:** To pick up where I
27 left off in this first part of my comments, I would like to
28 bring into focus how the Islamic regime in Iran seeks to

1 interfere in the political system of democratic countries
2 along the activity -- along its activities to disrupt and
3 divide the Iranian communities around the world.

4 As I noted earlier, the Islamic regime has
5 demonstrated to have a special interest in Canada, and as
6 such, it has made efforts on many levels to further its
7 agenda using the leverage it can muster through the Iranian
8 community in this country.

9 We can consider this effort in two main
10 categories: first, to interfere in Canadian political affairs
11 in service of the regime's interest; and second, to monitor
12 and survey the Iranian community in Canada and identify
13 political and civil rights activists who seek to promote
14 democracy in their home country, but also, to use its
15 operatives to intimidate, harass, sometimes even threaten
16 community members with the intent of blocking any dissent or
17 organized efforts to expose the corruption of the regime in
18 the international arena.

19 Furthermore, there are several reports that
20 have become public, exposing terrorist conspiracies
21 throughout Canada aimed at the United States that have been
22 planned, funded, and directed by the Islamic regime in Iran.

23 As an example, two years ago there was
24 reports about a kidnapping plot of a well-known reporter in
25 the United States and there were reports that there were
26 three Canadians on the list of the kidnappers, but we never
27 heard any report from our government or any report from
28 intelligence services who those people were and what was the

1 plan. There is an existing indictment about that in the
2 United States.

3 Let me give you other examples for each of
4 these main categories that merely represent the tip of a much
5 larger and nefarious iceberg of interference by the Islamic
6 regime in Canada.

7 If I go to my personal experiences, I've been
8 targeted for -- on social media. I've been targeted in
9 Canada if I go to some experiences, verbal attacks, physical
10 attacks. Like 20th of May last year was one of the examples.
11 I'm sure police has a report of that, and we had a gathering
12 in Toronto.

13 When I was in Toronto in last October in
14 downtown Toronto, there was a person approached me, he was on
15 a motorcycle, and then he stopped and he was searching his
16 pockets for something, and then I had to leave the area, go
17 back to the hotel, report to the police. And RCMP and
18 police, I'm sure they have the reports. They were only a few
19 examples.

20 Like, when I go to some names of the former
21 officials of the Islamic Republic, I can say that a former
22 Minister of Islamic Republic, when he was here, he threatened
23 me too. So I will get to that.

24 But once when I went to a grocery store, in
25 the spring of two years ago, when I went back, I had two flat
26 tires on one side. I reported that to the police and still I
27 don't know what RCMP did or what your police did, and I
28 didn't get any report back.

1 So about what they do in Iran. My parents,
2 they're banned to leave the country. My mother is 73 years
3 old. My father is 74. They planned to travel to Canada in
4 November to participate in the fourth anniversary of the
5 downing of Flight PS752. Their passport was confiscated and
6 now they know that they can't leave the country, at least for
7 six months. We don't know what happens after six months.

8 And I can say about other family members of
9 the victims in Iran, also they have been tortured, they have
10 been prisoned. And we have several reports supporting that
11 fact.

12 A very small minority of Iranians in Canada
13 are engaged directly or indirectly as either sympathizers or
14 sometimes even overt operatives of the Islamic regime. It's
15 a small minority, however, leverage is financial advantages
16 that mostly originate from inside Iran and political backing
17 advantages that -- political backing from the Islamic regime
18 to create institutions disguised as community advocacy
19 groups, media, social media, or even research institutes, but
20 effectively seek to undermine the majority of the community
21 that opposes the regime, as well as to meddle with the
22 influence Canadians or influence Canadian government and non-
23 government institutions in favour of the regime's agenda.

24 The level of sophistication of these plans is
25 highly disconcerting to our community and many of us are
26 making our best efforts to identify and expose these covert
27 and overt activities that we find highly dangerous and
28 disruptive. Hence the importance of including the Islamic

1 regime in the Terms of Reference of this Commission.

2 This small minority has demonstrated the
3 intent and capacity to cause division in the Iranian Canadian
4 community while creating an atmosphere of fear and
5 intimidation here in this country.

6 Many Iranians who participate in public
7 events, such as the massive October 1st rally, wore masks to
8 avoid being identified by the regime operatives. A
9 documentary that was made about Flight PS752 had to anonymize
10 many crew members in the final credits of the film because
11 they were in fear of persecution and threats by regime
12 operatives.

13 Another highly concerning example is a
14 multitude of revelations of the increasing number of Islamic
15 regime officials who have sought and been granted permanent
16 residency in Canada or got visas to come to Canada.

17 When I go to examples, we have the person,
18 Mahmoud Reza Khavari. He is a former banker and he was the
19 head of National Bank. He immigrated to Canada in 2011 and
20 he was involved in corruption. And I'm sure the Canadian
21 Government and the intelligence services, they have reports
22 about him.

23 We have Morteza Talaei. He was the former
24 Chief of Police of Tehran. He was seen in Richmond hill two
25 years ago working out in a gym. This is a person who was the
26 Chief of Police of Tehran at the time of killing Zahra
27 Kazemi. He was the Chief of Police who founded Morality
28 Police in Iran, the same organization who killed Mahsa Amini

1 and other innocent girls in Iran.

2 We have Hassan Ghazizadeh Hashemi, the former
3 Minister of the Islamic Regime that was seen vacationing in
4 Montreal, Canada last August.

5 I go to that threat right now. When I raised
6 the issue on Twitter and I wrote to our government, this man
7 had an interview with some media outlets inside Iran and he
8 said:

9 "When I come back to Iran, the
10 actions of Hamed Esmaeilion and the
11 foreign media will be retaliated."

12 (As read)

13 But he was free to walk in Montreal, go visit
14 Casa Loma in Toronto a day after, and finally he went back
15 without any consequences.

16 Now I know that he can't come back to Canada,
17 but we have concerns that how a former Minister of the
18 Islamic Regime can come to this country, threaten the
19 activists here, and just freely go back?

20 I'll go to another name. Son of the current
21 speaker of the Islamic Parliament in Iran, Es'hagh Ghalibaf.
22 He even initiated a lawsuit against the Canadian Government
23 to obtain a visa to come to this country. Hopefully -- you
24 know, I'm happy that we heard his visa finally got rejected
25 after the outcry of the community.

26 Another person is Iran's representative in
27 ICAO, International Civil Aviation Organization. He lives in
28 Montreal. Farhad Parvaresh. Not only because of denial and

1 his role after the downing of Flight PS752 in misinformation
2 campaigns, but this person had connections with Quds Force,
3 is the person who was the head of Iran Air for years, for
4 smuggling weapons to Syria with commercial airplanes. But
5 this person is in Montreal and he is representing the Islamic
6 Regime.

7 These are merely the high-profile names that
8 have been exposed and unfortunately indicate the severity and
9 the scale of this highly dangerous problem for Canada and the
10 Iranian Canadian community.

11 I would like to emphasize that these are not
12 benign attempts by regime officials to seek a better life in
13 Canada, but serious indicators of money laundering at best,
14 but also efforts to increase the presence and influence of
15 regime operatives in Canada.

16 I share our community's concerns that there
17 may be thousands of other lesser-known regime affiliates,
18 officials, and operatives, who have found their way to Canada
19 and the threat their presence poses to our society and
20 communities.

21 Last but not least, an example of how regime
22 operatives have breached the very depths of our democratic
23 institutions in order to interfere and have an influence.

24 Just recently, a member of the Iranian
25 community in Canada sought to run for as a member of the
26 federal Parliament. The intensity of the smear campaign
27 against him went far beyond the normal fervor of political
28 competition in Canada. We believe that this is indicative of

1 a much more sophisticated and multi-layered attempt by the
2 regime and its operatives to hinder the participation of
3 Iranians opposed to the regime in the Canadian democratic
4 institutions.

5 On the other hand, there are examples of
6 organized support for those who are known to be aligned with
7 the Islamic regime in Iran. There are many alarming reports
8 of a certain member of the federal Parliament to be
9 supporting regime sympathizers and even meeting with regime
10 officials and Parliamentarians in Canada.

11 Again, these are just the tip of the iceberg
12 that is visible to us, and we fear that these examples are
13 indicative of a much more serious and dangerous problem that
14 must be investigated and dealt with.

15 Let me end with another example. The Islamic
16 regime has a stranglehold on every aspect of social,
17 political, economic, cultural and civil life in Iran. The
18 sports is, of course, no exception. Every sport category is
19 closely monitored and influenced by various security,
20 intelligence, political and even military arms of the regime.

21 All international sporting events are
22 carefully orchestrated by the intelligence, propaganda and
23 military establishment of the Islamic regime. Every sport
24 team, most especially soccer teams, are accompanied by
25 multitude of those operatives who not only seek to direct and
26 monitor the athletes, but also disguise the state covert
27 operations under the guise of sporting events. For example,
28 the entourage of a given soccer team usually reaches over 50

1 individuals in number, but nearly one-third of those
2 individuals having no connections with the given sporting
3 events.

4 Shortly after the downing of flight PS752
5 where 177 innocent civilian lives, including that of my wife
6 and nine-year-old daughter, was taken, we heard rumours of a
7 so-called friendly soccer match that was planned to take
8 place between the Canadian and the Islamic Republic national
9 soccer teams. It was planned to be held in B.C. Place in
10 Vancouver.

11 Against the backdrop of the tragic murder of
12 so many Iranian Canadians, this was outrageous to us, the
13 families of the victims, but also to the community as a
14 whole. Given the lack of diplomatic relations between Canada
15 and the Islamic Republic regime, one wonders who was behind
16 the planning and execution of such an event.

17 Who were the liaisons on behalf of the
18 Islamic regime here in Canada? Who supported or sponsored
19 the event, and why? We were asking how were the visas for
20 the entourage being processed.

21 Ultimately, we believe that this was an
22 attempt to sports wash the criminality of the Islamic regime
23 and to bury the story of flight PS752.

24 Fortunately, the community came together and
25 posed not only serious questions surrounding this nefarious
26 plan, but also helped to put an end and cancel the event.
27 Again, this example demonstrates the level of sophistication
28 and nefariousness of the Islamic regime's scheme to influence

1 and meddle the community and political discourse in Canada.

2 Thank you.

3 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** The last question for now
4 is, would you please describe the impact that foreign
5 interference has had on your community?

6 **DR. HAMED ESMAILION:** Yeah. As I explained
7 before, I notice every time we go to rallies several members
8 of the community, they wear masks, sunglasses, hats to not be
9 identified.

10 There are reports that when they travel to
11 Iran, the cell phones get confiscated, they get persecuted,
12 interrogated. Their family members are under pressure. Even
13 we have had members who met Canadian Parliament members here
14 and their family members in Iran have been pressured or have
15 been interrogated.

16 So this is the least that I can say but, as I
17 said before, it doesn't let the members of the community to
18 get engaged in -- especially in political levels. We have
19 organizations here that they don't have any relations with
20 the civic organizations in the community, with the cultural
21 organizations in the community like Tirgan civic association,
22 civic organizations like us or even political members of the
23 community like our Parliament member, Mr. Ali Ehsassi, but
24 they are everywhere and they get funded by -- unfortunately,
25 by our governments.

26 We have reports of some organizations that
27 have been funded by Department of National Defence or
28 Canadian Armed Forces. And these are the questions on the

1 table, that who are these people and what are intelligence
2 services organizations they know about because the
3 community's fearful to ask and to act because we know that
4 they have endless financial resources and they can initiate
5 lawsuits against everyone.

6 Even now, when I'm testifying right now, I
7 have to be very careful because we are ordinary people and
8 it's not easy to fight with some organizations that they have
9 financial resources and they know people and they get the
10 best support not only from Iran, from other countries like
11 Russia, China, the government of Russia, government of China.
12 And I hope that this Commission will start to add Iran to the
13 terms of references.

14 One of the other things that I have to say,
15 when we go to Department of Justice in United States, we go
16 to website, there's several people that you see that have
17 been charged with foreign interference, but we don't see any
18 Iranian name in Canada that have been pursued by Department
19 of Justice.

20 Recently, there was a person, Salman Salmani.
21 He was the Deputy Minister of Interior Affairs in Iran. At
22 the time of flood in November in 2019, 1,500 people got
23 massacred in the streets of Iran and this person came to
24 Canada and got -- obtained a visa and he was here.

25 Like fortunately, the Canadian government,
26 they found him, but now they're deporting him instead of
27 putting him on a trial for crimes against humanity. This is
28 what the families of the victims have asked for several

1 months and our association is supporting, too.

2 When they see there's no consequences, I
3 mean, the community doesn't feel safe and they're worried.
4 And when these -- you know, these names that I mentioned,
5 when these terrible people are here in this country and when
6 they see that some organizations are very active, that's why
7 the community doesn't feel safe to participate in lots of
8 activities.

9 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Thank you very much.

10 We'll now turn to our next panelist, Mr.
11 Yuriy Novodvorskiy.

12 Mr. Novodvorskiy, would you please describe
13 your community or communities?

14 **--- STATEMENT BY/DÉCLARATION PAR MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:**

15 **MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:** Bonjour, and good
16 afternoon, everyone. Thank you for having me here.

17 My name is Yuriy Novodvorskiy, and I'm here
18 to represent the RCDA, the Russian Canadian Democratic
19 Alliance.

20 I was born in Russia, but for the most
21 several decades have lived first in the U.S. and now as a
22 permanent resident in Canada. I have been opposed to the
23 Russian regime for many years, but only became involved in
24 activism in 2022 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

25 And in September 2022, we connected with
26 other Russian activists across Canada in different cities to
27 create the RCDA, an organization based on the values of
28 democracy, human rights, anti-imperialism and, in particular,

1 opposite to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

2 I'd like to thank the Commission for giving
3 me an opportunity to appear here and allowing our
4 organization to participate in this step of the inquiry.

5 So to describe our community, it is very
6 multi-faceted. People have come over from Russia to Canada
7 at different stages of their life, some of them coming as
8 economic migrants, some of them as refugees, students, work
9 visas, people who work in different professions, including
10 information technology, entrepreneurs, medical professionals
11 of many different religions, and also many different -- of
12 many different geographic origins. People who, of course,
13 come from the major cities of Moscow, St. Petersburg, but
14 also I have met people at events who are from Siberia, from
15 the far east who themselves are from or who have relatives
16 from the ethnic republics that make up the Russian
17 federation.

18 And this expands into also people having very
19 different opinions across the political spectrum.

20 We have people, members who have been opposed
21 to the Russian regime for years or even decades, some people
22 who only began to realize the extent of atrocities committed
23 by the Russian government after they came to Canada and were
24 exposed to different sources of media. And unfortunately, of
25 course, there are still some people who support Putin and his
26 regime.

27 When we organize our events, we try to make
28 them as open as possible to reach as wide an audience of

1 Russian Canadians as possible. We have letter-writing events
2 to political prisoners in Russia, events and fundraisers to
3 support Ukraine and many events that are focused on
4 supporting dissidents in Russia, the LGBTQ movement and other
5 politically repressed groups as well as other cultural events
6 that correspond to our values.

7 One of the key points we'd like to emphasize
8 is that in its propaganda, Putin's regime tries to emphasize
9 that Russian society is a monolith supporting the politics of
10 the Russian government, the atrocities it is committing, and
11 that is not true. With all the conversations we have, we see
12 that Russians have many different opinions, Russian Canadians
13 especially, and they are not always able to voice these
14 opinions because they fear retribution or because, after
15 decades of being exposed to Russian media, they have
16 retreated into a sort of political apathy or unwillingness to
17 voice their opinions. And this was one of the obstacles that
18 we seek to overcome.

19 Even with people who support Putin's
20 politics, very often this is not active support. It could be
21 the result of somebody immigrating to Canada at a later stage
22 in life and they remain surrounded by Russian news and so
23 they are not aware that any sort of alternative organizations
24 or alternative news exists that provides a different
25 perspective from what Russian propaganda is telling them.

26 We try to make it our goal to connect with as
27 many Russian Canadians as possible and our goal is to show
28 that there's an alternative Russian position, one that is

1 against the politics of the Russian regime.

2 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Please describe the forms
3 of foreign interference that your community experiences.

4 **MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:** Thank you.

5 So in general, we see foreign interference
6 happening in one of two forms. The first is disinformation
7 and news manipulation, and the second is direct and indirect
8 threats against members of the Russian Canadian community.

9 Disinformation and news manipulation, partly
10 true news stories or completely false news stories, they are
11 generally spread over social media or Russian news platforms
12 or alternative news media sites, but it takes different forms
13 depending on who the target audience is, whether it's the
14 Russian diaspora in Canada or the wider non-Russian Canadian
15 audience. So ---

16 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Just a question I have.

17 To the best of your knowledge, is there any
18 specific social media that are used for that or there's many
19 of them that are used?

20 **MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:** So I would say that
21 the methods of the Russian government involve spreading the
22 message across as wide an array of communications channels as
23 possible, meaning you can find their messaging on all social
24 media platforms. But there are definitely some social media
25 platforms that are targeted more, that have more channels,
26 more fake accounts, things like that.

27 So for the Russian diaspora, the main focus,
28 especially for the younger population, they get a lot of

1 their news from Telegram news channels, also YouTube channels
2 and Russian TV over internet, especially for some of the
3 people who are older. And for the non-Russian audience, I
4 would say Telegram is probably less a factor. More people
5 there would get their news from YouTube, Twitter, Facebook
6 and now TikTok especially.

7 So when targeting the Russian diaspora, the
8 focus of the news manipulation is -- pushes either Russian
9 news stories, stories that paint the regime in a positive
10 light, and also blame the west for any problems that exist in
11 the world. And also, there's a focus on conspiracy theories
12 basically promoting false science.

13 The purpose of these stories is to have
14 people trust government less and put less faith into actual
15 journalism, doctors, scientists, basically anybody who
16 actually has area expertise with the goal of making them more
17 susceptible to Russian propaganda.

18 When targeting the wider Canadian non-Russian
19 audience, as I mentioned, the social media, Twitter, YouTube,
20 Instagram, TikTok now, the focus is on -- less on pushing
21 pro-Russian news up front and instead first it's to prepare
22 people and put them in the position when they are more
23 susceptible to pro-Russian positions.

24 The focus is generally on divisive issues,
25 divisive Canadian issues to undermine faith in democracy and
26 increase political polarization.

27 What happens then is when somebody is exposed
28 to news sources like this, and especially coming from many

1 different channels, it creates an atmosphere of believability
2 where they feel that this is a commonsense position, that
3 it's coming from many different angles because it does seem
4 to be coming from many different accounts, but the source for
5 all these is usually the same. It's either directly
6 controlled by the Russian government or it might be some
7 marginal source that has been promoted by the Russian
8 government. And what this does is it increases social
9 division and dysfunction.

10 Until recently, there have also been two
11 Russian TV channels that essentially were -- there was
12 "Russia Today", RT, which presented itself as partly
13 independent from the government, and Sputnik TV, which I
14 don't think even tried to present themselves as independent.
15 But in both cases, they were essentially mouthpieces of the
16 Russian regime.

17 They were both sanctioned or banned following
18 the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but I believe they might
19 still be available over the internet.

20 And the purpose of this misinformation that
21 is targeting non-Russian Canadian audience, the focus on
22 divisive issues, the reason why the Russian government is
23 trying to increase social division and dysfunction is because
24 it makes the entire society and government more dysfunctional
25 and less able to react in terms of crisis.

26 We saw this with some other governments when
27 the pandemic was occurring, with COVID, and now with -- when
28 it comes to Ukraine support, where instead of it being a

1 medical issue in some governments, it became a political
2 issue due to increased polarization. And the federal
3 government was not able to achieve an effective response to
4 the crisis.

5 With aid to Ukraine, we see some governments
6 where the majority of the population supports sending it to
7 Ukraine, the majority of politicians support sending it to
8 Ukraine. However, the government is not able to actually
9 reach any sort of decision or action because of the increased
10 dysfunction in the system. And this is partially a result of
11 Russian propaganda efforts.

12 Another reason why Russia focuses its
13 manipulation efforts to create social dysfunction is that
14 democratic states present an attractive alternative to the
15 state regime that Putin has implemented, a criminal and
16 corrupt regime. And when democratic states become more
17 dysfunctional, it allows Putin and his regime to point to
18 them and show that -- well, make the case that things are not
19 any better there and that, at least in Russia, you have some
20 semblance of stability.

21 Finally, the other reason is that, compared
22 to authoritarian systems, democratic states are, in many
23 ways, more resilient to corruption, which means that they are
24 more difficult for Putin's regime to control. And by
25 increasing polarization, increasing social divisions, it
26 leads society in a direction where corruption becomes more
27 possible.

28 Moving to the other major form of foreign

1 interference I mentioned, direct and indirect threats against
2 members of the Russian community, some of this is similar to
3 what Dr. Hamed Esmaeilion mentioned with the Iranian
4 diaspora. Some of it might work a little different, but
5 there is a focus on harassment of relatives in Russia.

6 Many Russians who come here, they come with
7 families, but many of them still have parents or relatives
8 who still live in the Russian Federation. And we've had
9 cases where Russian activists have been identified here in
10 Canada and then police initiate some sort of harassment
11 actions against their family back home.

12 If you've ever walked by any Russian
13 Consulate in Canada, you'll see that it's surrounded by
14 cameras. And through identification via recorded video or
15 through following on social media, but they are able to
16 identify people here who engage in any sort of protest action
17 and they're willing to put pressure on completely unrelated -
18 - well, relatives in Russia who are completely unrelated to
19 any sort of protest activity.

20 Another form we have seen of pressure is the
21 refusal of constabulary services. There was a case
22 documented in the media here in Ottawa where a protestor,
23 somebody who was engaged in activism against the Russian
24 Government, they were refused access to the Consulate, which
25 means they could not renew their documents, could not provide
26 any forms they need from Canada. And this is a major concern
27 to people in the Russian Canadian community because not
28 everybody is yet a Canadian citizen. If you are here on a

1 work visa, student visa, even if you have PR, at some point
2 Canada will likely ask you for some documents from Russia,
3 whether it's just an extension of your passport or something
4 else, and a refusal of constabulary services essentially puts
5 people under the threat of potential deportation, and
6 especially when you've been engaged in political activism,
7 that becomes very dangerous.

8 Another form of threat against members of the
9 Russian Canadian community is the employment of criminal
10 charges in Russia, which is essentially a greater degree of
11 threat from the previous two situations I mentioned. But the
12 laws passed in Russia allow a criminal prosecution to be
13 opened against you if you engage in any sort of political
14 activism abroad, but even for something as innocuous as
15 having social media posts. And we've had cases where people
16 who have PR in Canada, are applying for citizenship
17 nonetheless because they posted something on social media or
18 engaged in some sort of activism against the Russian
19 Government, they have criminal charges laid against them, and
20 then this becomes an additional obstacle when they attempt to
21 gain citizenship. So it is a major threat.

22 And an extension of this is that it makes it
23 more dangerous to travel outside of the country. Many
24 countries still practice extradition to Russia. For example,
25 Turkey, which is a major transportation hub, extradites
26 people to the Russian Government, as does Thailand and some
27 other popular tourist destinations. So that all is an
28 additional danger if you have criminal charges against you.

1 Finally, there is always the risk of hacking
2 and electronic surveillance. It's well documented that the
3 Russian Government invests considerable resources into
4 hackers and ways of accessing electronic devices. And when
5 you engage in political activism, this becomes an active
6 threat. But not only members of the Russian community, this
7 is also a potential threat for the Canadian Government and
8 for Canadian Government entities.

9 As was documented in the -- in other
10 countries, in their investigations of Russian interference,
11 there were cases where Russian hackers got access to
12 political parties, which led to potentially compromising
13 situations.

14 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Please describe the impact
15 that foreign interference has had on your community?

16 **MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:** So the overall
17 effect on the community that we see is that although many
18 Russians are critical of Putin's regimes, they see that there
19 are many risks to them speaking out in public about their
20 views. And what this does, it helps Putin to maintain an
21 image of a united and monolithic community that supports the
22 politics of his regime, when the reality is actually quite
23 different.

24 We've heard often, "Why don't more Russians
25 speak out against the war or participate in anti-Russian
26 activity if they are opposed?" And this is one of those
27 reasons, because there is a realistic fear of retribution.

28 I've spoken to many concerned people at many

1 of our events, and some people are very in support, some
2 people are softly in support, but for many of them, they are
3 aware that these threats are real, and so they always have to
4 make that calculation of how far they are willing to go,
5 because they are essentially putting themselves and their
6 families at risk.

7 Many other people retreat away from politics
8 entirely and hide behind apathy. Some people are truly
9 trying to, like, segregate themselves from politics
10 completely. But in many other cases, what we see is that
11 years of Russian propaganda has created this feeling for many
12 people where any sort of resistance is pointless. They feel
13 alone. They feel like they're the only ones who have these
14 opinions against a united Russian state. And this is the
15 goal of many repressive governments' propaganda: to make the
16 individual feel powerless and unable to accomplish anything
17 of value, which is something we try to work against, but it
18 is a difficult process to break through that propaganda.

19 One of the focuses of our activities is to
20 connect with such people and show them that alternative
21 organizations such as ours that value human-centred values do
22 exist.

23 One other question that came up as we were
24 preparing for this public inquiry is, "Why don't more Russian
25 Canadians participate in government inquiries or turn to the
26 government with any information regarding foreign
27 interference?" And it's more or less the same answer, that
28 they see that there are substantial and clear risks to doing

1 so, whereas there's not a clear safeguard that the Canadian
2 Government provides for those who put themselves at risk, or
3 risk losing their legal status, or have some threats against
4 their family.

5 I and other members of the RCDA and members
6 of our community are very grateful for the opportunity to
7 live in Canada as part of a democratic society that
8 emphasizes human and civil rights.

9 The one thing I'd like to bring up is that we
10 definitely want to see efforts to limit interference by any
11 foreign actor that can compromise the integrity of the
12 Canadian democratic process. But what we would like,
13 ideally, is a targeted and sufficient response, because in
14 our experience from the foreign interference that we have
15 seen, the actors are often based on foreign soil or with ties
16 to the consulates and the embassies, not necessarily members
17 of the general Russian Canadian community. And the concern
18 is that if the Commission recommends a sweeping response that
19 adversely affects the entire Russian Canadian community, it
20 may be limiting its own effectiveness, and in effect,
21 counterproductive. A heavy-handed response could impact the
22 civil rights of all members of our community, the vast
23 majority of whom are law-abiding Canadian residents and
24 citizens.

25 So we urge the Commission to recommend
26 targeted measures that focus on the specific sources of
27 foreign interference. Thank you.

28 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Can you just tell me,

1 maybe you said that, what is the size of the Russian
2 community in Canada?

3 **MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:** So I'm not an expert
4 on the statistics, but from my understanding, ---

5 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Just a ballpark.

6 **MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:** --- there's about
7 half a million people in Canada who have ties or origins with
8 Russia, but this is over many decades. Specifically
9 immigrants from the Russian Federation, I believe it is
10 around 80,000, as of the last census. However, I do believe
11 that that number has increased at a faster pace over the last
12 few years, as a lot more people have tried to find ways of
13 leaving the Russian Federation and moving to Canada. Some of
14 these people would probably not show up on censuses as they
15 may be here on work and student visas or PR. But those are
16 the numbers I have.

17 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

18 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** We'll turn now to our
19 third panelist, Mr. Mehmet Tohti. Would you please describe
20 your community or communities?

21 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** Thank you. Do I open
22 this, or?

23 **MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK:** I think the mic is
24 ---

25 **MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:** You have to bring it
26 down.

27 **MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK:** --- off. You have
28 to -- oh, okay. Just ---

1 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** Well first of all, I would
2 like to thank my invitation and ---

3 **MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK:** I think ---

4 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** One moment, sorry.

5 **MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK:** I think you have to
6 turn it on.

7 **MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:** It's already on, I
8 think.

9 **MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK:** Just try it.

10 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** How about now? It is on,
11 actually. Hello?

12 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** It's sounding a little
13 quiet to me. I wonder if ---

14 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** I don't know, maybe we can
15 switch.

16 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Switch, yeah.

17 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** How about now?

18 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** That's fantastic.

19 **--- STATEMENT BY/DÉCLARATION PAR MR. MEHMET TOHTI:**

20 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** Thank you. And I believe
21 the success of this Public Inquiry on Foreign Interference is
22 crucial for the future of our nation and unless we study it
23 and figure out the loopholes and close it down, the stake of
24 inaction will be very high, involving future generations, and
25 for that reason, I really want this Commission to be
26 successful and serve the best interests of our nation.

27 For our community, Uyghur Canadians are, from
28 coast, to coast, to coast, approximately 2,500. And the

1 latest census from Census Canada is about 1,700 Uyghur
2 Canadians. At least 1,700 people identified themselves as
3 Uyghur Canadians in 2017.

4 As of February 2017, China's Government
5 confiscated all the passports from Uyghurs as part of this
6 genocide campaign. And so we haven't seen anyone escaping
7 from the country. And there is some international migration
8 from some countries, like Turkey or some central Asian,
9 countries to Canada. Maybe approximately a couple hundred,
10 maximum. But the newborns, and that 2,500 is probably the
11 maximum. It translates as three- to 400 families.

12 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Please describe the forms
13 of foreign interference your community experiences?

14 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** Just let me get a little
15 more, Uyghur Canadians as well?

16 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Yes, please.

17 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** Canada, we are small, the
18 community, but we have 13 members in the Canadian Armed
19 Forces and seven members in the police and RCMP and others,
20 and 23 nurses, seven family doctors, and 28 PhDs, 13
21 professors in Canadian universities, and 76 Masters. So
22 despite we are small, we are very vibrant, we are active in
23 our communities, and we are the first generation of Uyghur
24 Canadians and we're trying to integrate the society, at the
25 same time, contribute to society.

26 And in terms of interference, yeah, that is
27 the advocacy point of Uyghur organizations since maybe 20/25
28 years.

1 Personally, my first interaction with
2 Canadian Government started in 1998, as soon as I landed in
3 Canada.

4 Since then, I have had more than 100 meetings
5 and parliamentary briefings about interference of Chinese
6 Government to our family members, and the harassment, and the
7 threat phone calls from Chinese Police.

8 And I remember my first media report about --
9 this one was published in 2007, "Beijing is always watching".
10 It was published in Maclean Magazine in 2007 on May 14th.
11 And this article refuted three incidents. One in 2004.
12 Seven Uyghur acrobats brought by Chinese Government for a
13 show in Canada to celebrate Chinese New Year, they defected
14 in Canada and so they asked help from our organization, from
15 me, and I came all the way from Mississauga to Ottawa, just
16 picked them up, and then immediately there was attack from
17 the Chinese Embassy and the Consulate, and somehow accused
18 our organization, me, just hijacking them.

19 And so then the press and the -- declared
20 that they applied for asylum with their own will. And so
21 that story is closed, but the attack, never. And since then,
22 the Chinese Government constantly attacks.

23 And then April 2004, I was heading to Munich,
24 Germany, for the establishment of World Uyghur Congress. And
25 just before, one day prior my departure, I was called by
26 Chinese Police from Kashgar, my hometown, and they brought my
27 mother and one of my brothers on the side, just to force on
28 me not to go to Germany and not to participate in the

1 foundation of World Uyghur Congress.

2 And so this article is talking about that.

3 And other main -- the background of this
4 article is 2006, approximately this time. The Chinese -- the
5 Uzbekistan Government abducted Huseyin Celil, Canadian
6 citizen of Uyghur origin, when he visited his mother in-law
7 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

8 And within a couple of months, that gentleman
9 was smuggled to China by the Chinese Government, and he was
10 eventually sentenced for life. And still we don't know if
11 he's alive or dead. But his four children and the wife are
12 still living in Burlington, Ontario.

13 And I was campaigning for the release of
14 Huseyin Celli. And this article was published within that
15 context. At that time Chinese agents are very active and
16 they're just following me through various cars, and they're
17 visiting my home, and they knock on doors, and with the
18 Chinese language newspapers, and they sent me numerous
19 statements from the Consulate officials, even threats.

20 So this was the first report about the
21 Chinese interference or intimidation. It was 17 years.
22 Seventeen (17) years I'm talking about. Two thousand seven
23 (2007).

24 And since then, another -- so probably it
25 highlights the interference of the Chinese Government. I
26 left my hometown in 1991. Since then, Chinese Government did
27 not allow any of my family members, including my mother,
28 siblings, or father, close relatives, did not allow any of

1 them to apply for a passport just to visit me. I cannot go
2 back, so it is also total isolation. Just for what? Just to
3 speak up about the rights of Uyghur people and the Chinese
4 human rights abuses. Just very simple exercise of our basic
5 freedom in Canada.

6 And for that reason, when we say
7 interference, and maybe many people may think that that is
8 not the proper word, or at least it is proper between state-
9 to-state relationship, for example, interference of hostile
10 government, for example, in Canada through misinformation,
11 disinformation campaign, or deception, or stealing property,
12 intellectual property and others.

13 But when it comes to individual level, it is
14 about threat. It is about hijacking of your family members
15 to force you or compel you to live within the rule of hostile
16 regime in a democratic country like in Canada and force you
17 to be an informant and use all of the arresting power, just
18 like proxies in institutions or covert legions underground,
19 just like police stations, just to chase you and put pressure
20 on you to stop what you are doing.

21 And so for individual level, the foreign
22 interference is totally different. And for that reason, just
23 I would like to highlight that one.

24 When we say the individual level, it is about
25 travel ban. For example, I cannot travel to Turkey because
26 of Chinese pressure. The Turkish Government put a travel ban
27 on me. Otherwise, I don't have any criminal record,
28 anything. I cannot go to central Asia because of the Chinese

1 Government's pressure. And some middle eastern countries,
2 where China has developed very strong relationships.

3 And it is smuggling of people, and it is
4 rendition, it is repatriation when we say foreign
5 interference in individual level. And it is the misuse of
6 INTERPOL system. Putting red notes on your name and so at
7 any time you can be arrested. It happened in our communities
8 many, many times.

9 And misuse of UN system and approach the UN-
10 organized institutions to provide, for example, if I go to
11 Geneva to testify, or just to campaign work, to talk about
12 Uyghurs issues, the Chinese Government just finds a way to
13 get my personal information beforehand. And it happened.
14 Many UN staff also testified about that. And for that
15 reason, the Uyghur situation is quite unique, not only in
16 China, at the same time in Canada as well.

17 For example, there are alliance Canadians, I
18 believe, in this room and if you apply for a Chinese visa,
19 you will be subject to different rules, different application
20 form. And if, as we were Canadian -- if I apply to visa for
21 the Chinese embassy or consulate, I will be subjected to
22 different formalities. And for that reason, our communities,
23 they don't go to Chinese embassy, they don't go to Chinese
24 consulate because there are some problem components of the
25 application. And for that reason, just the foreign
26 interference could be a broader language, but if you break it
27 down, there are a lot of components in it just I would like
28 to highlight.

1 And another form of foreign interference
2 which is unique for Uyghurs, it is transnational repression.

3 Transnational repression, I touched a little
4 bit, including the travel ban. But the many Uyghurs that are
5 members of exiled Uyghur communities in jail in many parts of
6 the world, including Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Turkey. They
7 don't have any criminal record. Just because China's
8 government wanted them repatriated back to China and so those
9 -- the host countries arrested them and, after the
10 interrogation, they couldn't find anything and so we have to
11 use the UN system, Committee Against Torture, to put pressure
12 on those countries to stop the extradition.

13 And so transnational oppression is very
14 important part of the foreign interference for Uyghur
15 communities and many Uyghurs cannot travel. Even with a
16 Canadian passport, we are afraid to travel in some countries.

17 And that is where -- for example, the people
18 are calling me from somewhere in Africa, Egypt. Egyptian
19 government deported more than 37 Uyghurs just upon the
20 Chinese request.

21 And Thailand, it happened for Thailand.
22 Kazakhstan and Pakistan and Afghanistan and those countries.
23 Even Turkey. And for that reason, transnational repression
24 is very big part of foreign interference when it comes to
25 Uyghurs.

26 I would like to -- I would like to highlight
27 a couple of individual stories. There's one, the lady in
28 Vancouver, Tornissa (phon.). She's a nurse and she was

1 protesting in front of the Chinese consulate in Vancouver and
2 she was harassed by the Chinese, the consulate officials or
3 any other, because she couldn't identify. Three or four
4 times even physically attacked in Canada. She's a Canadian
5 citizen.

6 And there are another gentleman, and -- in
7 Edmonton. His physician wrote a letter to the Minister of
8 Immigration and Public Safety a year ago, and he was about to
9 die. And the Chinese government isolated his own daughter
10 for 20 years without giving a passport or without responding
11 to the correspondence from Canadian Immigration.

12 And at the end, that physician wrote to both
13 the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Public
14 Safety, at the same time forward that letter to Chinese
15 embassy as well, just asking them in humanitarian just allow
16 his daughter just to travel to Canada to say goodbye before
17 his final minutes. And the Chinese government did not
18 respond and the father, without seeing his daughter, just
19 died a couple months ago in Edmonton.

20 And so it is -- there are a lot of personal
21 tragic stories like this and so this situation of Uyghurs and
22 some of them already highlighted in our report. It should be
23 attached to the paper submitted to the Commission.

24 And there are individual testimonies and most
25 of them are Uyghur Canadians and the story of harassment,
26 intimidation and threat.

27 And not only -- it is not only from my
28 personal experience. Many Uyghur Canadians are experiencing

1 the same thing.

2 Just before any major campaign items we
3 launch or before finalize -- finalizing any campaign items,
4 for example, just before the Parliamentary hearing there were
5 some disturbing messages all the time I receive somewhere
6 from the cities in China are really ugly content. And I
7 think it is also in the report.

8 Then last year, January 16th, early in the
9 morning, just as soon as I got my office in Ottawa and I
10 received a phone call. The phone number was -- looked like -
11 - it looks like the Hong Kong number, not the Chinese
12 mainland, Chinese number so I picked up the number -- the
13 phone. And it was Chinese state police.

14 And they put my mother's brother or my cousin
15 on the side of the phone. Just -- it was just week away for
16 the Parliamentary vote on the M62 motion for the resettlement
17 of 10,000 Uyghurian refugees. And just openly they say that
18 my mother was dead and the two sisters were dead, and I ask,
19 "How about my brothers and their spouses and the childrens?".
20 They send me a message.

21 And later on, I confirm it through third
22 party that my mother was dead in a concentration camp at the
23 age of 76, but still I don't know when, even she has any
24 grave, which date, what time, which year, even. I don't
25 know.

26 And my two sisters, I don't know. And how
27 about -- my two sisters, I don't know when exactly, which
28 date they were killed.

1 And so basically, sending that kind of
2 message and implying me that this was the cost you have to
3 pay if you continue to advocate. And so yeah, the cost for
4 the advocacy here in Canada, it is really high for some
5 communities. It is unfortunate.

6 And also, there's a lack of protection in
7 Canada as well. And the most disturbing thing is that we --
8 we wanted to have a legal summit in last year from July 3rd
9 to July 6 in Alma, Quebec -- that is small town, lovely town
10 -- with legal professionals. And July 2nd, in Montreal we
11 dined in a restaurant. And are we finished, we were heading
12 to hotel and I invited one official from Global Affairs to
13 the dinner and he was there.

14 As soon as I left, within two, three minutes
15 I received a call and he -- that official from Global Affairs
16 told me that, "Mehmet, two cars are following you. Be
17 careful".

18 And so I made some sharp turns and I got my
19 hotel and I immediately called back. And he said that he
20 tried to intervene and those two cars, the licence plate,
21 plates are covered and so just one person could not catch up
22 to and basically, they escaped.

23 It is happening here in Canada, in Montreal.
24 Not in somewhere else. The people are watching you,
25 following you.

26 It happened in 2006 when I campaigned for the
27 release of Huseyin Celli. Three SUVs just -- I didn't know
28 and my neighbours reminded me, "You know those cars, whenever

1 you come, they will come. Whenever you leave, they are
2 leaving just behind you".

3 And then I called some security department
4 just asked help. Just I don't know who they are, but just I
5 really afraid about my safety. And a couple days disappeared
6 and so now, more than ever, we see reports that Chinese
7 military members with fake ID just coming to Canada and
8 living with us. And police stations -- we identified --
9 actually, the one human rights organization in Spain
10 identified number of them in Montreal and Toronto and others.
11 We don't know how many.

12 We don't know how many are walking on the
13 street right now, put together. And so this is real danger.

14 And in 2018, when I was in Italy, in Rome, I
15 saw the Chinese police with the uniform. I scared. And now
16 we are read in the news that they are a number of police
17 stations in Canada.

18 And so the function of those police stations
19 is not here just to go to party. They collect information.
20 They monitor your schedule and they send that information to
21 the Public Safety in China and they coordinate together. And
22 then in China, reach out to your families, family members,
23 and take hostage of your family members and they force you to
24 do something against your will in Canada. And they work in
25 coordination, they are a piece of the whole integral part of
26 the government body, and there a number of names they are
27 being called, United Front, and community organizations, or
28 the provincial organizations. But if you dig deep, they

1 function basically on the name of providing services for the
2 Chinese communities, just getting some information,
3 extracting information, spying, collection of intelligence.

4 So it is really an important issue that has
5 not been touched in Canada since long, since 2000. And for
6 that reason, it is really important for this Commission just
7 to dig deep, just to find out the loopholes in the system, if
8 you have any faulty line in our system, just to close it down
9 for the safety and the security of Canadians in the future.

10 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** You touched on this topic
11 in your previous answer, but would you please describe the
12 impact that foreign interference has had on your community
13 here in Canada?

14 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** Okay. It is really tough.
15 Last summer I travelled some provinces and cities and I
16 visited our community members, because I have been going
17 through the same tough situation. Just imagine you have some
18 joyful event in your family. You cannot share that event
19 with your family members back home. You cannot send texts to
20 them, you cannot call them, and you cannot share photos, and
21 all communications are cut off.

22 And it is the same situation for all Uyghur
23 Canadians all across the country. They don't know even if
24 their family members are alive or dead, because Chinese
25 Government just blocks the whole communication. And using
26 their own, what is called in China, the 50 Cent Party, or
27 specially trained propogandists, just to send the propaganda
28 about how Uyghurs are happy, this and that, but in reality,

1 none of them can freely communicate with their family members
2 because since 2017, Chinese Government arrested if anyone
3 back home has any history of communicating with people abroad
4 or visiting certain countries, just that became a reason for
5 detention and for internment in concentration camps. And so
6 many people disconnected from their loved ones here and
7 abroad, or Canada, and many Uyghur Canadians are afraid to
8 call them in fear that they may give them trouble.

9 And so basically the Uyghur Canadians live in
10 total darkness without getting any information about their
11 family members, whether they're alive, and also family
12 unification. I know some of them sponsored their family
13 members to come to Canada and the Chinese Government refused
14 to issue a passport, or sometimes if they -- when they
15 receive any constabulary news from the Embassy in Beijing,
16 they cannot go to Beijing, or there are certain time windows
17 for applicants to fulfill certain procedures and it is not
18 that easy because of that environment, the police state, and
19 in the midst of active genocide.

20 And for that reason, this impact is huge on
21 the community and they developed kind of -- all of them, they
22 have the same problem, just the stress and kind of
23 depression, and low productivity, and some uncomfortable
24 situation families as well, and they lost the joy in the
25 family and they lost that kind of family environment and they
26 lost the connection, and from their -- back home.

27 Usually we, Uyghurs, are a family-loving
28 people and we count previous ancestors and reconnect. So

1 even someone died, weekly basis, we used to visit the
2 cemetery and tell our younger generation, "Here's your
3 grandma. Here's your grandfather," and the name. The
4 connection was established through that culture, but now the
5 Chinese Government also destroyed all the cemeteries and the
6 cultural and the religious shrines and sites, and the people
7 lost that connection as well.

8 And so here in Canada, we double lost that
9 connection. And for that reason, we are trying to survive,
10 the Uyghur Canadians are trying to survive, and I'm truly
11 grateful for our communities, despite this tough situation
12 they are going through. Solidarity and help among them is
13 really -- that spirit is really high and we just come
14 together on a weekly basis and share the pain and the console
15 one another. Just we became just like family members, and
16 there's no city boundaries. And we have social media groups,
17 and we chat, and we establish online schools for our kids to
18 learn about the tradition and the mother tongue Uyghur
19 language, and we try to recover all the books and the
20 histories that Chinese Government destroyed and burnt.

21 And so as the generation is passing through a
22 critical moment, we try to connect our past to future in
23 Canada and elsewhere. That is despite this kind of heavy,
24 heavy, physical and mental situation.

25 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** I have a question for
26 you, Mr. Tohti. You mentioned that you have been threatened
27 actually many occasions, I understand. And do I have to
28 understand that you reported these threats to some

1 authorities?

2 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** Yeah.

3 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Yeah. And can you tell
4 us a bit about the support you have received, if any, from
5 these authorities? It's not necessary to identify the
6 authorities. Just to give us a bit of ---

7 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** Okay. So that is -- yeah,
8 just when we report, we expect something could come out after
9 the report, and there should be some mechanism in the
10 government when they receive that kind of serious threat for
11 someone, there's a mechanism which is triggered to action,
12 but we don't have in Canada.

13 And just to reiterate, the sad example is
14 just two years ago, we had a hearing with CBSA, we had a
15 lawsuit against CBSA. The Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project was
16 intervenor and we thought the CBSA did not fulfill its
17 jurisdictional duty not stopping the imports made by the use
18 of Uyghur-forced labour. And so just right before the
19 hearing, or just after the hearing started, both my phone and
20 my legal counsel's phones were hacked right at that point.
21 And at that time, my legal counsel is just sitting there, she
22 -- after she said, "Okay, it happened the same for my phone,"
23 and so she said, "Okay. I'm going to report to the police
24 and I'm going to go there, go here." I said, "Just you can
25 go. It is a waste of time and I have gone numerous times
26 about and we don't get any result." And it turned out to be
27 the same situation and my legal counsel spent a lot of time
28 and energy trying to get answers.

1 And similarly, a year ago, I think, JIAS, a
2 Jewish organization, they wanted to have a fundraiser to
3 sponsor six Uyghur refugees to come to Canada. Just as soon
4 as that fundraising event started, there was intervention by
5 a third party, and they inserted just pornography to that
6 webinar. So that fundraiser didn't happen.

7 The small debate, people are very -- they're
8 focused to disrupt the normal activities. And you may think,
9 "What is the big deal of fundraising?" Yes, it not a big
10 deal, but for some people, it is a big deal.

11 And as we work with the government, IRCC and
12 Government Affairs to resettle the 10,000 Uyghur refugees,
13 the Chinese Government assembled a delegation to delegation
14 to a number of countries where Uyghur refugees reside and
15 initially our government officials did not understand why the
16 Chinese Government is so busy. So just those Uyghur refugees
17 in third countries and we are helping them to resettle in
18 Canada, nothing to do with China, but that is the normal
19 thinking. But for Chinese Government, it is not normal
20 thinking. For Chinese Government, they would like to keep
21 the Uyghurs in those countries where they have full control
22 over. They don't want those Uyghurs to come to democratic
23 societies and receive education and after 10 years, 20 years,
24 to confront the Chinese Government in the international
25 arena.

26 And so if those Uyghur refugees live in
27 Turkey and some other places, at a maximum, if they do well,
28 maybe they can open one shop or restaurant, or do some small

1 business. That's it. For the Chinese Government it is much
2 better than they come into Canada and receive the higher
3 education and become a professional -- establish a
4 professional career that can be challenging for the Chinese
5 Government in the future. And for that reason, the Chinese
6 Government starts to intervene and put pressure on those
7 countries just to stop the exit of the Uyghur refugees.

8 And it happened in Kazakhstan, and their
9 global affairs and immigration had to wait for two years,
10 just work, just to get one family out, because of the Chinese
11 pressure. Otherwise, that family has nothing to do. And
12 those family members will receive an adjournment of refugee
13 status. Kazakhstan, by law, are obligated to assist them to
14 resettle in third countries, but because of Chinese pressure,
15 they blocked the exit.

16 And so this is what it means when we call
17 foreign interference. Just it touches your life. It touches
18 your safety. It touches your security. It touches your
19 family comfort. It touches your career. It touches your
20 future. You don't get sleep and you don't know what kind of
21 bad news you are receiving when you wake up tomorrow morning.

22 And so this is the exact situation of Uyghur
23 Canadians right now.

24 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

25 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Madam Commissioner, I
26 wonder if now would be an appropriate time for an afternoon
27 break?

28 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Yes, it's 2:20. So

1 we'll take a 20-minute break. So we'll be back at 2:40.

2 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order. All rise. The
3 Commission is now in recess until 2:30 -- actually, 2:40.

4 La séance est en pause jus 'ça 2h40.

5 --- Upon recessing at 2:20 p.m./

6 --- La séance est suspendue à 2h20

7 --- Upon resuming at 2:42 p.m./

8 --- La séance est reprise à 2h42

9 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. A l'ordre,
10 s'il vous plait. The sitting of the Foreign Interference
11 Commission is back in session. C'est séance du la Commission
12 sur l'ingérence étrangère est reprise.

13 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Before we turn to our
14 fourth panelist, I just wanted to follow up with you, Mr.
15 Tohti. We went for break in the middle of your answer, I
16 think. Was there anything that you wanted to add before we
17 move on to Ms. Wollensak?

18 **MR. MEHMET TOHTI:** The last thing I would
19 like to add is I would like to talk a little bit about the
20 2021 Federal Election.

21 When an election decision was announced, as
22 an organization, we developed a number of policy action items
23 and distributed that to all political parties. And we
24 received a response from the Conservative Party and NDP. And
25 also, we made a little pamphlet, brochure kind of, and we
26 distributed to all community members and supporters all
27 across the country and we asked them, "Okay. If someone
28 knocks on your door, these are the five items you ask those

1 candidates whether they support.”

2 And so at the end, to make the long story
3 short, the Conservative Party adopted four of our policy
4 action items in their election platform and made public.
5 That is one of the important reasons the Chinese Government
6 went mad about it. They increased the campaign against the
7 Conservative Party.

8 And December 15th, 2022, I had the conference
9 in McGill University. I shared the stage with the Honourable
10 Erin O’Toole and I shared some of my personal thoughts how
11 the Chinese government interfered the 2021 election.

12 And so the number of the policy items we
13 proposed and adopted by the Conservative Party of Canada in
14 the election platform, I believe one is the acknowledgement
15 that we were genocide because Parliament voted and
16 acknowledged unanimously, but the Government of Canada did
17 not. And so we want the Conservative Party if they win the
18 election just as a government acknowledge the atrocity crimes
19 that Chinese government has committed against Uyghurs as a
20 genocide.

21 And second, there was a discussion at the
22 U.S. Congress to pass a specific legislation called *Uyghur*
23 *Forced Labour Prevention Act*. And we want the Canadian
24 government or Parliament to pass similar legislation and call
25 it *Uyghur Forced Labour Prohibition Act*. It was one of the
26 policy item we proposed and the Conservative Party adopted.

27 And the third one is, it was -- there are --
28 to the Parliamentary committee report what is subcommittee of

1 international human rights and the standing committee of
2 Foreign Affairs. Both committees adopted number of policy
3 recommendations when they issued the report on Uyghur
4 genocide to the government.

5 The one -- the common element of that report
6 was to create a special refugee stream to help those Uyghur
7 refugees stranded in unsafe third countries and help them to
8 settle in Canada.

9 So number third our policy item that --
10 adopted by the Conservative Party was to help Uyghur
11 refugees.

12 And the fourth one is the divestment because
13 Canada Pension Plan has investment in China and on Chinese
14 companies, either directly or indirectly, tied up with the
15 Uyghur forced labour or supply chain or directly or
16 indirectly tied up with what is called as Integrated Joint
17 Operational Theft Forum, IJOTF system.

18 The Chinese government created a system to
19 basically, from all street cameras or all surveillance
20 devices, whenever -- the number of Chinese high-tech
21 companies also developed the facial recognition technology
22 for Uyghurs, and they received a patent. Huawei is one,
23 Dahua is one, Hikvision, Alibaba, SenseTime.

24 They received a patent just to identify the
25 Uyghurs whenever they are seen on the street and it trigger
26 police alarm within 15 seconds, just allow police come to the
27 right spot to arrest them.

28 And Human Rights Watch called it Integrated

1 Joint Operational Theft Forum, so all data will be
2 centralized in that platform and then compared with the
3 personal ID of that individual and just to create the profile
4 of that person, that there's a score system in China
5 especially for Uyghurs, as you know, and then just immediate
6 arrest right after that.

7 That system is called IJOTF system.

8 So Dahua, Huawei, Hikvision, Alibaba,
9 SenseTime, Hitira, all of them part of that system. And our
10 Canada Pension Plan investment board invested on those
11 companies.

12 And so I'm a pension contributor. I don't
13 want to receive my pension from the money Canada Pension Plan
14 made for those companies when they are actively engaging or
15 involving or benefiting from Uyghur forced labour,
16 surveillance or genocide. And for that reason, that was one
17 of our campaign items.

18 And the Conservative Party of Canada adopted
19 that campaign as well to the election platform.

20 And last, the one was about foreign agent
21 registry. It was important for Canada to identify the
22 foreign agents or agents who are receiving money from foreign
23 hostile governments and working for the interest of those
24 governments. At least we should know. And for that reason,
25 that was one of the campaign items and the Conservative Party
26 of Canada adopted.

27 And after that and we have seen the increased
28 level of attack against Conservative Party and, from time to

1 time, I exchanged with former leader -- Conservative Party
2 Leader Erin O'Toole and Michael Chong and a number of other
3 Conservative colleagues as well as member of Parliamentary
4 Uyghur Friendship Group. So there are two election debate.
5 One is French, one is in English.

6 If you look back, Erin O'Toole during the
7 election debate on TV mentioned the Uyghur genocide and tried
8 to squeeze Right Honourable Justin Trudeau on the debate,
9 saying that he did not acknowledge the Uyghur genocide, and
10 he didn't do anything in that regard.

11 And so election is over two, three weeks, I
12 guess. I'm not going to name that MP because it was a
13 private conversation. I was called by one of the very
14 important MP who said, okay, there is an internal review
15 process that start just to figure out what is the issue, why
16 we lost election. We may not be that much vocal on number of
17 issues because the initial level, we are thinking that we
18 failed to communicate with the Chinese Canadians and some of
19 our messages regarded the puff and, for that reason, we
20 support the human rights and we understand the situation of
21 Uyghurs.

22 And so during that conversation, I told this
23 is wrong message. This is wrong message and this is wrong
24 message to other political parties as well. And if you take
25 a stand, then the message will be clear to other political
26 parties. If you talk about China, there will be a
27 consequence. You lose election.

28 So all political parties tend to follow the

1 same thing.

2 And secondly, this is kind of exactly what
3 the Chinese government wants. This is not the right policy.

4 So that is the end of the -- that
5 conversation.

6 And recently again with the same MP, I
7 exchanged a number of times and I said, okay, you should --
8 you should have stick on your point, highlight from the
9 election platform. Now you see the whole Canada, this is
10 part of our national conversation and we are talking about
11 the same issues. And somehow, you stepped back. That was
12 not a good message.

13 And so I believe Chinese government was not
14 happy about the Conservative Party that adopted the number of
15 our policy recommendations in the election platform,
16 including the acknowledgement of Uyghur genocide and
17 promising to pass the *Uyghur Forced Labour Prohibition Act*
18 and do something about the divestment of Canada Pension Plan
19 and university -- the fund -- we have a number of
20 universities. We identified nearly 119 -- 115 or 119 million
21 dollars investment from McGill University invested in Chinese
22 companies tied up with genocide.

23 We issued a report and so there are some
24 other universities are doing the same and we have the clean
25 universities initiatives and a number of university students
26 to work on it just to expose the investment portfolio.

27 And the Canada Pension Plan is the biggest,
28 and the provincial and the federal pension plan is the

1 biggest.

2 And so the -- just including that
3 recommendation in the election platform, the Conservative
4 Party of Canada could cause some sort of retaliation from
5 China, and that's my belief.

6 And also, if you look at the change of tone
7 in the Conservative Party, for example, if you look back at
8 the Erin O'Toole and the whole question period, Erin O'Toole
9 at least confront with the Prime Minister at least 10 times I
10 know during Question Period, asking questions about Uyghur
11 genocide and the government response to it.

12 With the new leader of Conservative Party, I
13 met twice, and I frequently meet with the Deputy leaders of
14 the Conservative Party all the time. They offer support, but
15 if you look at the specific performance at that Question
16 Period, and the new leader of the Conservative Party has yet
17 to mention Uyghur genocide in the Parliament. In compare,
18 Erin O'Toole.

19 And so you can see the difference, and as a
20 person advocating for this cause, as a person dealing with
21 high-level individuals from both parties, and especially
22 prior the 2021 election, and after 2021 election -- prior and
23 after the election, let me say like this, and if I look at
24 the actual performance and talking point and the issue that
25 they are raising in the Question Period, it was different.
26 That is just because of the internal review report after the
27 election and the Conservative Party and removal -- I say
28 removal of the Erin O'Toole from the leadership position, and

1 that is all something to do with the adaption of the five
2 points, the policy recommendation we offered, and that is
3 what I believe.

4 And I shared my thoughts with Erin O'Toole a
5 number of times. We exchange it. And he's a responsible
6 person and he did not -- he did not tell me exactly what he
7 thinks but at least he knows. And so I hope that he will
8 explain more during this Inquiry.

9 Thank you.

10 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** We'll turn now to our next
11 panellist, Ms. Grace Dai Wollensak.

12 Ms. Wollensak, let's start by making sure
13 that you've got access to a microphone so we can hear what
14 you have to say. Wonderful.

15 Would you please start by describing your
16 community or communities?

17 **--- STATEMENT BY/DÉCLARATION PAR MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK :**

18 **MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK:** Okay. Hello. Good
19 afternoon, everybody. My name is Grace Wollensak. I'm a
20 National Director of the Falun Dafa Association of Canada.

21 Yeah, I like to thank you for the Public
22 Inquiry Commission for organizing this panel; it's really
23 crucial and important. And I appreciate the opportunity to
24 speak today.

25 So about our Falun Gong community. I'd like
26 to start off by introducing Falun Gong, also called Falun
27 Dafa, as it probably is new to many people.

28 Falun Gong is a peaceful spiritual practice

1 rooted in the Buddhist tradition. It consists of five
2 meditative exercises, and the moral teachings centred on the
3 principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance.

4 Falun Gong emphasizes morality and cultivation of virtue.

5 Falun Gong was introduced to the public in
6 1992 in China, and quickly gained popularity due to its
7 powerful effectiveness in helping people improving their
8 physical and mental wellbeing, and spiritual elevation, with
9 the number of participants growing to between 70 million to
10 100 million by 1999. The Chinese government praised and
11 awarded the Falun Gong for its health benefits and the moral
12 teachings before the persecution began. A high ranking
13 Chinese official once stated that Falun Gong could save
14 billions of yen, the Chinese dollars, on healthcare costs in
15 China each year.

16 Falun Gong is open to everyone with no
17 membership enrollment. People can come and go at their will.
18 It is a way of life. Learning and practising Falun Gong is
19 free of charge. There's no clergy and no temples. All
20 relevant materials and the information, including audio,
21 video and the books available with translation over 50
22 languages on the internet for the public at no cost, and all
23 community events and activities are organized and run by
24 volunteers.

25 Today, Falun Gong is practised by people of
26 all ages and all walks of life with different ethnicities in
27 over 100 countries, including Canada.

28 The Falun Gong community hosts events, mostly

1 in public spaces in various cities across Canada. Since
2 COVID-19 pandemic, some activities have gone online. In
3 Canada, our community include the people from different
4 ethnic groups, like Chinese, Irani's, Vietnamese, Korean, and
5 the local Canadian communities from different professions,
6 you know, just like as normal, like, society members.

7 So anybody can start learning Falun Gong by
8 visiting the website of learningfalungong.org. Each year
9 thousands of people in Canada attend the free online classes.

10 Because there's no membership enrollment so
11 we don't know the exact number of people who practice, and so
12 maybe, like, thousands, or 10 thousands; that's a big range.

13 So China's continuing to eradicate the Falun
14 Gong. In July 1999, the Chinese Communist party launched a
15 nationwide eradication campaign against Falun Gong in an
16 extrajudicial manner. Largescale arrests, detentions and
17 imprisonments, accompanied by brutal tortures and inhuman
18 treatment were reported by human rights organizations, like
19 Freedom House, Amnesty International.

20 The persecution is considered one of the
21 worst human rights violations since the Cultural Revolution
22 in China.

23 The practitioners have experience with over
24 100 torture methods, including electric shock; rape and
25 sexual abuse; sleep, food, toilet deprivation; being exposed
26 to extreme cold or heat; and being forcibly sent to
27 psychiatric hospitals where they are injected with unknown
28 psychiatric substance; like, each day, like, 16 to 20 hours

1 of false labour in extreme poor hygienic conditions,
2 sometimes toxic environment without protection; mass killings
3 and the largescale false organ harvesting has been happening
4 over two decades, supported by the evidence from China
5 Tribunal and other credible sources.

6 There's also disappearance and displacement,
7 harassment, and social exclusion and discrimination are other
8 widespread phenomena experienced by Falun Gong practitioners
9 in China.

10 So millions of families have been torn apart.
11 The state-orchestrated systematic human rights violations
12 constitute crimes against humanity and potentially genocide.

13 The CCP also wages a mass hate propaganda,
14 and disinformation campaign demonize Falun Gong and its
15 practitioners with thousands of state-controlled media
16 outlets and internet in China to incite the hate and to
17 justify the persecution.

18 So most frequent asked question is; why are
19 Falun Gong being persecuted in China? So there are four key
20 reasons:

21 Falun Gong is a massive popularity and the
22 rapid growth outnumbering CCP members, which is about 60
23 meeting at a time over the persecution started.

24 Second, completely independent of the Chinese
25 government control. The Chinese government want to set up a
26 Communist Party branch in Falun Gong and also charge fees,
27 which got rejected and so they were not happy.

28 The Falun Gong's the guiding principles

1 incompatible with Communist ideology.

2 Number 4, former CCP leader, Jiang Zemin's,
3 jealousy and the political motivation also plays a large
4 role. Jiang views Falun Gong as a threat to his power.
5 While Falun Gong has no political pursuit, it's the
6 spiritual.

7 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Yeah, thank you.

8 Would you please describe the forms of
9 foreign interference that your community experiences?

10 **MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK:** Okay, yeah.

11 So the persecution has not only been confined
12 in China but also been expanded worldwide, including Canada.
13 There are well-documented directives from the CCP top leaders
14 to extend the persecution of Falun Gong to beyond China. The
15 objective is to stifle and marginalize Falun Gong adherence
16 and impede human rights advocacy.

17 The Falun Gong community in Canada advocates
18 against CCP's persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in
19 China, Canada, and elsewhere in the world. The community's
20 efforts in Canada, including combating disinformation about
21 the Falun Gong and the increasing awareness of the CCP's
22 crimes against humanity.

23 This is achieved through outreach and true
24 collaboration activities. For example, displaying banners,
25 the boards, in public places, distributing flyers, collect
26 petitions, protest at the Chinese Embassies and the
27 Consulate, or the performance by Shen Yun, and other
28 initiatives, and also through seeking the support of

1 politicians and governments.

2 In the course of this carrying out these
3 advocacies, the Canadian Falun Gong community has witnessed
4 and experienced extensive foreign interference and repression
5 in the past two decades by the Chinese Communist Regime.

6 So actually, in the -- recently, we -- the
7 Falun Dafa Association issued a report with 130 pages
8 documenting this 20 some years of foreign interference with
9 over 90 examples and cases to show -- actually, that's just
10 the tip of the iceberg. What we have experienced is so much
11 and in the wider range of spectrum of tactics and the
12 strategies they used in this prosecution overseas.

13 So yes. So, like, this report covered the
14 tactics used by the CCP's interference in Canadian elected
15 officials and the different sectors of society to marginalize
16 or suppress public support of Falun Gong. The tactics include
17 political infiltration, manipulation, intimidation, hate
18 incitement, disinformation, assault, harassment, cyber
19 attacks, and surveillance. They are not used only by the
20 Chinese Embassy and the Consulate, but also by the CCP agents
21 and the proxies on Canadian soil, the United Front Work
22 Department, the Communist Party's primary tool for foreign
23 interference, plays a key role in spreading CCP
24 interference in Canada.

25 The report also documents the CCP's
26 interference towards Canadian communities, business,
27 festivals, and other art and cultural events, et cetera, to
28 exclude the Falun Gong community from participation.

1 The campaign of coercion and manipulation
2 harms Canadians' interests and erodes Canadian values as
3 well.

4 We also experience persistent physical and
5 verbal assault and the harassment, surveillance, and cyber
6 attacks against Falun Gong practitioners in the public space,
7 and there's a continued systematic control of the Chinese
8 community, media, and the digital space in Canada to promote
9 the CCP's narratives and silence the voice of the Falun Gong
10 community.

11 So I'm going to elaborate more hate
12 propaganda and dissemination in Canada.

13 The PRC seeks to interfere with Falun Gong
14 and those practicing it in Canada by demonizing them through
15 the spread of hateful disinformation about Falun Gong and its
16 practitioners within the Chinese Canadian community by
17 Chinese language media, internet, and otherwise, to the
18 Canadian public more broadly, and to elected political
19 representatives.

20 Over the 25 years, hate propaganda against
21 Falun Gong was disseminated in Canada by the following ways.

22 One, the Chinese Embassy and the Consulate
23 via anti-Falun Gong displays, rallies, websites, and the
24 dissemination of propaganda material to Chinese media and to
25 all levels of Canadian Government officials, as well as
26 Canadian media outlets.

27 Second, the vast majority of Chinese Canadian
28 media and social media is controlled by the CCP to replicate

1 anti-Falun Gong articles and the information in Canada,
2 including the local community papers across Canada, and also
3 international major daily newspapers, like Sing Tao and Ming
4 Pao.

5 The Court's documents revealed that a
6 Montreal-based Chinese newspaper was founded by the 610
7 Office in China to produce anti-Falun Gong leaflets for
8 distribution across Canada. The 610 Office is an
9 extrajudicial body that is responsible for the persecution of
10 Falun Gong and other dissident groups in China.

11 Number four. CCP controlled WeChat, like
12 we've seen, and local Chinese media platforms, tightly
13 monitor chats, and delete any posting -- any positive
14 postings related to Falun Gong while allowing anti-Falun Gong
15 posts to stay.

16 And I've personally experienced that because,
17 like, if I post anything, not only the post will be deleted,
18 my account would be also removed and my IP be blocked for
19 many years. And, like, it's very severe. Also in all across
20 Canada, the Chinese platforms.

21 The CCP deploys internet police, or 50 Cent
22 Party, those paid commentators, to reproduce anti-Falun Gong
23 views and post the CCP's narratives consistently and widely
24 in every internet, 24 hours, seven days per week.

25 Some CCP Chinese leaders, reporters, and the
26 publishers were invited to attend briefing meetings at the
27 Chinese Embassy and the Consulate and also in mainland China.
28 It was reported by the National Post that the Chinese

1 Ambassador visited their office to distribute anti-Falun Gong
2 materials and they -- and also they also pressured the CBC
3 not to air documentaries on the topics of the persecution of
4 Falun Gong and the forced organ harvesting.

5 Many of the -- well it's no exception that
6 the western media here in Canada reports often quoted the
7 CCP's slanderous words and accounts in their reports related
8 to Falun Gong, which lent a hand to the CCP in its
9 disinformation campaign.

10 So after we protested and clarified these
11 issues to the media and it's getting better, but at the
12 beginning, like, they all quoted those slanderous words. And
13 that's also, I think, helping to spread the hate.

14 So next is about physical and verbal assault.
15 Instances of rampant harassment and assault have been
16 persistent in different cities over the years, including
17 practitioners held at gun point during a protest at the
18 Chinese Consulate in Vancouver.

19 Another example is a Toronto practitioner who
20 was outspoken because her brother in-law was tortured to
21 death in China and her sister disappeared for many years, and
22 she was threatened by a stranger who knocked at their home
23 door and threatened to take their kids away. On another
24 occasion, her car window was smashed and her balcony was
25 spread by human excretions all over the balcony.

26 And there's many instances of practitioners
27 got assaulted while they are in a public place at Toronto
28 City Hall and at the Provincial Queen's Park, and, like, the

1 CN Tower, because that is the place that usually we raise
2 awareness, like collect signatures, tell people what's going
3 on in China, the persecution, and to tell the Chinese people,
4 "Don't believe the lies."

5 But, like, this activity has been monitored -
6 - there's monitoring, surveillance, and intimidation has been
7 also going on. Practitioners raising awareness in public
8 places are subjected to constant monitoring through being
9 photographed, videotaped, and receiving intimidation phone
10 calls, interference with family members in mainland China
11 persists.

12 For example, a man followed a female
13 practitioner to her home and stopped her to tell her that he
14 knew her name, and her father's name, and home address in
15 China, and demanding her stop going to the Chinese Consulate
16 for protests.

17 Many practitioners have experienced similar
18 threats. Basically all the practitioners who joined these
19 public activities, they are black-listed. And so, like,
20 subsequently, they're denied -- it's possible they're denied
21 a visa, or, like, even if they visit their families, they got
22 arrested at the border. So, like, at the beginning years of
23 the persecution, so now we stopped going to China. So, like,
24 over 20 some years, many of our community members have never
25 seen their families, be able to visit China.

26 And also, the digital and cyber attackers.
27 Falun Gong practitioners not only being compromised for their
28 online presence, they also face the cyber threats directly

1 from China, including attacks on Falun Gong websites, email
2 viruses spread all over the place, and hacking over the 24
3 years.

4 So that's the consequences, like, we lost
5 data, important files that disrupt our work, advocacy work.

6 And also now come to the important aspect of
7 the interference, is the political interference. PRC's
8 efforts to spread hateful disinformation to elected political
9 representatives included providing such disinformation to all
10 politicians in all levels of government, impersonating
11 members of the Chinese community, and sending politician
12 members that echo or repeat inaccurate and harmful
13 disinformation about Falun Gong, often insulting and
14 threatening, and impersonating Falun Gong practitioners and
15 sending messages to politicians designed to make the PRC's
16 information about Falun Gong appear credible.

17 Tracking the IP address of some of those
18 emails show that they originated in China. And it's a global
19 phenomenon highlighting the involvement of the communist
20 regime. Identical or similar emails have been sent to
21 politicians in various other countries, including the United
22 States, Australia, New Zealand, and beyond.

23 The hate campaigns have become more active in
24 the past of the election and politicians send supporting
25 letters to the community. This effort has led to 13
26 politicians to refrain from supporting or interacting with
27 Canadian Falun Gong community without knowing that's hate
28 campaigns behind it to manipulate them.

1 So for example, there is one -- there is a
2 bogus email that an individual claimed to be a colleague of
3 Ms. Grace, referring to me, to an unknown number of elected
4 MPs after 2015 election. And shortly after, I ran into this
5 MP in an event, and after introduction and she heard my name,
6 Grace, and Falun Gong, she immediately became upset and she -
7 - because she said she received aggressive and rude emails
8 from Falun Gong and Grace. And after I clarified with her
9 the situation, that is CCP's plot to sow discord, she
10 understood. She forwarded me the email she received from the
11 CCP agent and the email chains and it was really rude and
12 offensive.

13 And so, like, we have documented many such
14 emails in our report. There's -- they sent such fake emails
15 to MPs, to the MPPs, to the city councillors, to also the
16 theatre managers, and all levels, and around.

17 And so we have been trying to clarify this,
18 but we have limited resources to be effective.

19 And so these impersonation emails were
20 effective as a method of disinformation.

21 There's another example of the political
22 interference.

23 So our practitioners have been holding daily
24 visual protests in front of Chinese Embassies and Consulates
25 in all, like, the cities, like in Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver,
26 and Montreal, like, daily, more than 20 years. And the
27 Chinese Government is really, like, annoyed, and they tried
28 to get rid of us from the practicing side. So they pressured

1 the different cities to try to remove us. And so there were
2 incidents that happened in cities like Ottawa and Vancouver,
3 attempted to restrict our daily protests in front of
4 embassies and the consulates.

5 So from the CCP's inference and the demands,
6 the Vancouver Mayor, in 2011, ordered the removal of Falun
7 Gong 24-hour protest site outside the Chinese Consulate in
8 the city. The site had been there for a decade at that time.

9 It's sad. It's so sad to see this.

10 Something similar since happened in Ottawa.
11 In early 2000, one day I received the permit in front of
12 Chinese Embassy. They put restrictions like we're not
13 allowed to hold big banners that is visible from far. We
14 were restricted with a small board this size and it has to be
15 handheld. Like, I was really puzzled why they put this after
16 years of we were in front of Chinese Embassy without any
17 incident, without anybody complaining. And so, like, why
18 they restricted us?

19 And I talked to the permit office, they said,
20 like, "It's not my decision, because we received the
21 complaint." I said, "If the complaint is from the Chinese
22 Embassy, that should not be valid. That's not a legitimate
23 request or complaint. But if there's any legitimate
24 complaint, you should forward it to us. We will improve,
25 like, what the issue is. We can address the issue."

26 And so, like, he said, like, he got this from
27 his superior. So I had to talk to the City's officers and
28 the policemen, and it's all, like, City Councillors, and many

1 of those people tried to ask them to give me explanation.
2 And also eventually I talked to the City's lawyer, and I
3 said, like, "Why do you put this" -- like, they used a bylaw
4 to restrict it. I said, "Why do you have to use a bylaw?
5 You have to go that far to restrict us? You're not using the
6 law in good faith, because you are supposed to -- that law is
7 supposed to maintain a good order and for good service of the
8 public, but you are restricting the freedom of speech in
9 Canada and assisting the Chinese Communist Party while we are
10 calling for the end of the killing. And so what are you
11 doing here?"

12 So we sent an appeal to the City Council and
13 to the Transportation Committee. Fortunately they
14 unanimously passed the motion to remove the restrictions on
15 this.

16 By the way, we did not have to go through
17 this. We did not have to face this. And that suggests an
18 example of the foreign interference of the Chinese Government
19 to our local authorities.

20 Sorry for getting emotional. I have gone
21 through many of these things that we don't have to.

22 Yeah, the same, like, in Vancouver. They had
23 to bring to the court in order to remove our display board,
24 which is calling for the stop of the killing.

25 You know, this happened after, you know, the
26 free trip to China, the Vancouver Mayor's free trip to China,
27 and where they treated him like emperor. And he came back
28 and ordered to remove the board. And this was the campaign

1 by the Chinese Consulate. That has been documented and
2 reported by the media and many evidences showed that.

3 This is the corruption of politicians with,
4 as I said, consequences of the foreign interference.

5 Okay. So then the next example. There's
6 RCMP actually when they contacted me after some MPs felt
7 offended and made complaints about the emails they received.

8 And after I clarified to the RCMP officers,
9 two of them, and they understood what's going on. I said
10 this is the systematic attack orchestrated by the CCP agents
11 or CCP themselves, you know, try to discredit the Falun Gong
12 practitioners for our politicians.

13 And so when I asked them to help, to stop
14 this campaign, an RCMP officer said that they were tasked to
15 protect the Parliamentarians and they suggest that we took to
16 other routes for help. So actually, I reported to the
17 police, Ottawa Police, RCMP, CSIS and the Minister of Public
18 Affairs and also talked to Global Affairs over the years with
19 all these issues, but really have no idea what has been --
20 what measures, actions have been taken. It seems nothing has
21 been done.

22 The PRC's efforts to interfere with the
23 Canadian politicians also includes threatening or offering
24 the potential -- the potential loss or gain of business
25 opportunities as well as votes from the Chinese community.

26 For example, the city mayors withdraw the
27 proclamation of Falun Dafa Day after trips to China. That
28 happens, I give examples, in Ottawa and Port Moody.

1 In 2010, May -- in May 2010, Ottawa's Citizen
2 reported that the mayor of Ottawa, upon return from a
3 business trip to China, refused to issue a publication to
4 recognize Falun Dafa Day as he had done in previous years
5 because he had -- he said he had made a commitment. Later,
6 we learned that he made a commitment with the Beijing mayor
7 upon request during the business trip and not proclaim Falun
8 Dafa Day.

9 Fortunately, the Ottawa City Council later
10 bypassed the Mayor to issue a proclamation of Falun Dafa Day
11 in June 2010, and so like since then like the City of Ottawa
12 has issued every year.

13 Another case was reported by Global News,
14 like stating that seven mayors from the Vancouver area were
15 invited an all expenses paid trip to Beijing in 2007 by
16 billionaire real estate developer and former People's
17 Liberation Army officer who has official connections to the
18 United Foreign Works Department.

19 Following the trip, the then Port Moody
20 mayor, who had proclaimed the Falun Dafa Day from 2002 to
21 2007, ceased issuing the proclamation. According to a
22 profile story in the People's Daily, that businessman came to
23 Canada with the intention of using his real estate business
24 to persuade Canadian politicians to view China more
25 favourably.

26 As an example, Chinese consulate in Toronto
27 threatened the city -- the Toronto City Council not to
28 proclaim Falun Dafa Day in Toronto by writing to all of them

1 and threatened with the business ties and the relationships.

2 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Ms. Wollensak, I do
3 apologize for the interruption. I'm just mindful of the
4 time.

5 And I know that you have covered some of this
6 question already in the information that you've shared so
7 far, but I wondered if you wanted to briefly address the
8 impact of foreign interference on your communities before we
9 turn to our next panelist.

10 **MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK:** Okay. So can I
11 have the last piece of ---

12 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Yes, please go ahead.

13 **MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK:** I will skip some,
14 but the last one is important because it just -- something
15 happened the last weekend.

16 So like because the Chinese government also
17 systematic try to sabotage Shen Yun. Shen Yun is a classical
18 dance company. Its mission is to restore the lost heritage
19 destroyed by the Communist Party in China.

20 Chinese government afraid of Shen Yun because
21 that's a challenger to Chinese Party's legitimacy of ruling
22 China and with -- because the traditional Chinese culture is
23 in conflict with the Communist culture so they write warning
24 letters to politicians asking them not to attend the
25 performance. They call, email those elected officials who
26 attended the show to pressure them with defamation to Falun
27 Gong and the Shen Yun.

28 A city councillor in Ottawa watched the show.

1 Following the show, his office started to receive emails non-
2 stop with offensive and lewd content claiming to be from
3 Falun Gong practitioners. With the help of technical support
4 at city hall, the office managed to block the emails. Only
5 after the councillor complained to a local practitioner, the
6 practitioner had the chance to explain it.

7 Such interpersonal emails pretend to be Falun
8 Gong also sent to a theatre manager in Calgary with insulting
9 wordings and tried to attempt to sabotage the relationship
10 with the local presenters.

11 Theatre -- they also threatened the local
12 business sponsors to withdraw the sponsorship to Shen Yun.
13 They slash the tires of Shen Yun bus -- tour bus in Canada
14 and U.S. happening multiple times.

15 In just the most recently, last weekend, on
16 Sunday a bomb threat email was sent to the Queen Elizabeth
17 Theatre in Vancouver while the performance was being shown in
18 the theatre. The same threatening emails was sent to the
19 theatres in the U.S. at the same time, showing it was
20 deliberate and a vicious attack on Shen Yun. Only the CCP
21 had such motive and matches with their previous behaviour.

22 Yeah. So I will move to next -- the impact
23 to our community.

24 I mentioned briefly earlier the impact of our
25 community was for the threatening the safety and the security
26 of our members here and our family members in China with the
27 visa denial, the passport denial and arrest upon return to
28 China and et cetera and the window slash, the tire slash.

1 You know, but that's the personal -- personal experience.
2 It's on the surface, but the impact is more profound and
3 deeper.

4 So I give you a few points here.

5 Falun Gong practice in Canada have sought an
6 end to the persecution and the crimes of humanity that are
7 part of the ongoing eradication campaign against Falun Gong
8 in China. In response their effort, actions and, in fact,
9 their social life have been profoundly disrupted and
10 challenged by the foreign interference and the repression
11 carried out by Chinese diplomats and their agents and proxies
12 in Canadian soil.

13 Not only does the CCP's extension of the
14 persecution of Falun Gong to Canada threaten and undermine
15 the safety, security and the liberty of Falun Gong
16 practitioners seeking -- okay.

17 The CCP's interference also adversely impact
18 the Canadian society as a whole, creating a climate of
19 indifference in the face of the CCP's mass killing and the
20 torture in the PRC and the breeding intolerance and the
21 discrimination towards the Canadians in contradiction to
22 well-established Canadian values.

23 You know, the foreign interference and the --
24 and the repression is multifaceted. Falun Gong practitioners
25 face the most brutal suppression by the totalitarian
26 committee in China. The overseas Falun Gong community has
27 been tirelessly working to raise awareness and call for the
28 end to the persecution which is already itself a challenging

1 task.

2 The difficulties and the challenges they face
3 are compounded by experience of political interference,
4 demonization, spying, bullying and abuse perpetrated by the
5 CCP in Canada. Support and protection have been lacking and
6 are urgently required from Canadian institutions and the
7 government agencies.

8 There's a limit in what the Canadian Falun
9 Gong community can do. At the Chinese government, they are
10 up against the near unlimited resources at its disposal.
11 Navigating the legal process is also difficult, costly and
12 time consuming, as seen in Tribunal case that lasted for a
13 decade and drained considerable resources and time.

14 Also, CCP's continuous hate propaganda and
15 the disinformation campaign against Falun Gong has
16 responsible for creating indifference, apathy, and even
17 marginalization and discrimination towards the Falun Gong
18 community within Canadian society.

19 The CCP's unlawful dissemination of hate
20 speech and the disinformation against Falun Gong in Canada
21 must be addressed. In early years, anti-Falun Gong hate
22 campaigns that the Chinese Embassy and the Consulate
23 instigated and participated in were direct and visible.
24 After hating sentiment, the case involving Chinese diplomats
25 were brought and the police investigation into Canadian
26 courts and tribunals as well as the public attention, these
27 CCP activities became more subtle and covert, carried out by
28 more hidden agents and proxies, which are no less harm --

1 damaging and harmful.

2 The network of this covert agents has grown
3 and has become deeply integrated and involved, embedded into
4 Canadian society, creating an invisible but a persuasive
5 hand, controlling Canadian communities to serve the CCP's
6 interest, eroding Canadian values and the sovereignties.
7 Canada must take effective and urgent measures to respond to
8 this phenomena before it is too late.

9 Of particular note is this malicious email
10 campaigns. The important aspect of CCP's interference is use
11 of enticement, inducement, and the material incentives to
12 influence the behaviour of Canadians in key positions or
13 roles in Canadian society to act in the interest of the CPP,
14 and to align themselves with Communist regime's agenda.

15 This enticement include free trip to China;
16 lavish hospitality; promising while threatening the business
17 perspectives, as well as some material incentives.

18 You know, the CPP's infiltration into
19 Canada's political system and the institutions is extremely
20 concerning as it is otherwise affecting the proper
21 functioning of the Canadian governments and undermines the
22 very ability of the Canadian institutions to address and
23 rectify this issue itself.

24 There is a clear pattern and organization to
25 simulate random and sporadic acts of assault and attacks
26 perpetrated against the Falun Gong community. Canadian law
27 enforcement and authorities needed to conduct deeper
28 investigations to unravel and address the potential

1 systematic causes of these apparently individual cases,
2 including of dealing and treating those cases as isolated
3 individual incidents; an approach likely to have limited
4 effect.

5 The CCP has successfully instilled fear in
6 the minds of many, not only within the Chinese community, but
7 also among the non-Chinese populations of the world. Many
8 individuals and organizations fear the CPP, and they give
9 credence to the CPP's threats, coercion, and retaliation,
10 which the CCP exploits to control them.

11 Chinese nationals fear the possibility of
12 being barred from visiting China, or having their families in
13 China implicated if they do not comply with the CCP's
14 demands. Business fear losing business opportunities in
15 China and the government, the fear otherwise impact on their
16 relationship with China if they do not follow to the CPP's
17 transgressive demands.

18 Scholars who study China fear research
19 opportunities or denial of visa to China. Some community
20 event organizers fear losing sponsorship by the Chinese
21 Embassy or Consulate. And the politicians fear of losing
22 votes, even that's baseless, like, for they would lose votes
23 if they support the Falun Gong. But that's the rumours has
24 been spread among the communities to the politicians, and
25 that's the way to control and manipulate our politicians.

26 And in a similar vein, although the CPP's
27 interference and repression targets the Falun Gong community,
28 its measures encompasses effects and involves all sectors,

1 and indeed, the fabric of Canadian society. The objective is
2 to suppress voices advocating for an end to the human rights
3 abuse in China and conceal the CPP's crimes against humanity
4 committed against the Falun Gong. But at the same time, this
5 coercion and the manipulation continue; also harms the
6 Canadian interests and erodes Canadian values which endangers
7 this country. As such, the victims of this interference are
8 not just the Falun Gong but also Canadian society at large.

9 Thank you.

10 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** We'll turn now to our next
11 panellist, Mr. Jaskaran Sandhu.

12 Would you please describe your community or
13 communities?

14 **--- STATEMENT BY/DÉCLARATION PAR MR. JASKARAN SHANDHU:**

15 **MR. JASKARAN SANDHU:** Yeah. Look, the Sikh
16 Canadian community acts as almost a beacon on the hill for
17 other Sikh diaspora communities around the world. The
18 community in Canada is about a million strong at this current
19 juncture, and that makes it the largest concentration of
20 Sikhs outside of Punjab, which is considerable when you also
21 consider the fact that Sikhs in Canada make up over 2 percent
22 of Canada's population. And I stress that point because as a
23 portion, that's greater than the Sikh population in India,
24 which comes just around or shy of 2 percent.

25 Sikhs are a part of Canada; this country is
26 theirs. They have come here in mostly three waves of
27 immigration. The first and foremost happened over 100 years
28 ago as pioneers to this country, mostly to Western Canada.

1 And you have communities in British Columbia, especially
2 around lower mainland but also in the Okanagan, as far up as
3 William's Lake and beyond, that have been there for many
4 generations.

5 You also have a sizable Sikh community that
6 came during the eighties and nineties, and this is important
7 to remember for the points that we'll be making later. The
8 eighties and nineties saw Sikhs come here as they fled
9 persecution in India; that was the time of the Sikh genocide
10 when India was attacking, killing not only Sikhs but also
11 their institutions -- and forms a large part of the Sikh
12 diaspora that you see today.

13 The population from the eighties and nineties
14 settled across the country, but that is when you started
15 seeing a lot of Sikhs settle down in places like the greater
16 Toronto area, Brampton, as well as other parts of the
17 country.

18 The third wave, which we're probably
19 currently going through right now is a Sikh population that's
20 coming via things like point system, international students,
21 which is a pretty large body. That have added to the
22 tapestry that is the Sikh diaspora.

23 The Sikh community has been incredibly
24 successful. It has established itself across many different
25 industries, industries that are critical to the success of
26 this country. It has made significant cultural impact. You
27 know, just the other day, a Punjabi Sikh artist won a Juno
28 award. That again is a testament to the impact the community

1 has culturally as a soft power emanating out of Canada.

2 And probably most importantly for the
3 dialogue and the conversation we're having here today, it has
4 immense success in politics. I think we can be very frank
5 about that. We have over a dozen MPs, across party lines;
6 your leader of the opposition party, the NDP, comes from the
7 Sikh community, visibly Sikh; practices it as an Amritdhari
8 Sikh, or an initiated Sikh. You have Ministers within the
9 Liberal government, at one point four Ministers from the Sikh
10 community. You know, Prime Minister Trudeau at one time
11 famously said, "I have more Ministers than the Modi
12 government does from the Sikh community." And, again, we'll
13 touch on that a little later because that probably caused
14 some of the backlash that we're seeing from India, but it
15 ties into a lot of other things.

16 The Sikh community also enjoys senior posts
17 in the Conservative Party; for example, the Deputy Minister
18 of the Conservative Party at this time is also a visible
19 Sikh. And that also trickles down to other levels of
20 government. Provincially you see Sikhs succeeding in many
21 different provincial parties; you see Sikhs succeeding at
22 provincial politics. In fact, the Mayor of Edmonton and the
23 Mayor of Calgary are both Sikh, so the Sikh community has
24 definitely punched above its weight politically.

25 The other thing to remember about the
26 community is, just like any other community -- and I think
27 this will be true of my friends here sitting alongside me --
28 that there's a diversity of thought within the community.

1 The Sikh community, I think, differs from other communities
2 that hail from the Indian subcontinent in that it is
3 ethnically homogenous.

4 The community, like myself, is almost
5 entirely Punjabi. There are obviously other groups, but it
6 very much is a Punjabi Sikh community here in Canada.

7 There is still a diversity in political
8 opinions, on thoughts, on the news of the day, current
9 affairs, history just like every other community. It does
10 not act like a monolithic on every aspect of life, but it is
11 very much united. It is a community that mobilizes together,
12 that works with one another and that shares in one another's
13 successes. And I think that's a really bright spot about the
14 community.

15 It's also what scares the Indian government.
16 It's also what strikes fear in their hearts because this is a
17 community that cares very deeply about back home, about
18 Punjab, about India, about South Asia in general. It's a
19 community that is tied to Punjab and it's -- the fact that a
20 lot of them still have ancestral land and holdings in Punjab,
21 a lot of them still have family and friends in Punjab, a lot
22 of them still care about the politics of Punjab and of India
23 and, most importantly for the Sikh community, have deep ties
24 to faith.

25 The land of Punjab is the birthplace of the
26 Sikh faith. It is where the fountains of Sikhi that we
27 understand and see today first blossomed. It's where
28 Amritsar or the land that is -- in which the Harimandir

1 Sahib, the complex, the Golden Temple exists, a site that was
2 invaded and almost partially destroyed by the Indian
3 government again as part of the eighties and nineties
4 persecution.

5 It is the land where the Akal Takht stands.
6 The Akal Takht is the temporal seat of authority for the Sikh
7 people. It's -- and I hate making this comparison, but it's
8 the closest one I got and it's the only one that seems that
9 everyone kind of understands. It's the closest we have to,
10 let's say, something like the Vatican or Mecca for the Muslim
11 community.

12 It's the centre of our political existence
13 and our spiritual existence so, obviously, Sikh Canadians,
14 people of faith, have a deep connection to what's happening
15 there.

16 And I only mention this again because the
17 diaspora community, the Sikh diaspora community, doesn't
18 exist in a vacuum. It's very much a transnational people,
19 very much that it's still connected with their land in Punjab
20 for a lot of different reasons and, most importantly, I would
21 argue, faith.

22 This is something we need to keep in mind
23 when we talk about the community. As of today, the three
24 largest centres of the Sikh community here in Canada are
25 Brampton, which exists inside the Greater Toronto Area.
26 There's also large communities in places like Mississauga and
27 also in the GTA.

28 There's growing communities, obviously, in

1 Quebec outside of Montreal. There's growing communities in
2 Windsor and other places like that. Winnipeg has a growing
3 community. The second-largest community, though, after
4 Brampton, is in Surrey in the lower mainlands and adjoined
5 with that Abbotsford and Delta, obviously, have very large
6 communities of Sikh people.

7 And then the third-largest hub of Sikh
8 population is Calgary, but there's also a sizable population
9 in Edmonton, so this is a community that is fairly
10 centralized and dense in their community pockets. They enjoy
11 a lot of success in the cities in the places that they call
12 home and they care deeply about what's happening in Canada,
13 including foreign interference.

14 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** On that note, would you
15 please describe the forms that foreign interference takes in
16 your community?

17 **MR. JASKARAN SANDHU:** So the one thing I
18 really want to make clear is I appreciate and understand that
19 this inquiry is looking at a snapshot in time. I appreciate
20 that. I understand that of the terms of reference. You're
21 looking at a specific snapshot in time.

22 But you can't talk about foreign interference
23 and how it has impacted the Sikh community in Canada if you
24 don't go back to the eighties because that is when it
25 started.

26 The Sikh community has been facing
27 transnational repression in clear terms since the 1980s. And
28 you don't have to take my word for it.

1 RAW and IB agents, what are the external and
2 internal intelligence agencies of India, have literally
3 written books about this of how they, in the 1980s and
4 onwards, have infiltrated Sikh institutions and bodies,
5 including gurdwaras, which is our places of worship, how they
6 have threatened and coerced actors within our community,
7 including within spaces like ethnic media, how they have
8 worked to not only infiltrate, but destabilize and undermine
9 the ability of the community to mobilize.

10 And part of that is a fear of the Sikh
11 community gaining success in the political space and the
12 political theatre and electoral politics and the hallways of
13 powers.

14 The foreign interference story truly, truly
15 starts then. And it hasn't changed. It has just evolved.
16 And it has maybe got more sophisticated and advanced since
17 then, but its roots were settled in the 1980s to the point
18 that, in and around the mid-eighties -- and Canadian media
19 has reported about this. They've reported about all of this,
20 in fact, that at one point Canada actually expelled members
21 of the Indian consulate engaging in foreign interference in
22 the eighties, which ties into another important point of how
23 the foreign interference happens.

24 Indian consulates act as a hub for espionage
25 and foreign interference and transnational repression
26 targeting the Sikh community and they will target anyone
27 who's vocal. That goes for individuals that talk about human
28 rights issues in India. That goes to people talking about

1 historic and existing democratic backsliding in India, one of
2 the fastest autocratizing nations on earth. That goes to
3 people who talk about local issues and political issues in
4 India and it goes to people who talk about Khalistan or Sikh
5 sovereignty issues.

6 They'll target everyone, and they'll target
7 them for various reasons, again which we'll talk about when I
8 think we handle the third question about what the impact is.

9 The point is, though, the consulates are a
10 hub for this activity and the consulates are made up of, in
11 large part, RAW agents and IB agents. They have stationed in
12 Canada intelligence officers whose sole purpose is to monitor
13 and target the Sikh community.

14 Now, how they do that and what forms that can
15 take, we saw that in the eighties and we see that continue
16 today, is, you know, things as simple as visa denials. You
17 know, good luck visiting India.

18 Now, you may ask, well, why does one want to
19 visit India or why would one want to go there, and I go back
20 to my initial answer to your question about what the
21 community makeup is. If a Sikh -- and I really want people
22 to really understand this of how frustrating this is for
23 someone from the Sikh community.

24 If a Sikh speaks about a Sikh issue that is
25 important to the Sikh community, that is not controversial
26 within the Sikh community, which is a conversation that we're
27 allowed to have as a people and the debates we're allowed to
28 have as a people, we risk having our visas denied to visit

1 our religious and ancestral homes in Punjab.

2 What other community would experience that
3 type of heavy-handed transnational repression and foreign
4 interference for merely practising -- and I want to stress
5 this point -- merely practising legal protected *Charter*
6 rights and international norms?

7 This is -- this is something as crazy as,
8 let's say, folks in the Catholic community having debates
9 about issues that are hot topics within the community that
10 don't align with maybe what the Vatican's saying and are now
11 barred from entering Italy or Vatican City. That is
12 literally what is happening to the Sikh community. And it
13 goes on across a whole host of different issues.

14 So that's one way the consulates do it and
15 that's one reason why they have agents within their
16 consulates.

17 Other forms that foreign interference take,
18 and this is a -- definitely a proper one nowadays with the
19 advent of social media and everything else that comes with
20 it, and it's probably going to get scarier with AI. As we're
21 already seeing, deep fakes are very easy to do and there's
22 been advancements in that already in the last week.

23 Disinformation is a critical tool in
24 amplifying and escalating foreign interference against target
25 communities. And this is true for the Sikh community, it is
26 true for my friends here in the communities that they come
27 from. We're seeing it only grow more alarming and I fear
28 even scarier with the advent of things like AI.

1 There's a real possibility what I am saying
2 right now, which is being streamed, can be modified literally
3 by tomorrow and say something completely else, and what are
4 people supposed to do about that?

5 Now, India is seen -- and again, this is
6 something -- you don't have to take my word for it. This has
7 been reported by international media from the likes of BBC.
8 It's been documented by major institutions that look at these
9 issues like the EU Disinfo Lab. It has been examined by The
10 Fifth Estate recently. The CBC launched a documentary that
11 was, in fact, banned in India after it came out.

12 India is a hub for global disinformation.
13 The ability for India to spread disinfo is second to none,
14 and they'll target everyone and anyone that they see as a
15 threat to their interests. And it just happens to be that
16 the Sikh community is at the top or almost at the very top of
17 the communities they target.

18 And what does that disinfo do?

19 That disinformation in the case of Canada
20 maligns the Sikh community, undermines the Sikh community.
21 And again, when I say Sikh community, I'm talking about the
22 Sikh Canadian community. I'm born and raised in this
23 country. I'm born and raised in the city of Brampton, spent
24 my whole life there.

25 We're Canadian, right. I grew up playing
26 street hockey on my court shouting "car" every time something
27 drove by and then we get right back to it. We grew up on
28 pads wearing -- goaltending pads. Patrick Roy was one of my

1 favourites, him and Felix Potvin.

2 We were -- we used to play with pads one size
3 too small. My knees are a mess. They still are.

4 We are Canadian. We're as Canadian as maple
5 syrup. We just -- we are Sikh, though, as well. That faith
6 is very important and integral to my identity. We're also
7 Punjabis. That history, my ancestors who fought day and
8 night and martyred -- and achieved martyrdom at various
9 points of our history so that I can sit here and speak to you
10 as a Sikh, is very important to me.

11 But what's happening is we're getting
12 targeted by disinfo. We're getting maligned. We are victims
13 of lies. We are the victims of an attempt to foster discord
14 in our communities, to polarize our communities. And I'm
15 talking about multiple diaspora communities that come out of
16 the subcontinent.

17 In a way, building this -- a term that's
18 often used in the Indian context of communal tensions, right,
19 tensions between different communities, whether it be the
20 Sikh community, the Muslim community, the Hindu community,
21 what have you.

22 These are -- this is discord and tensions
23 that are being exported out of India and undermining our
24 community's institutions here in Canada. That's incredibly
25 dangerous, especially if you understand what's going on in
26 India.

27 So that disinfo happens via social media.
28 And Your Honour was asking about, you know, what type of

1 platforms that happens on.

2 In India's case, you know, there's two
3 avenues in that disinfo is spread. One is WhatsApp, which is
4 more internal community facing, ethnic media. There are some
5 ethnic media outlets that are known to be very close to India
6 and the consulate and have different reasons why they might
7 comply with demands from Indian government or Indian
8 government officials. That happens. And Indian national
9 media.

10 Indian national media will spread
11 disinformation. Like it is known. It has been covered.
12 It's been reported. It's a reason why India currently on
13 Reporter Without Borders index on press freedom ranks 161 out
14 of 180 countries.

15 Now, human nature being what it is, those
16 numbers don't mean much unless you anchor with something.
17 India ranks below Afghanistan. India ranks below -- I'm
18 pretty sure it was in the previous iteration. I don't know
19 about currently. But I think it actually ranks below Russia.

20 India, though, unlike those other countries,
21 likes to tell people that it's a pluralistic, democratic
22 nation that shares values with the likes of Canada and the
23 United States and the UK and et cetera, et cetera.

24 So this is how disinfo is being disseminated.
25 On social media, aside from WhatsApp, the platform of choice
26 for Indian disinfo is Twitter, and there's a reason for it.
27 There's a very specific reason for it.

28 India understands that Twitter is where your

1 politicians are sitting, your decisionmakers are sitting.
2 India understands that journalists sit on Twitter. India
3 understands that think tanks and institutions and NGOs all
4 operate on Twitter.

5 Their goal is not just to directly malign
6 Sikh actors or Sikh activists or the Sikh community. Their
7 goal is also to influence western actors to silence Sikh
8 activism in the diaspora. So the role of disinfo is to make
9 it so that decisionmakers think twice before listening to,
10 quite frankly, their own constituents because of noise coming
11 out of India that they can't find the signal through.

12 The examples are multiple. You know, look at
13 -- look at the NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh. Look at Liberal
14 Ministers. Look at members of the Conservative Party at
15 senior ranks within the party. Look at any time they ever
16 Tweet anything or say anything or do anything. You will see
17 underneath accusations of them being terrorist sympathizers,
18 extremists, you name it. Just absolutely bonker accusations.

19 If you go read Indian media -- I'll give you
20 an example from the 2008 trip to India that Prime Minister
21 Trudeau and his entire team went on. The Minister of Defence
22 at that time, Harjit Singh Sajjan, was accused of being a
23 terrorist and an extremist. Think about that for a second.
24 That makes absolutely no sense. We know that's ridiculous.

25 The leader of the NDP Party at that time was
26 also accused of such things. Prime Minister Trudeau was
27 accused of being in bed with terrorists in Canada.

28 Again, none of these things are ever proven

1 and they're not going to be proven because they're false.
2 But the point is to attack and undermine and cast a cloud of
3 suspicion on the Sikh community.

4 And in February -- I think it was February
5 2018 at the time, it worked. India was able to achieve their
6 goal. There were, at one point in February, 150 negative
7 articles -- I'm not talking about news reports, radio,
8 whatever -- 150 mainstream articles that were negative and
9 parroted unverified, quite frankly false, accusations about
10 the Sikh community, its political aspirations and its Members
11 of Parliament.

12 That's one snapshot in time. That's been
13 happening since the eighties.

14 So that disinfo is also meant to shape the
15 manner in which Canadian media reports on our community.

16 Now, back then there was huge feelings over a
17 lot of advocacy from Sikh community, including a World Sikh
18 Organization campaign called "Ask Canadian Sikhs", including
19 the efforts of Gurdwara associations like the OGCBGC as well
20 as just grassroots organizing, attempts to talk to
21 journalists and media to educate them on what's actually
22 going on. And Canadian media actually has grown leaps and
23 bounds since then and hasn't necessarily fallen victim to
24 these disinformation networks like they did back in 2018.

25 But that doesn't mean it's not happening
26 still and there are other people platforming this
27 disinformation who I can only term, unfortunately -- and
28 don't mind my language -- useful idiots from the far right,

1 especially on platforms like Twitter, that are more than
2 happy to parrot and push nonsensical, outlandish disinfo from
3 India.

4 Another form that disinformation -- sorry,
5 foreign interference happens is through proxies. And we've
6 heard that used -- that term used here quite a few times.

7 There are organizations and groups that are
8 close to either the Government of India, that are either
9 close to political parties in India primarily at this time,
10 just because they've been in power for a while, the BJP, or
11 are close to the consulates that are used for various tools
12 of foreign interference -- for varying methods of tools of
13 foreign interference, sorry.

14 They're used to lobby Government of India
15 interests. They are used to support and fundraise political
16 parties. They are used -- and I'll get to this as well.
17 They're used to gatekeep the community from decisionmakers
18 and politicians. And, quite frankly, they're used in
19 nominations and leadership races to funnel membership and
20 cash to candidates of their choice that will propagate and
21 uphold, in this case, Government of India interests, which
22 typically is targeted towards a Sikh community that has a
23 history of raising grievances with the Indian State, whether
24 that's because of the Sikh genocide, whether it's their right
25 to self-determination, or whether it's to various human
26 rights or other causes, including, and we'll get to this when
27 we talk about impact, extrajudicial actions by the Indian
28 Government.

1 So the proxies are important, the
2 disinformation is important, the media, how it works, is
3 important because it gets to, again probably more relevant to
4 the conversation we're having here, the other form of foreign
5 interference, which is interfering in the electoral process.

6 The theatre in which foreign interference
7 happens on the electoral process is actually, quite frankly,
8 not necessarily general elections, which I know is kind of
9 the scope of what we're discussing here. The first phase at
10 least.

11 Where foreign interference really happens at
12 a much more successful and consistent manner is nominations
13 in leadership races. And there's a reason for that. Those
14 are closed universes. So for those that are not aware how
15 nominations in leadership races work, unless you're a party
16 member, you don't -- you can't vote in that process.

17 So, you know, I'm a member of, you know, the
18 Brampton riding and I can't vote for my candidate of choice
19 unless I first purchase a membership by a certain deadline,
20 and then go vote on a nomination date, and at the result, one
21 of the many candidates that stood for the race will get a
22 ticket to run.

23 That's very easy to manipulate. It's very
24 easy to mobilize. It's very easy to give cash to candidates.
25 There's very little oversight on how nominations are done in
26 this country. Political parties are essentially clubs and
27 they can, for lack of better terms, or going into details, do
28 whatever they want.

1 And so it's easy to insert yourself into
2 those processes, especially if you're a powerful government
3 that everyone wants to get cozy with because of trade deals.

4 So you have an easy time of getting into the
5 process at the nomination of leadership race because of that.

6 Now, there's been some reporting recently
7 that one federal party, and again, these folks may not even
8 know that it's happening, have been a victim of foreign
9 interference by proxies and the Indian Government in their
10 leadership race, and it was done by withholding and
11 gatekeeping community events; right? So that's put on and
12 attended by Canadians, membership sales, and general
13 fundraising, to undermine or stop a candidate they didn't
14 like because they had raised issues that were important to
15 the Sikh community that the Government of India didn't want
16 being discussed.

17 That's happening everywhere. Right? That
18 happens at the provincial level, it happens across party
19 lines. This is not necessarily an issue specific to one
20 party. I want to make that very clear. The nominations work
21 the same way.

22 So this something that we need to really keep
23 in mind when we talk about foreign interference in elections,
24 because a lot of it actually happens before the generals.
25 It's harder to interfere at a general election because, you
26 know, people are voting, because of the way they're voting
27 for multiple different reasons, there's a lot of different
28 external and internal factors at play. That's not the case

1 with nominations of leadership, where you can control a lot
2 of the levers.

3 Interference also happens in things like
4 candidate selection. And so a party before they allow
5 someone to run in a nomination, will go through a process
6 where either they're red lit or they're green lit.

7 If you're someone who has actively spoken
8 about Sikh issues, and Sikh causes, and Sikh concerns, I
9 guarantee you the Indian Government is telling those parties
10 to red light them. Those conversations are happening. Those
11 correspondences are happening with one another. And it's
12 done through Consulates and High Commissions.

13 That is a very real form of foreign
14 interference that is happening, again, across party lines
15 across every level of government. Again, because it's easy.
16 Every political party is going to, one way or another, say
17 they want to have close ties with India, again for trade, and
18 they're willing to, quite frankly, look the other way on
19 human rights violations and transnational repression against
20 their own citizens to pursue those trade deals, minus one
21 exception, which we'll get to.

22 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Sorry to interrupt, but I
23 am mindful of time, because we do have one more panelist.
24 You've mentioned several times that you will talk to us more
25 about some of the things you'd mentioned when you discuss the
26 impact, so I wonder if you can turn your mind to moving on to
27 the impact once you finish?

28 **MR. JASKARAN SANDHU:** Yeah, look, impact,

1 they literally killed a guy. Right? They killed Hardeep
2 Singh Nijjar, a president of a major gurdwara in Surrey, in
3 the parking lot of said gurdwara in broad daylight. A leader
4 of the Sikh community slumped over his steering wheel,
5 bleeding out because he was shot multiple times, as part of a
6 transnational repression assassination program.

7 And the scary part was he was only one of
8 many people on that list, as per the U.S. indictment on
9 Nikhil Gupta, which should really shed more light on this.

10 And I look forward to the day that the RCMP
11 lays charges and arrests the people that were involved in the
12 Canadian example.

13 Like how is that for impact? That's the cost
14 of foreign interference in this country and not taking it
15 seriously.

16 What surprised us about Prime Minister
17 Trudeau's message in Parliament back in, what was that, six
18 months ago, seven months ago now at this point, what
19 surprised us as a community was not the fact that India would
20 go to the lengths of assassinating someone in Canada.
21 Canadian citizen, mind you. What surprised us was that Prime
22 Minister Trudeau would stand up in Parliament and confront it
23 head on and that at least that day in Parliament would be
24 echoed by all major opposition parties, from the NDP, to the
25 Conservatives, the Bloc Quebecois. And that surprised us as
26 a community because the impact of foreign interference on the
27 Sikh Canadian community has been largely ignored over the
28 last 30/40 years. The community has felt that it's been up

1 to us to defend ourselves, that there is essentially nothing
2 the government will do to protect Sikhs, out of fear of
3 embarrassing India, a country that likes to advertise itself
4 as the world's largest democracy, but quite frankly isn't,
5 and the trade deals that it comes with.

6 The reality is, the impact of foreign
7 interference has had a major chilling effect over the last
8 30/40 years and Sikh Canadians enjoying Charter protected
9 rights and the full glow of liberty and freedom that this
10 country is supposed to stand for. We have allowed the Indian
11 Government to dictate the terms of how fellow Canadians look
12 at us as Sikh Canadians. The impact has been we have largely
13 allowed India to describe us and describe us practicing our
14 Charter Rights as extremists or terrorists.

15 In fact, me speaking here right now, under
16 Indian definitions, would be considered an act of terror and
17 extremism. I'm just telling you the truth of what happens to
18 our community. That's how freely they throw that word
19 around.

20 And the impact of that is not just a chilling
21 effect within the community, but casting a cloud on the
22 manner in which government, government officials, party
23 members, MPs, agencies, talk to us and deal with us, because
24 they don't want to be caught up in the whole disinfo
25 networks, they don't want to get the gatekeeping from proxies
26 of the Consulate, they don't want the angry phone calls and
27 meetings that the Consulate ask for, because, again, the
28 reputation on The Hill is India is a very insecure country

1 and throws a storm about everything.

2 The reality is that that is what the impact
3 is.

4 Aside from the community and the chilling
5 effect it has on us, it has also led the government to make
6 some really profoundly problematic decisions. Because of the
7 disinfo that was being leveled against its MPs and the
8 community back on the 2018 trip that Prime Minister Trudeau
9 took, Canada, at the end of it, signed a document which was
10 hailed as a major policy victory for India. They signed what
11 was a security sharing framework with India.

12 And I'll tell you right now, the only
13 community that India cares about is the Sikh community. So
14 essentially, as far as the Indians are concerned, they are
15 working with Canada to spy on us, conduct espionage, but to
16 use and fish for information so that they can harass and
17 bother not just activists that may be operating out of
18 Canada, but their families and loved ones back home.

19 Now, a security sharing framework of this
20 type did exist at one point, but Canada pulled it decades ago
21 because they realized that India was using information, even
22 just basic information that doesn't actually amount to any
23 kind of guilt of anything of that sort, to engage in
24 extrajudicial murder, torture, seizure of properties, et
25 cetera, et cetera. And Canada, to its credit, has, over the
26 years, not fallen under the pressure to bring that type of
27 framework back, until foreign interference worked like a
28 charm for India and they were able to get it done. It has

1 dictated the type of people that run for positions of, like,
2 MP, or MPP, or whatever, or MLA in this country. It has
3 stopped certain folks from engaging or speaking freely about
4 issues because of the fears of the retribution.

5 India has effectively exported autocratic
6 despotic extrajudicial measures that are normal in India to
7 Canada. That is what we have allowed. And the murder of
8 Hardeep Singh Nijjar is just one really drastic example of
9 that. May not be the last one.

10 Now, aside from the community, the impact is
11 that it undermines the ability of our community, of
12 Canadians, to make free decisions, decisions that are not
13 tainted by foreign interference. It stops Canadians from
14 engaging with the democratic institutions without the stain
15 of disinformation and misrepresentation casted from India.
16 It robs Canadians of making really informed decisions because
17 of the types of attacks that are being leveled against the
18 Sikh community, and, you know, it formats discord and
19 polarization within our community as well, who are happy, in
20 some segments of the community, happy to jump and bandwagon
21 on disinformation from India if it means that they can attack
22 certain political parties and certain politicians they don't
23 like for other reasons or whatever it may be.

24 The impact -- you know, I'll give you another
25 stark example. You know, back in 2010, Canadian visa
26 officials rejected visas to former and current Indian
27 paramilitary, military, and police officers from visiting to
28 Canada because they had been implicated in extrajudicial

1 murder and torture, particularly against the Sikh community
2 in India.

3 The Indian Government, after an outcry, and
4 pressure, and complaining about, the Canadian Government
5 reversed their decision and allowed those actors who had a
6 history of conducting torture and extrajudicial murder
7 against our people into the country.

8 That has continued to happen to this date and
9 those people, quite frankly, live amongst us.

10 That is something we're allowing because of
11 foreign interference and that is something that is going to
12 increasingly happen if we don't wake up. And if we believe
13 that, well, India is, again, a pluralistic liberal democracy
14 just like Canada and the U.S., so therefore we can interact
15 with them just like we do with, you know, allies like the
16 U.S. and the U.K, we're in for a really rude awakening.

17 India is a hostile state. India is not --
18 well, depending on what ranking you look at, if you look at
19 the V-Dem Institute, or the Freedom House, it is the fastest
20 autocratizing country on earth. It is now what is referred
21 to as an electoral autocracy. It is what is referred to as a
22 partly free country. I already referenced the rankings of
23 press freedom there. Institutions like the judiciary is
24 falling apart. They've literally just arrested one of the
25 major opposition leaders right before the election and they
26 pulled the funding of another major opposition, again in the
27 lead up to an election.

28 This is the state of India, and it's been

1 like this for a very long time, and it's the Sikh community
2 that's facing the brunt of this hostility.

3 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Thank you very much.

4 We have one final panelist who is joining us
5 remotely. So I'm just going to wait until she appears on our
6 screen.

7 Ms. Winnie Ng, thank you for joining us
8 today. Would you please describe your community or
9 communities?

10 **--- STATEMENT BY/DÉCLARATION PAR MS. WINNIE NG :**

11 **MS. WINNIE NG:** Yes. Thank you very much for
12 the invitations. My name is Winnie Ng. I'm the co-chair of
13 Toronto Association for Democracy in China.

14 And I just want to start off by sending
15 regrets on behalf of our other co-chair, Cheuk Kwan, who has
16 taken ill and lost his voice. So I'm here to speak on behalf
17 of our group.

18 I would start off by talking -- saying a bit
19 more about TADC and then go into the broader Chinese Canadian
20 community.

21 TADC was founded on the eve of the 1989
22 Tiananmen Square massacre. It has been a human rights
23 organization for the past 34 years, organizing an annual June
24 4th candlelight vigil to commemorate the victims of the
25 massacre. It's -- in a sense, it's our way to preserve the
26 truth of what has taken place and to stop any rewriting and
27 erasing of this chapter of the atrocity.

28 Right now, there is a disinformation

1 campaign, a counternarrative that's going on that June 4th
2 never -- massacre never took place. And that's why we
3 continue to organize and make sure that the truth will never
4 be forgotten.

5 In addition to the annual event, we also play
6 an active role in advocating and lobbying efforts in Canada
7 and abroad, including appearing before the Canadian
8 Parliamentary Standing Committees and the U.S. Congressional
9 Hearings.

10 TADC is also a founding member of the
11 Amnesty-led Canadian Coalitions for Human Rights in China.

12 During the -- after the June 4th Tiananmen
13 massacre, TADC, along with Chinese Canadian National Council,
14 the umbrella organizations representing activists across the
15 country, we actually lobbied and got amnesty from the Federal
16 Government and got amnesty for 5,000 Chinese scholars and
17 students who then were stranded in Canada.

18 And then as you all know, the 2019 anti-
19 extradition bill protest movement took place in Hong Kong,
20 and as a result, with the political crackdown and the passing
21 of the national security law in Hong Kong by Beijing on June
22 30th, 2020, it has a devastating sweeping impact on the
23 rights and freedoms of Hongkongers.

24 So TADC has initiated a project since 2020 in
25 assisting some of the former protestors and pro-democracy
26 activists in resettling in Ontario.

27 That's sort of the gist of our work.

28 And I just want to also want to echo some of

1 what the previous speakers have said, and I want to introduce
2 myself on a personal level.

3 I was born and raised in Hong Kong and came
4 to Canada in 1968 as an international student. I went to
5 Montreal and then moved down to Toronto in 1975 and worked as
6 a community organizer right in the heart of China Town. So
7 I've been involved in the community for over 45 years.

8 And I think just like the Punjabi
9 communities, it's -- the Chinese Canadian community, it's
10 diverse, it's complicated and it's non-homogenous.

11 We had different waves that have come in and
12 bringing in new diversity, new ideas as well as new
13 challenges.

14 I was -- you know, after the -- in the
15 seventies, we worked on the Southeast Asian boat people's
16 movement. In 1975, there was the campus giveaway, the W5
17 movement, and that sparked the whole anti-racism movement
18 within the Chinese Canadian community.

19 And to me, I think what we have been saying
20 is then, in 1989, with the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square
21 massacre, this is where the turning point is that we -- you
22 know, I'm hoping the Commission would look beyond the
23 elections of 2019 and 2021 and take a broader and long-range
24 view looking back and the insidious way the Chinese PRC has
25 been influencing and interfering with not just the elections,
26 but in terms of controlling our media, in terms of usurping
27 our organizations. And these are all part of the pieces that
28 has shaped to bring it to this point.

1 In that sense, it's also -- I mean, in the
2 past it has been -- the United Front's work has been more
3 quiet, more under the current, more hidden. Now, it's a
4 whole lot more emboldened and they have taken a free range in
5 doing a lot of the intimidations and interference into our
6 own Canadian politics.

7 So this is where I'm coming from from briefly
8 describing what TADC is as well as the broader Chinese
9 Canadian community. It's diverse, it's complicated. And you
10 know, with the influx of different waves of newcomers, and
11 particularly with the last four years through the grace of
12 the Hong Kong federal government's Hong Kong Pathway program,
13 we now have a new generation of young Hong Kongers that come
14 in and it's also creating more dialogue and more providing us
15 with more evidence on the whole scheme of the influences and
16 interventions of the People's Republic of China.

17 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** When you talk about the
18 People's Republic of China becoming more emboldened, you talk
19 about influences and interventions, can you give us some
20 examples of what that looks like?

21 What kind of forms does foreign interference
22 take in your community?

23 **MS. WINNIE NG:** Yeah. And just to reinforce
24 some of the points that Mehmet and Grace have made, the
25 pattern is quite similar to all the other groups as well.
26 And I think I just want to start off by saying, you know, a
27 lot of these actions and, you know, campaigns and schemes are
28 orchestrated by none other than the United Front Work

1 Department, the UFW, which is headed by the chief of the
2 Secretariat of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee.

3 And part of that whole -- I think, you know,
4 what the whole intent through the -- you know, through the
5 PLCs and its proxies is to create and cultivate an atmosphere
6 of fear that would stop and dissuade Chinese Canadians from
7 speaking out against the PLC.

8 These means include, one, by usurping
9 legitimate Chinese Canadian organizations, you know, by co-
10 opting, by repurposing. And I'll go into a bit more detail.

11 Two, it's by influencing people in power
12 directly or indirectly. Three, it's by criminalizing certain
13 acts extra-territorially. Four, it's through Chinese
14 language media and social media. And then last, but not
15 least, by threatening individuals directly or indirectly who
16 speak up against the PLC.

17 And part of its -- these means are made more
18 complicated and more difficult to counter because PLC does
19 not abide with the regular, the ordinary rules of engagement,
20 right. The overarching purposes of PLC's foreign
21 interference strategy is to silence the critic, to suppress
22 any dissent and force the loyalty among people of Chinese
23 descent or the heritage of PLC. And so in that sense,
24 nationalism, patriotism trumps over human rights, democracy
25 and freedom.

26 So I will go into a bit more detail and give
27 some examples, one on usurping, co-opting legitimate
28 organizations.

1 This is a very common political tactics,
2 strategies that's used by the United Front. You know, it's -
3 - in their way, it's called entryism. It's using -- you
4 know, the PLC encourages members -- its members or
5 supporters to join an organization locally. It could be a
6 community service agencies, associations, whatever means
7 possible to permeate and perpetuate these organizations in an
8 attempt to expand influence and expand their ideas and
9 programs.

10 So they might not be -- you know, it appears
11 to be so innocuous, but the hidden agenda is it's trying to
12 persuade these organizations to remain, quote unquote,
13 neutral and not to be, quote unquote, political, right.

14 Over times, these infiltrations, these
15 influences, the United Front has become a complex network of
16 organizations that would engage in various activity for CCP,
17 for Chinese Communist Party, at a whim and at a beck and
18 call.

19 So -- and so these -- that's one of the
20 pieces. And we have seen, you know, one of the first fight,
21 it's during the -- you know, it's the aftermath of the
22 Tiananmen Square massacre. CCP has also recognized they need
23 to -- they need to counter our narrative, they need to
24 counter our community-based organizations such as the Chinese
25 Canadian National Council that came about from a whole anti-
26 W5 movement in pushing for equality and access to positions
27 and outcomes.

28 What they have done is using their power

1 brokers to create a counter national umbrella organizations
2 that would espouse the ideas and act as the mouthpiece of
3 CCP. So this umbrella organizations was formed in 1992. And
4 while it professed to be a community national organization,
5 it actually carry out the work to counter criticisms in
6 Canada by local organizations.

7 And one example to cite is the whole head tax
8 redress campaign, which we took on as community activists. I
9 remember I was signing -- interviewing head taxpayers in 1984
10 and CCNC took up the fight and we got an apology in 2006.
11 But the path to that apology was fraught with challenges and
12 counter-diversions and confusions that was instigated by this
13 counter-umbrella organizations.

14 And they took different stands to the point
15 that it divided the community efforts and we end up not
16 having the strongest solidarity in pushing for more changes
17 within the government.

18 At the end, the head tax redress campaign, we
19 got the apology and we got compensations for the head
20 taxpayers or their, you know -- their spouses. But when the
21 other counter organizations was pushing for this apology and
22 no compensations, these are -- we fall into the divide and
23 rule context -- divide and rule tactics, and this is just one
24 clear example.

25 The other, it's influencing -- the other
26 strategy is influencing people in power.

27 You know, the community leaders, elected or
28 non-elected as long as they're a high profile, they're deemed

1 as the opinion leaders. PRC, through the United Front, would
2 try to approach them, try to -- and you know, get them to go
3 travel to China. To wine and dine politicians at all level
4 was rampant over the last 20 years, you know, with the aim to
5 -- for them to achieve -- you know, to shape and influence
6 the opinions of these elected politicians that they would
7 take a pro-PRC policy position, including funding trip to
8 China.

9 And I mean, it's -- to me, I think this is
10 really quite counterintuitive when we have Parliamentarians
11 who embark on exchange programs with the -- with PRC's
12 National People's Congress. What kind of -- to me, I think
13 it's what kind of exchange program would that be coming from
14 an autocracy system, coming from a system where the National
15 People's Congress only meets 10 days a year and they have
16 never voted anything down.

17 I believe these are charades, these are
18 influences at the very top level of our Canadian democratic
19 institutions.

20 So -- and then the -- in terms of the
21 influences of people in power, it include, you know, the
22 Confucius Institute -- the presence of Confucius Institute in
23 our public school board system to the public post-secondary
24 institutions. These influences have repercussions. These
25 are soft ways of entries, but if carried on, have severe and
26 long-term impact on our intelligence, on our informations as
27 well as the shaping the public opinions about PRC.

28 The other piece is on the -- it's on the

1 threat of accessing and weaponizing personal data. The PRC
2 collect data as all the previous speaker has talk about, you
3 know, to collect data and informations that they can use as
4 part of their intimidation and interference strategies and
5 efforts, right.

6 It includes social media and, you know, our
7 technology that have us using information and data. It's
8 expand especially through banking institutions with
9 connections with PRC.

10 And to me, I think this is where Mehmet had
11 talked about it, too. The presence of six police stations,
12 Chinese police stations in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto
13 are no coincidence. These are -- you know, much as they have
14 been shut down, we never know whether it's operating in
15 another form at -- on an underground basis or through other
16 social media and through internet.

17 So these are -- to me, I think we cannot
18 afford to be relaxed, we cannot -- we need to be stepping up
19 our vigilance as well as stepping up our measures in
20 protecting our Canadian democratic system.

21 The other piece -- and the fourth, which is
22 what's happening taking place, the real example is what's
23 taking place in Hong Kong right now, is the criminalizing act
24 within Canada. The Beijing controlled Hong Kong government
25 introduced various legislations such as, in 2020, the
26 national security law, and then, last Saturday, the Article
27 23 legislations took -- has taken effect in Hong Kong.

28 And this -- these legislations prohibit

1 activities by anyone, whether they are Chinese or Hong Kong
2 nationals or not, in speaking out, in criticizing, in
3 engaging in activities that seem as, you know, colluding with
4 foreign agents, seditions and subversions.

5 And you know, regardless -- and you know,
6 under this new law, Article 23, activities like what we have
7 been doing such as lobbying, which is normal -- a normal part
8 of life of Canada's democratic system, may be found to have
9 breached PRC's or Hong Kong's law. And both these -- these -
10 - that national security law and Article 23, I think one of
11 the damaging part is also they are retroactive and that an
12 individual or group can be criminalized for activities that
13 took place even before Article 23 has taken place.

14 And to me, this is all part of the
15 continuations to silence dissent, to get people to start
16 self-censoring themselves and to give up speaking out or
17 showing up in any of our activities outside Canada. And to
18 me, this is the last nail in the coffin in dismantling and
19 threatening the highly-built civil society of Hong Kong into
20 shreds.

21 Then the fifth one is the Chinese language
22 media and social media which others have also talked about.

23 I will just raise an example that, you know,
24 over our 34 years of organizing the candlelight vigil, June
25 4th candlelight vigils, prior to eight years ago, we have
26 always been able to get the cooperation of the Chinese print
27 dailies to give us a community wave, to put our ads in the
28 newspapers as a way of promoting the event. But from eight

1 years -- last eight years, that offer has been declined. We
2 do not -- you know, at this point we cannot, and the
3 newspapers have refused to put our ads in the paper.

4 And I think these are some of the pieces that
5 has dramatically shaped and polarized our communities as
6 well. I think this is where, you know, the influences have -
7 - you know, it's beyond just the 2019 and 2021 election.
8 It's these -- you know, the influences that took shape and
9 started back in the late -- in early eighties have now taken
10 shape and taken a strong hold within our Canadian democratic
11 system.

12 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** You mentioned goals of
13 silencing, dissent. You've talked about trying to impose
14 self-censorship. You talked about the impact of polarization
15 within our community.

16 What else would you like to tell the
17 Commissioner and the members of the public about the impacts
18 of foreign interference on your community?

19 **MS. WINNIE NG:** Yeah. And you know, I'm
20 going to elaborate about the impact with a few concrete
21 examples, right.

22 Last Saturday, March 23rd, the day when the
23 Article 23 legislation took effect in Hong Kong, we organized
24 -- we were part -- Toronto was part of the Global Day of
25 Action Against Article 23. We were one of the 23 cities
26 across the globe that did the protest.

27 And in the protest, we immediately saw a
28 number -- an increasing number of demonstrators or activists

1 who came out to the rally. They end up concealing themselves
2 by wearing heavy-duty head gear, and that wasn't the case
3 previous demonstrations. And to me, I think this is -- this
4 is part of that self-protections that they have to do.

5 After the -- the rally on Saturday, on
6 Monday, as organizers of this year, the 35th anniversary of
7 the June 4th candlelight vigil, we have -- you know, we have
8 booked Mel Lastman Square for our event. We have
9 commissioned -- we have contracted an AV technician company
10 to set up our stage.

11 Now, on Monday we just heard from that AV
12 company that they are withdrawing their commitment, they are
13 withdrawing their contract because our organization is deemed
14 as "Political".

15 These are real and, you know -- I mean, we
16 are not going to be, you know, deterred and we're going to
17 forge ahead. But these are concrete examples of how
18 insidious and how that element of fear sometimes have
19 overtaken our conscience, our commitment for freedom and
20 democracy.

21 The other piece -- and I think these are some
22 of the key pieces. The other it's -- you know, TADC has
23 launched a campaign, along with other groups, in pushing for
24 foreign agent registry. And for that, we were accused of
25 being traitors; we were accused of being racist. And these
26 -- I mean, for me, this is -- you know, as someone who has
27 been involved in anti-Asian racism, in human rights causes in
28 Canada for the last 45 years, I find this offensive, that

1 they told Beijing, politicians and community people,
2 activists, would brand this initiative as a racist, as
3 reminding of the *Anti-Chinese Exclusion Act*. To me, I think
4 this is farthest from the truth, what they have done. It's
5 using forced equivalence, conflating anti-racism, anti-Asian
6 racism and our desire to safeguard our Canadian transparency
7 and accountability within our political system. What's wrong
8 with us standing up as Canadians and saying that we need a
9 foreign agent registry to hold our government, to hold our
10 elected politicians accountable? And this -- and in
11 particular, this foreign registry, Asian registry is not just
12 singling out Chinese "Agents".

13 So I find these to be part of that
14 divisiveness that is taking place, trying to create a --
15 further polarizations between different groups within our own
16 community. And so I guess my sense is, you know, it's the
17 Commission's, as you -- later on you're going to be releasing
18 your initial report. I believe, you know, that would be one
19 of the counter-narrative that pro-Beijing people and pro-
20 Beijing people in Canada is going to characterize, using
21 anti-Asian racism, nationalism, and patriotism as a way to
22 counter and diffuse the recommendations of the Commission.

23 So it's a word of forewarning that that
24 should be -- that the Commission needs to stand firm on
25 this.

26 And last but not -- I mean, you know,
27 previous speakers had talked about what has -- you know, some
28 of the personal impact and harassment, and very painful

1 stories and narratives. I want to add on, you know, through
2 the last -- you know, one add-on, a positive impact. It's
3 through the last 34 years of working on this issues,
4 staffing, and in particular through the China coalitions as
5 Amnesty International's-led China coalitions, it's one
6 positive outcome that came out from our organizing, is
7 getting to know more about the Tibetan struggle; more about
8 the Uyghur's struggles; more about the Taiwanese's struggle,
9 and what we are doing, it's the more China PLC, it's creating
10 this divide and rule through a united front, the more we are
11 standing in solidarity, and being united for our own common
12 goal to make -- ensure that democracy, freedom, dignity, and
13 human rights would appear, not just in Hong Kong but in
14 Canada, and in Chinas at one point.

15 I think my final message would be the only
16 way we can overcome fear -- and sometimes these fears are
17 legitimate, particularly for those who still have relatives
18 and family in Hong Kong and China. The only way we can
19 overcome such fear it's by putting out -- by showing up,
20 standing up, by giving that sense of hope. Hope would
21 overcome fear. Hope and solidarity and strength in numbers
22 would overcome fear.

23 And to me I think this is where, you know, we
24 would continue, and I appreciate the Commission's work and
25 I'm hoping that you would take also our advice into account
26 and say that look beyond the last two elections and look at
27 the long arm of China, PLC's influence in Canada over the
28 past few decades.

1 Thank you very much.

2 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Thank you.

3 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** I wonder if we might take
4 a brief break.

5 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Yes, we'll suspend for
6 about 10 minutes, just to review the questions that may have
7 been sent by the participants, and we'll come back.

8 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. À l'ordre,
9 s'il vous plaît.

10 This hearing is now in recess until 5
11 o'clock. Cette audience est en repos jusqu'à cinq heures.

12 --- Upon recessing at 4:51 p.m.

13 --- L'audience est suspendue à 16 h 51

14 --- Upon resuming at 5:07 p.m./

15 --- La séance est reprise à 5h07

16 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. A l'ordre,
17 s'il vous plaît. The sitting of the Foreign Interference
18 Commission is back in session. C'est séance du la Commission
19 sur l'ingérence étrangère est reprise.

20 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** We have very little time
21 left, and so here is how I propose we use it. We're going to
22 give each of you two minutes to either answer one of the
23 insightful questions that was suggested to us, which is to
24 share what, in your view, is the most effective protection
25 against foreign interference, or to share a final thought
26 that you would like to leave with the Commission and the
27 members of the public.

28 And we will proceed starting with Mr. Sandhu

1 and moving through to the left and we will finish with Ms. Ng
2 on Zoom.

3 So beginning with you, Mr. Sandhu, please go
4 ahead.

5 **--- FINAL REMARKS BY/REMARQUES FINALES PAR MR. JASKARAN**

6 **SANDHU:**

7 **MR. JASKARAN SANDHU:** My hope is that we walk
8 away from today with an understanding of how foreign
9 interference is not something that's experienced by, you
10 know, random small communities off in the corner of Canada.

11 One thing that stood out to me from all my
12 friends up here on the panel is that how much of our
13 experience with foreign interference was shared, the manners
14 in which the Consulate operates, the manner in which
15 disinformation operates, the manner in which the chilling
16 effect it has on communities to participate themselves, and
17 the manner in which it -- we get misrepresented to others
18 outside of our community.

19 And that's a testament to how hostile states
20 act similar to one another. And in our instance with the
21 Sikh community, India is a hostile state. They're not a
22 friend that shares the values that we hold as Canadians. In
23 fact, they're stripping away any semblance of those as we
24 speak.

25 Foreign interference also impacts folks that
26 we would be surprised by. You know, MPs, Members of
27 Parliament have had their visas revoked to go to India
28 because of things they have called out, such as human rights

1 violations impacting Sikhs and other minorities. It's pretty
2 -- it's a pretty damning indictment of how far states like
3 India would go. And if they're doing that with MPs, what are
4 they doing with folks within communities that are unseen and
5 unknown to the general public?

6 So my hope here today is that what we stated
7 here is not just important for the second phase, but it
8 should really shape the way we understand and think about the
9 evidence that this inquiry is going to be hearing moving
10 forward and that the media and those in attendance thinking
11 about this and talking about it and reporting on it do the
12 justice that it deserves, and that meaningful efforts are
13 made to continue dialogue with community well after this
14 inquiry wraps up, because this problem is not going to go
15 away. It's just going to evolve and shape itself into
16 something more nefarious.

17 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Thank you very much.

18 Mr. Novodvorskiy?

19 **--- FINAL REMARKS BY/REMARQUES FINALES PAR MR. YURIY**

20 **NOVODVORSKIY:**

21 **MR. YURIY NOVODVORSKIY:** I want to take a
22 moment to just thank the Commission again for giving us an
23 opportunity to appear here.

24 And I agree with Mr. Sandhu that it was very
25 helpful to hear how different forms of foreign interference
26 affect all of our diasporas, but it definitely seems like
27 there is substantial overlap.

28 And one item that caught my attention is that

1 it seems that for all of us, the consulates and the embassies
2 seem to be a core source of foreign interference. So we urge
3 the Commission to handle this matter with the seriousness it
4 deserves, as it affects not just our diasporas, but the wider
5 Canadian community, especially when it comes to
6 disinformation, hacking, and other forms of interference.
7 Thank you.

8 MS. KATE McGRANN: Thank you.

9 Ms. Wollensak?

10 --- FINAL REMARKS BY/REMARQUES FINALES PAR MS. GRACE DAI

11 WOLLENSAK:

12 MS. GRACE DAI WOLLENSAK: Hello. Yeah, I'd
13 like to take this opportunity to thank the Commission and
14 everybody working hard on this and to give us the opportunity
15 to give you a picture of how this foreign interference
16 impacts diaspora communities.

17 Actually, like as we have talked about today,
18 we gave the patterns of CCP's infiltration and interference
19 in Canada through our first-hand experience. We may not have
20 direct information on the two stated elections, but I believe
21 that we have -- through what we have witnessed over the 25
22 years in Canada that can provide a picture of the scope and
23 the depths of foreign interference by the PRC through the
24 tactics of mobilizing Chinese Canadian groups and
25 organizations to suppress. Furthermore, it helped the PRC
26 build infrastructure, and the mechanisms, and to form a broad
27 base to support the PRC's infiltration and interference in
28 the political structures of Canada, including elections.

1 Such infrastructure and mechanisms become most mature and
2 available discernably for the wider Canadian public of its
3 interference and in the recent two elections.

4 So I echo what other people mentioned. We
5 need to look beyond in the broader to see what the full
6 effect is capable and able to do in influencing Canadian
7 societies. And that's directly related to the election, what
8 they are able to do.

9 And so, like, for -- like, in our report, we
10 have 11 recommendations to counter -- to combat that
11 interference, but I'd like to especially mention about
12 enacting the foreign agent registry legislation not for
13 punishing those -- singling out those players, but to
14 function as a shield to protect the community members from
15 being coerced into playing for the Chinese Embassy or
16 Consulate or foreign factors, because a lot of times, many
17 people, they're not willing to do it, but out of fear or
18 other leverage, or fear of punishment, or whatever reasons,
19 they were forced to do the job that they were not able --
20 they are not willing to. And this legislation will help them
21 to be able to say no to the foreign factors.

22 So that's one thing I want to say.

23 And the last sentence is, like, we really
24 urge our Canadian Government and its agencies to be committed
25 to take effective measures and actions in responding to the
26 CCP's invasive and aggressive infiltration into Canadian
27 communities, institutions, political system, and beyond. It
28 is essential for Canada to safeguard its values, democracy,

1 sovereignty, and the rights and the freedoms of its people
2 against the foreign interference and the repression.

3 Thank you very much.

4 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Thank you.

5 Dr. Esmaeilion?

6 **--- FINAL REMARKS BY/REMARQUES FINALES PAR DR. HAMED**

7 **ESMAEILION:**

8 **DR. HAMED ESMAEILION:** Thank you very much.

9 I want to thank you again for inviting me.

10 And the last thing I want to say, you asked
11 my friends here about the level of support they got from
12 different organizations here.

13 So we work and cooperate with the government
14 for taking the case of Flight PS752 to the International
15 Court of Justice. It was submitted last year. This year
16 they submitted another case in International Civil Aviation
17 Organization. Our request for supporting our case in
18 International Criminal Court is still pending. Our request
19 to put IRGC in the list of terrorist organizations is still
20 pending.

21 It's very important for the community to see
22 the entirety of this organization to be listed as a terrorist
23 organization.

24 If I go to RCMP, from what I heard from my
25 friends here and from our experiences, okay, RCMP didn't open
26 a criminal case for PS752, let alone protecting the activists
27 or really any Canadian activists. That's why I hear from
28 friends that they have turned their houses to fortresses with

1 cameras and, like, security tricks, because you're on your
2 own and there is no protection.

3 And the last thing, it's about IRCC. I
4 mentioned a banker, a chief of police, the Minister, the
5 current Speaker of the House of the Islamic regime. They
6 have -- they're already here, or they've been here, or
7 they're planning to come here. That's why we have deep
8 concerns that we don't have any political relationship.
9 These two countries, they don't have open embassies. But why
10 we see the flow of Islamic regime officials in this country?
11 And this is the reason that the community is not getting
12 involved in lots of activities.

13 I urge the Commission again that -- to add
14 Islamic regime of Iran to those rogue states that are in the
15 Terms of Reference here. Thank you.

16 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Thank you.

17 And turning to Zoom. Ms. Ng?

18 And it may be that she is not with us. And
19 by that, I mean she's no longer in Zoom.

20 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** I just want to make sure
21 that it's not a technical issue.

22 **MS. KATE McGRANN:** Yeah. It seems that she's
23 no longer in the Zoom platform.

24 **COMMISSIONER HOGUE:** Oh, okay. So we are at
25 the end of our day.

26 I want to thank you all deeply. Having
27 accepted to come forward and share your views, as well as
28 your community's views and experiences, in my mind, is very,

1 very important for the Commission. And honestly, I think it
2 took some courage, and I'm very grateful that you have
3 accepted to do that. And your contribution will for sure
4 inform the work of the Commission going forward. So thank
5 you.

6 **DR. HAMED ESMAEILION:** Thank you.

7 **THE REGISTRAR:** Order, please. A l'ordre,
8 s'il vous plait. The sitting of the Foreign Interference
9 Commission has adjourned until tomorrow at 9:30 a.m. C'est
10 séance du la Commission sur l'ingérence étrangère est levée
11 jusqu'à demain à 9h30.

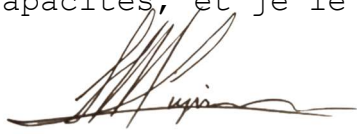
12 --- Upon adjourning at 5:18 p.m./

13 --- L'audience est suspendue à 5h18

14
15 **C E R T I F I C A T I O N**

16
17 I, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, a certified court reporter,
18 hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate
19 transcription of my notes/records to the best of my skill and
20 ability, and I so swear.

21
22 Je, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, une sténographe officielle,
23 certifie que les pages ci-hauts sont une transcription
24 conforme de mes notes/enregistrements au meilleur de mes
25 capacités, et je le jure.

26
27 

28 Sandrine Marineau-Lupien