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# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

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Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger





## Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Thursday, February 9, 2023

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone.

Welcome to meeting number 51 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee is meeting today to continue its study on foreign election interference. The first hour will be public. For the second hour, we'll continue in camera.

[*English*]

From the Communications Security Establishment, we have the former chair of the SITE task force, Lyall King, director, risk mitigation programs. From the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, we have Adam Fisher, director general, intelligence assessments, and Cherie Henderson, assistant director, requirements. From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Lisa Ducharme, acting director general.

Thank you, all, for being here today.

Before we begin, I would like to remind everyone to please address all comments through the chair.

I understand, Mr. King, that you will be bringing greetings on behalf of everyone. You have up to five minutes.

Welcome.

**Mr. Lyall King (Director, Risk Mitigation Programs, Communications Security Establishment):** Thank you very much.

Hello. Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for the invitation to reappear on the study of foreign election interference.

My name is Lyall King. I am the former chair of the security and intelligence threats to elections task force, also known as SITE. I am now the director of risk mitigation programs at the Communications Security Establishment. I am very happy to be joined today by my colleagues from CSIS and the RCMP, with whom we worked very closely in the SITE task force.

Since our last appearance on November 3, there has been a great deal of media attention on the topic of foreign interference. The SITE task force understands the concerns shown by Canadians, and we do take them very seriously. I would like to begin by providing some background on—and revisiting a bit—the SITE task force

and outlining a couple of the key trends observed on the threat of foreign interference. I hope this will help set the stage and provide some context for the discussions we have today.

As mentioned in our previous appearance, the CSE recently published the renewed national cyber-threat assessment, the NCTA. The NCTA highlights that online foreign influence activities have become a new normal, with adversaries seeking to influence elections and impact international discourse related to current events. We assess that misinformation, disinformation and malinformation—referred to sometimes as MDM—propagated by state-sponsored cyber-threat actors does represent an ongoing and persistent threat to Canadians.

I will now return briefly to an overview of the SITE task force and the work we do. As I discussed in my last appearance, I believe it is important to have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each of the SITE task force members, as well as the mandate of the SITE task force. The SITE task force is comprised of officials from the CSE, CSIS, the RCMP and Global Affairs Canada.

The SITE task force's mandate—just to reiterate—is to provide a clear point of engagement within the security and intelligence community for government partners; to review and focus intelligence collection, assessment and open-source analysis related to foreign interference; to provide government partners, senior public servants and other partners with situational awareness; and to promote the use of intelligence, assessment and open-source information analysis in the protection of electoral processes through sharing with partners or, when our mandates permit, taking action to mitigate the threat.

I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the important contributions that our partners have made to the task force. Again, this is an overview and does not cover all of the roles and responsibilities of SITE task force members.

CSIS provides threat briefings and intelligence reporting to Elections Canada and the Commissioner of Elections, and provides assessments of hostile state activity methodologies and capabilities to Government of Canada decision-makers. Global Affairs Canada provides research on disinformation campaigns targeting Canada by foreign actors; reports on global trends, metrics and incidents; and coordinates attribution of incidents. The RCMP investigates any criminal activity related to interference or influence of Canada's electoral processes, and works closely in partnership with intelligence, law enforcement and regulatory agencies.

The CSE provides intelligence and cyber-assessments on the intentions, activities and capabilities of foreign threat actors. We protect government systems and networks related to elections through cyber-defence measures; and provide cybersecurity advice and guidance to political parties, provinces and other institutions involved in democratic processes.

The important work the SITE task force conducts is also done outside of election periods as we continue to help the government assess and respond to foreign threats to Canada's electoral processes.

I'll just note that, since our last appearance, the CSE was tasked with a production of papers order to facilitate the committee's study on foreign elections interference. We do understand the important work of the committee, which is why we have produced and worked to provide documents in response to that order. We submitted 36 documents in total to ensure that your committee had the necessary information needed to complete its study, while at the same time respecting the national security limitations.

● (1105)

In conclusion, I would just state that the SITE task force does remain vigilant to protect Canadians and Canada's democracy from threats of foreign interference. I do hope this opportunity to reappear on the committee's study helps to answer further questions you may have and better showcase the importance of SITE.

Thank you for the opportunity to reappear, and we look forward to answering your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much for those opening comments.

We will now begin with our six-minute rounds starting with Mr. Cooper for up to six minutes.

Please comment through the chair, and I would ask that no two people speak at the same time.

Go ahead, Mr. Cooper.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll direct my question to Mr. King or whichever official is in the best position to answer.

What is the highest security classification level of information that will be provided to this committee during the first hour?

**Mr. Lyall King:** We'll only be able to discuss unclassified information in this setting today.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Would that also be the case in the second hour?

**Mr. Lyall King:** Yes. Madam Chair, you have my apologies. We will only be able to discuss unclassified information in this particular setting today in both sessions.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Is there no material difference with respect to the security level of information that would be offered in the first hour versus the second hour?

**Mr. Lyall King:** That is correct. I can confirm that there will be no difference in the level of classification we will discuss from the open session to the in camera session.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Given that there is no material difference, it seems to me that it is entirely unnecessary to go in camera, especially having regard for the advice that CSIS has provided, including what was laid out in a February 2021 memo to the Prime Minister that issues of foreign interference be grounded in a policy of sunlight and transparency. Therefore, I move that the second hour remain in public.

● (1110)

**The Chair:** Mr. Cooper, I think what's suitable for the purposes of this committee, and I will welcome comment.... Pause the clock on his time, please. I would love a signal from others as to what would be best. I think the level of conversation in an in camera setting is different from an in public conversation.

We have, as a committee, up until now been able to find and chart a path forward, which I regard and respect. I think that you should use your six minutes, and I will gauge the audience—Mr. Turnbull wants in—and we can then sort out what the best way to proceed is, but I think it is taken in good faith.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** I have no problem with what Mr. Cooper is suggesting. He didn't ask all the witnesses that question, so I just wonder whether there are any others who would reply differently to that question.

**The Chair:** I understand that the appearance today by witnesses is through the SITE task force, and Mr. King is speaking on behalf of the task force. Therefore, the answer would remain the same.

I would take a nodding of heads if it's not the case. It seems consistent.

Mr. Cooper, why don't we proceed with your six minutes? I'll get a gauge of the room, and then we'll get back to this.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** We have a motion on the floor. I don't think there's any objection. It appears that we might have reached unanimous consent on this.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** I would have liked two minutes to think about the pros and cons.

[English]

**The Chair:** I think you're right that we can get there. Is it okay that one member gets a couple of minutes to reflect, and we continue with your time to proceed with maximum time? I think we can definitely get to the bottom of this. Can we proceed with our questions, and we'll get that sorted out before your six minutes are over?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** I don't want to belabour this, Madam Chair, but will there be a vote on the motion upon the conclusion of my six-minute round?

**The Chair:** I think that we can get consensus, that we don't even need a vote. Therefore, that's what I would like to proceed with.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Okay, that's fair enough.

**The Chair:** I will return your six minutes to you, and I will get a good gauge. By the end of your time, your four minutes that are now remaining, I will have an answer. Is that suitable, Mr. Cooper?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** That's very good, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** I appreciate your collaboration here.

We'll go back to you, Mr. Cooper.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Ms. Ducharme, can you confirm that there are ongoing RCMP criminal investigations respecting foreign interference arising from the 2019 and 2021 elections?

**Ms. Lisa Ducharme (Acting Director General, Federal Policing National Intelligence, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** Thank you for the question.

Madam Chair, I can confirm that there were no criminal investigations into the 2019 elections, as per Commissioner Lucki's letter to this committee dated 28 November, 2022. That being said, there are active investigations into foreign actor interference activities at any given time—multiple investigations.

With respect to the 2021 elections, I am unable to respond whether there are active investigations into the election at this time.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** There are active criminal investigations pertaining to interference in the electoral process. Is that correct?

**Ms. Lisa Ducharme:** I am unable to respond whether there are investigations, Madam Chair, into federal election issues.

I am able to confirm that there are active investigations into foreign interference activities.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you for that.

Mr. King, given that you were chair of the SITE task force, we know that in September 2021 the SITE task force was monitoring interference targeting MP Kenny Chiu, which was released months later.

The problem is that the information was not passed on to Kenny Chiu at the time. He was kept in the dark. It didn't come to light until the election was already over. From the standpoint of combating foreign interference, why was MP Kenny Chiu kept in the dark?

• (1115)

**Mr. Lyall King:** Thank you for your question.

Madam Chair, I would only say in general, as we identify through our methods what may appear to be foreign interference, we need to go through a process of evaluation before we can take actions.

What we can do, and what we did do, with the information that we had available to us was inform, as was our remit, the critical election incident protocol. That was done through regular engagements, briefings and daily reports.

There's a distinction between observing and needing to analyze—

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** I just want to cut you off.

I want to give you as much time as needed to answer the question, but you did make reference to the critical election incident public protocol, which is set out in a cabinet directive. It provides, with respect to informing a candidate who is the target of interference, that the candidate or political party be informed. Surely that would mean being informed as expeditiously as possible. Wouldn't it?

**Mr. Lyall King:** Madam Chair, I would simply restate that it's not a decision of the SITE task force to engage in that. That is a decision made by that critical election incident public protocol. It's in their remit to make that decision and make that call. We provide the information that we have to them, so that they can make an informed decision.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Just so everyone knows and we're all on the same page, with a nodding of heads I will get agreement that the two hours will now be in public.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Do you see that, Mr. Cooper? It's magic. It's a good committee to be on, this PROC committee.

I'll just say to all witnesses that, if at any time you want to jump in to answer, give a nod and we'll make that possible, because this information is really important and there are many people who are listening and engaging. As long as we keep questions and comments short, we can always have time.

Ms. O'Connell, you have up to six minutes.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.):** Madam Chair, through you to the witnesses, I'm following up on Mr. Cooper's questions about the SITE committee.

Through either your testimony previously or other testimony at this committee, the Conservative Party, which is Mr. Chiu's party, did in fact send a representative who was security-cleared to have these discussions, to bring allegations to any of their candidates or, on the reverse, for you and your committee to provide information to that party member.

Can you speak to the fact that there seems to be this suggestion that nobody was notified? Would it not be through that party process, which the Conservatives had access to, that they could have raised any questions of influence and could have had that classified security briefing?

**Mr. Lyall King:** Perhaps I can begin. I would open it to my colleagues of the service to interject where appropriate.

Those engagements with cleared members of the political parties were very much to provide context to the threat—a little bit more detail to what we say publicly so they can understand—and to help them identify some of those issues themselves as well, and, quite frankly, to enable and open up some manner of dialogue.

Again, I just would like to restate that there are multiple levels of classification as well. The members we spoke to I believe were cleared up to “secret”. Sometimes our information is more than that. Classification levels can be an issue.

Again, as I was trying to state prior, there's the fact that we do take time, sometimes, to analyze before we start to take an action. I think it's important to develop a threshold and understand what you're conveying to an individual, so I would just say that—

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I'm sorry. It's just because I'm limited on time, but if others want to jump in, please do.

With that being said, previously...and the reports from the national security community have actually said and we've talked a lot about the difference between attempts and impacts. I believe CSIS has come out and said that in SITE the protocol was not engaged. Do you still feel that for 2019 and 2021, although there were attempts made that everybody takes very seriously, the attempts did not equal impacts in the election results?

• (1120)

**Mr. Lyall King:** Typically the way SITE approaches this matter is not to try to get into the evaluation of impact, ultimately. It's to understand what is happening in that domain and to inform and to try to take some action. We don't typically get into a deep assessment of the impact of that activity.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** CSIS has confirmed.... They have stated publicly that there was not an impact in the 2019 and 2021 elections despite attempts, that the protocol was not reached, the incident protocol committee was not reached to actually acknowledge anything, and that has not changed since the last time you appeared here.

**Mr. Lyall King:** That's correct, to my understanding. I'm not involved in that space anymore—

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Fair enough.

**Mr. Lyall King:** —but yes, there's no difference in that stance from my perspective.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you.

With that being said, is it not.... We heard testimony on Tuesday where our witnesses, despite the national security community not indicating any sort of decay or decree that the 2019 or 2021 elections were impacted by these attempts.... We heard from witnesses who said they felt that there was an impact in Mr. Chiu's riding.

Doesn't that somewhat undermine one of our pillars of democracy? That if we're to trust the non-partisan security officials who live in this space, who have all of the classifications that would be needed, who see the information, isn't this kind of doing China's bidding by suggesting our elections were in fact influenced, when the national security officials, who know far more than any of us in this room, who have the security classification, have come out and said they don't see that any of these attempts were successful?

Doesn't that kind of do China's bidding in undermining the civility and security of our elections?

**Mr. Lyall King:** I think we can only be honest and open with the facts that are before us at the end of the day. Again, you are speaking to perhaps bigger issues than I feel maybe I am able to address because of my position, but we strive—we do strive—to be open and communicate as much as possible. That is effectively why we have opened up those channels: to speak to and share some classified information with partners.

We will do our best to identify. We will do our best to get that information to the people who need it to make a decision and take an action. Ultimately, other people are going to take some of those decisions. It's not necessarily—

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I'm sorry. With the amount of time I have left, I think Ms. Henderson would like to speak.

**Ms. Cherie Henderson (Assistant Director, Requirements, Canadian Security Intelligence Service):** Thank you.

Thank you very much for the question. I think it's a very important point that we actually need to discuss.

When we talk about foreign interference, the service is extremely focused on any foreign interference activity against our country by numerous hostile state actors, so what we are trying to do is build that picture and educate all Canadians, because all Canadians can partake in supporting all of us in protecting our sovereignty, which includes not only our elections but also all of our democratic institutions. That's why these committees are so fundamentally important as well.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Fisher, I know you want to add something, but maybe that will be for next time.

I'll now invite those who don't speak both official languages to use their earpieces.

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I've just learned a number of things that I'd like to ask the witnesses about, and I invite them to tell me if I am on the wrong track.

Witnesses, you are subject to a protocol that, in practice, may have prevented you from accurately disclosing the information or the warning we received from *Global News* to raise awareness of the threat. Do I have that right or not?

• (1125)

[*English*]

**Mr. Lyall King:** Madam Chair, if I understand the question correctly, and just to make sure.... Are you verifying whether or not the protocol prevented us from sharing information that you're saying was publicly available?

Publicly available information is there for everybody. We are not just—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I'll stop you right there because interpretation can affect understanding.

Your role is to advise and inform the public, and we have reports where it is written in black and white. Besides the protocol that may have prevented you from informing the public—we'll ask you about that later—is there any other reason why we weren't informed? Are there any concerns or anything else?

I bring this up because we had the Minister of Public Safety here who, in his speech, raised concerns about the stigmatization of the Chinese-Canadian community. He also talked about vigilance.

If the protocol prevents you from doing so, what is there to prevent us from making a change? In other words, do you have a duty to be vigilant about your role to inform and advise the public?

[*English*]

**Mr. Lyall King:** Thank you for that.

With respect to the protocol, it's there for a very particular purpose in a defined time frame: an election period.

I will note—as Cherie, my colleague from the service, mentioned before—there are avenues outside of that through which we can communicate trends, information and our understanding of a threat to the public. The service does this through outreach and issuing reports. CSE and the cyber centre do this by sharing and issuing reports. It is the nature of some declassified information. You lose some of the granularity of those details. What's important is that people understand where the issues lie.

The protocol itself is very specific to the election period. Whether or not we determine to go public, in the event we feel we cannot hold a free and fair election.... Again, that's a decision for a panel of senior deputy ministers to make.

We all have other avenues, and we use those avenues to communicate threat information and trends in order to educate and prepare people—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Okay.

Considering that you had elements and all the restrictive measures at the time did not allow you to inform the public, even

though *Global News* did, was the government well aware of the results?

You say that an investigation is under way. I imagine there was a warning, a sounding bell. I'm asking because I want to make sure. People are watching and are worried about what's going on.

Also, when the minister came to meet with us, she said that she hadn't been informed. It may be a communication problem, but I want you to tell me more. What happened?

[*English*]

**Mr. Lyall King:** I will reiterate that, especially when you have online information playing out in a public domain.... We talk about online influence that is available for people to see and for anyone to pick up, look at, interpret and share. We, inside, are also trying to understand what is behind that. We are trying to understand what and who is driving that information exchange. Those aren't always simple, quick or easy things to do.

However—and we did this routinely throughout the election period—we shared when we had information, whether or not it was open source. We said, “Look, this is in the news, so we are having a look at this to try to understand what's behind it”, in order to alert and advise. Information was shared. It's decisions on what to do with that information....

We are in a different role and realm than the media and public. We have other considerations to think about when we're sharing and treating information, especially classified information.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I only have 30 seconds left. In my second round of questions or in the extra hour that follows, I will ask you a question for the people who are watching us and who are concerned about all the electoral process.

What can be changed? I'd like your opinion. We're talking about trust, but we're also talking about citizen participation in action.

I'll ask you a question later about the famous foreign agents registry.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gaudreau.

Ms. Blaney, you have six minutes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Of course, all of my questions go through the chair as they must. I want thank all of the people who are here testifying before us. For me the biggest concern I have is that Canadians have faith in our system, and that if there are problems within our system we fix those and we don't create a bunch of fearful speculations but rather a conscious effort to bring clarity and understanding. I feel that this is an area that we all need to do a little bit better in, to be quite frank.

We know that China and other foreign actors have had involvement in Canada's politics and have been going on for quite a long time trying to interfere, and that's very concerning. We see that, in the 2019 election, there were some pretty profound things that happened. We're hearing that there hasn't been an impact on our elections, but I think people's fear is growing and that really concerns me.

I'll direct my first question to Mr. King, and if anybody else wants to answer it please feel free to join in.

I feel, based on the research I have done, that Canada is far behind so many other countries and that concerns me greatly.

My first question is around the registry. What kinds of discussions are happening internally? I know you can't give us all of the details, but I think Canadians want to know there is information out there that we've heard. There isn't clarity on how that has impacted us in a way. There's not clarity, quite frankly, around what MPs and their parties can do to protect themselves. I'm concerned that there could be something happening and I would be merrily going along my way doing my work during an election and I would have no idea.

Is the registry being discussed, and what are other ways that we can look forward to in elections so that MPs can protect themselves from these kinds of things? Are there specific questions of ourselves and our parties? I heard Ms. O'Connell talking about those things and saying the Conservatives.... How would they know when to ask? What are the things that we need to be watching for as parties, as political folks, as MPs, as people who are running to be MPs, to have a better awareness and ask the correct questions so that hopefully we can get the information we need to do the things we need to do during the election process?

I know that was a lot to take in.

**Mr. Lyall King:** I will probably pass to my service colleagues maybe to talk about the foreign registry, or a few of those points.

Just briefly in terms of protection of MPs maybe I should just start by saying there's a constant learning process here for us as well. What we did in 2019 worked reasonably well, and we tried to take some lessons from that and reuse or change. There is a need to constantly evaluate where we are. I would say, comparing us to other nations and specifically the Five Eyes, we've gotten very good comments and feedback from our Five Eyes partners on the way we operate in this domain. You are correct that there are probably some gaps there undoubtedly, and I think we should look to highlight and close those where we can.

In terms of protection for MPs, certainly during the election I know the cyber centre, which is part of CSE, had a 24-7 hotline that

was available for MPs to reach out to. We provided specific guidance to MPs on how to protect themselves with respect to their personal devices' information really from the cybersecurity perspective. I know there are other discussions in and around security for MPs from a physical perspective through probably the RCMP. These were themes that came up and the service does reach out as well and try to engage with those communities.

I don't know if the service wants to reply on that piece and maybe the registry a bit.

**Mr. Adam Fisher (Director General, Intelligence Assessments, Canadian Security Intelligence Service):** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, maybe I'll put those in two buckets: policy, and some of our briefings to folks who can be impacted by foreign influence activity.

On the policy side, there's the foreign registry, of course. Behind the scenes, certainly the service and our partners are engaged in giving advice to government on what we see as potentially useful tools that could address foreign influence activity.

Something I would emphasize is that we're up against adversaries who are very sophisticated. They're using the full state apparatus in terms of their targeting against Canada. It's not a static threat. It evolves. They watch very closely how we react and how we adapt, and they look for ways to work around that.

My point is that there's no one silver bullet to deal with this. There needs to be a continuous process, a continuous conversation and engagement to address it.

In terms of awareness amongst Canadians, and the political class as well, that is something the service, outside of the SITE task force has been putting a lot of effort into in the last few years. That's both in general terms, so engaging with parties in a classified setting, and in an unclassified setting with broader audiences, to educate them about the threat. We have a number of unclassified publications on foreign influence activity, which give you a good idea of the flags to look for in terms of foreign influence activity.

I also want to say, where we can—because a lot of what we're dealing with is highly classified intelligence—we try to engage with individuals we know are being targeted. I say that outside of any specific case or example.

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Calkins, it's up to five minutes for you.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.



I have a question for you and whoever can answer this. Australia's intelligence service recently intercepted a foreign interference plot, and the situation became so grave that the director-general of security, Mike Burgess, confirmed that espionage and foreign interference in democracy in Australia have now supplanted terrorism as the nation's principal security concern. You're probably aware of that. He also expressed that Beijing used dating apps to mine confidential information from thousands of Australians with access to classified information. That's not me; that's you who would be the equivalent here in Canada.

In response to Australia's new laws making it a crime to engage in covert, deceptive or threatening conduct on behalf of a foreign government, and so on, we're trying to figure out here, as parliamentarians, what we should be doing. However, it's really difficult to figure out what we should be doing if we actually don't know what's going on.

Right now I can read Bloomberg's various very credible news articles coming out of Australia, where they say that they've intercepted people who are bankrolling money. We've had the same allegations here in Canada, yet nobody will say anything. If Beijing's willing to do it in Australia, I don't know why they wouldn't be willing to try it in Canada as well. All I hear is "media reports", but I can't seem to get a single official from the Government of Canada to confirm or deny that there is actually money that's being bankrolled.

I can look at the documents you provided. I look at "Cybersecurity Threats against Electoral Infrastructure". It's been fully redacted. "Cybersecurity Threats against Political Parties and Government Officials" is fully redacted. "Foreign Interference—Political" is fully redacted. "Overt Influence" is fully redacted. "Overall Threat Assessment" is fully redacted. I look at the other sides of the pages here and see that "Foreign Interference—Public" is fully redacted. I don't know what to communicate with my constituents.

It's a really awkward position to be in, because I don't want to impugn anybody's reputation here—that's not what my intent is. I actually believe that our government officials are doing the best they can. I believe you're very good at monitoring. I'm not so sure that we're good at interdicting or stopping, because I haven't seen any results that tell me so. I have no media reports. I have no information that tells me that we've actually stopped anything, but I do have a former colleague who tells me very clearly that Beijing was interfering in his election. At that last meeting, the former ambassador to China said that just a threat to one riding alone undermines the integrity of our process. I believe the government is now saying that the overall election result has to be the bar in order for us to become public with information, not just undermining the integrity of one electoral district.

I'm wondering if you could give me some clarification, because I'm very frustrated right now with the lack of information, the lack of transparency and the responsibility of trying to figure out how to solve this problem as a policy-maker and as somebody who votes on legislation.

What is the bar? Should the bar be interfering in a single election in a single riding, or should it be for the entirety of the country? Should the presence of any money being discussed by a foreign ac-

tor then warrant public information? At what point does the public...? Because the public has to maintain confidence in our systems, in our institutions. I have to tell you, as somebody who represents the public, there is not a lot of public confidence in some of our public institutions right now. I don't want to go down that road, and I'm not trying to foment that feeling. I'm trying to protect our institutions. I'm just frustrated.

Can you clarify for me—because going into an in camera meeting doesn't seem to resolve any of the questions I have—if any election or any candidate for any party in this country has been affected directly by foreign interference in the last two elections? We hear about 11 in Toronto. We hear about Kenny Chiu. Has the needle been moved in a single riding in either of the last two elections? Is it yes or no?

● (1140)

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, I'll take a stab at that. There was a lot in that question.

Maybe I'll separate what occurs during an election and outside an election, first of all, through the protocol and otherwise. There's a policy in place and protocols in place during the election for very good reason, because we want to be careful that we're not interfering with the democratic process. There are thresholds that need to be met there. It's not determined by the SITE task force. It's determined by the panel of five in terms of when something is publicly communicated. That's during an election period.

Outside an election period, as I've said, we are communicating more. I'll take the point that you can always do better, and I think certainly within the service we're looking for opportunities to be communicating with Canadians and politicians in an unclassified setting. Certainly, I think the effort is there.

As I said, you had a lot in your question, and I've forgotten what the rest of it was. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** It was a rant.

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** I would say as well that we can't speak to specific ridings, specific candidates.

Our measure is not whether foreign influence activity has moved the needle. When we see foreign influence activity, that's enough for us. That engages our mandate. That engages an investigation. That brings advice and assessments to government. Whether it changes the course of an election in a riding is not something we measure, and it's probably not something we could measure even if we wanted to, making that link between the two.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** Certainly when we see it, we report it.

**The Chair:** When the beep happens, I have to end it, but I do want to make sure we get the valid information. Exciting news: this is a public meeting. You can go back and watch the game tape and send us more fruitful answers. We always welcome them.

Mr. Turnbull, you have up to five minutes.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Thanks, Madam Chair.

For me, I'm worried about the repercussions of the direction that unfortunately the official opposition is moving in, which probably has some real risk associated with it. I'm wondering. When you treat allegations in a published article—the Sam Cooper story is what I'm referring to—that are really uncorroborated and unvalidated as fact, what are the risks of that?

• (1145)

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you for the question.

I'm not going to speak to any specific cases and I'm not going to speak to the allegations within the media article. What I will say goes back to what my colleague said and what one of your colleagues recently questioned. It was just in regard to this ongoing persistent threat of foreign interference and the fact that, as a nation, we need to create greater awareness of that threat. The threat does not only happen during an election process. It is an ongoing persistent threat that we are facing and that, as Canadians, we need to increase awareness of.

When we talk about being able to defend ourselves against the threat, we need to be able to have open conversations and be as transparent as we possibly can be.

Our director has come out and said publicly that foreign interference in our processes in our democratic institutions is one of the most serious threats that we are facing. It's not the most serious, because terrorism is still extremely serious but it is insidious. It takes its time and they can certainly play us against each other in trying to get their interference activities moving forward.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Without interrupting you, I just want to build on that.

Disclosing some of the information that folks with national security clearance rightfully had access to and are looking at every day, having that exposed out there in the public, to me, is a very dangerous game. Isn't it doing the bidding of some of these foreign actors? Wouldn't China just love it for us to have that information out there in public?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Again, I'm not going to speak to the specific allegations in the article.

What I will speak to is the fact that we need to have an ongoing greater conversation on national security within this country. We need to take the opportunities to have that and educate all Canadians and make sure that Canadians know where they can go to get information. I take the point that maybe we can do better, as my colleague said, but we certainly are trying to reach out and educate and bring that greater awareness so that people can tell perhaps truth from fiction.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Thank you.

Just building on that, we heard earlier this week from former ambassador David Mulroney that there were credible threats of foreign election interference well before 2015. There has been some discussion and almost implication that somehow the current government and the security apparatus that's there haven't done a whole lot to progress on protecting our democratic institutions, which I think is false.

Could one of you on the panel speak to the many steps that have been taken to essentially prepare ourselves and improve our process since 2015?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** When the service operates, of course, we do not operate out in an overt manner. A lot of our work is done in the background to support everyone in building strength and resilience against any type of threat. What we engage in, you will not always see. That's why it's so important to have this ongoing national security conversation to raise awareness, because every Canadian can support defending against foreign interference.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I have one last question.

Just because the public protocol in the last election wasn't triggered—the public wasn't necessarily notified; we couldn't, and for good reason, as I understand it—that doesn't necessarily mean that security agencies weren't in the background, working away to mitigate and interdict the different risks and threats that were there. Is that right?

Could you speak to what was being done in a general fashion?

**Mr. Lyall King:** Thank you for the question.

That is correct.

I think part of the problem is that, by nature, we have to live and operate in the shadows to an extent, given the nature of the source material and the methods of collection, etc., that we employ. However, we worked very hard in the lead-up for months and months. It wasn't just during the election period. I think that is what I would be very clear about. This is an ongoing thing.

During the election period, you see other mechanisms come into play, like the critical election incident public protocol—the CEIPP—but, in fact, we work very hard. We have to make sure that our operations and our actions are backstopped with good information. When we find something, we can't just take action willy-nilly, nor should we be able to. We should be under processes and procedures that are reviewable by oversight bodies, and we are. We need to meet thresholds to take action, but that does not mean that we are not feverishly at work, trying to identify and get that information to be able to take action.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Gaudreau. You have two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Since I'm going to have more time later, I'm going to ask the witnesses an extremely specific question, and I invite them to answer it in turn.

We're not talking about foreign interference here. The subject of foreign interference can be very broad, in terms of disinformation, possibilities or elections, which we are talking about more specifically. How is it that the United Kingdom talks about steps that could be taken, and the United States talks about Russian interference? I'd like to know why we're not talking about it here.

[English]

**Mr. Lyall King:** Thank you for your question.

I would say that we speak about foreign interference consistently, certainly in the lead-up.

Again, I've referred to some of the publications that we try to put out there, both in the service and the cyber centre, to educate the public about what foreign interference is, where it can happen and how people should be aware. They try to educate, so we speak about it and we speak about it when we can.

The difficulty, as well, during election periods is that we are different from the U.S., absolutely, and we have to observe other things, like the.... My mind is blanking. I apologize. There are things we can communicate and things we cannot communicate. That's why we have the critical election incident public protocol in place to be able to track—

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Mr. King. Before we go to Mr. Fisher, I understand that there are two different directives: during an election period compared to when we're in government.

Mr. Fisher, why do we hear so little about it? Yes, we hear about it, but clearly not much in the general public via the government to citizens.

[English]

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** Thank you for the question.

Maybe it's a symptom of where I work, but I find that we are talking about it more and more. That's the honest answer from me.

I think about where we were five or 10 years ago. I couldn't have thought of being in front of a committee like this and speaking openly about Chinese foreign influence, Russian foreign influence and Iranian foreign influence. It just wouldn't have happened, so I think we have made progress.

We can go further, but it takes time. We're on the right track.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We have Ms. Blaney for up to two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, Chair.

One of the other issues that I'm really concerned about is misinformation and how that's impacting.... I have an especially significant concern about any impacts it has for rural and remote communities, indigenous communities and different ethnic communities, so I want to preface that.

I saw that the report released by the CSE in 2021 states clearly that Canadian voters will very likely encounter “some form of foreign cyber interference” in the next federal election, so my question for you is this: Can you explain what that foreign interference looks like online?

What policies are being implemented? What measures are being taken to educate Canadians, so that they have some awareness that this might be happening to them and that they should question it? How are we protecting Canadians?

**Mr. Lyall King:** Thank you for your question.

In terms of online misinformation, disinformation, malinformation and that whole ecosystem, it's unfortunate that our Global Affairs colleagues aren't here with us today to speak about it, because that is very much their domain in terms of SITE's role.

Generally speaking in terms of the trends, we're concerned. Looking at what Canada is going to be susceptible to, I suppose, is the ultimate thing. What is the intent of foreign actors and what are their foreign policy objectives, for example, with respect to Canada?

We have the fortunate—and sometimes unfortunate—issue of being very close to the U.S. Our media ecosystems are very intertwined. That is an issue as well, in terms of spillover. Sometimes that disinformation isn't necessarily directed at Canada, but we're getting blowback effects because it's part of the North American ecosystem. It is problematic.

Sometimes it is hard to discern the origin of the information. The methodologies employed by adversaries are pretty good. They intentionally obfuscate who they are, so it's hard for us to identify who's in behind. We have clear examples in the past of, say, Russia sharing disinformation around COVID, etc. That was aimed at a number of different audiences.

It can take a lot of different forms and isn't exactly being directed to Canada, yet we still feel the impacts.

What can we do? I would just like to point out—and I'm sure this is true of the service as well—that CSE and the cyber centre are making more of a concerted effort to specifically engage with indigenous communities, so that we understand their needs from a cybersecurity perspective. Given that there are different geographies and different complications there, how can we better support and understand their needs?

That is certainly on our radar. Things that we're engaged in—I'm sure that is the same for the service—are looking at particular communities and doing outreach to educate, understand and let them know what the risks are.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

I have been so impressed over the last few weeks on how long one sentence can go on for. It's really impressive to see that it's not just elected officials who can really extend a line. It's an impressive skill to gain over time.

[Translation]

Go ahead, Mr. Berthold. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here.

Ladies and gentlemen, what I gather from the first hour of testimony is that, unfortunately, you are not in a position to disclose much information to us. In reading the many documents that have been sent to us, we've had the opportunity to note that every time we became a little more specific or asked for a little more information that would allow us, as parliamentarians, to take action and make decisions to introduce bills and propose legislative changes, we are unfortunately deprived of that. The information you have can't be made public and can only be sent to the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians to determine whether the information should be made public.

So here's the problem we have. During an election period, this non-intervention or this decision to follow the process can directly affect the outcome. We saw this yesterday with the former ambassador, Mr. Burton, who told us that he believes that had it not been for the massive online disinformation campaign against MP Kenny Chiu, he would still be a member of Parliament today. Respecting a process and following the steps means that, unfortunately, it also affects the outcome of the election.

I understand your discomfort and the difficulty of your work, but since our only source of information is from journalist Sam Cooper, let me look into a few allegations and see exactly what you can tell us.

First of all, he told us of documented evidence that the Chinese communist regime is trying to infiltrate all levels of government.

[English]

It says here, "there is a substantial body of evidence that Chinese officials are actively pursuing a strategy of engagement to influence Canadian officials in ways that can compromise the security of Canada and the integrity of Canadian institutions."

[Translation]

Is that true? I'd like a short answer: yes or no.

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you for the question.

[English]

I'm going to respond in English, just for clarity.

One thing that we're very concerned about, actually, is that every Canadian and all levels of government—

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, with all due respect, I'm just asking if the statement is true.

**The Chair:** Let's stop for a few seconds.

Sometimes we ask long questions, and they have to be answered with a little information. Since we are all respectful, we will give Ms. Henderson a few moments to answer the question.

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you.

[English]

All levels of government are susceptible and targeted by foreign interference actors. I am not going to specifically name a state, but I would say that all levels of government are. That's provincial, federal and municipal. All electoral candidates are.

• (1200)

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Why can't you name a country?

[English]

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** I think we can easily say that we know China is very engaged in focusing, but there are other nations as well out there. I would always be very concerned to focus on one nation and then lose the focus of what else could be happening from other hostile activities of states.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Here's another statement:

[English]

It says, "Chinese officials used local, pro-Beijing community groups as intermediaries to engage Canadian politicians they identified as strategically valuable." Is that true or not?

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** Yes, it's true.

We see China—in particular, China—using non-traditional methods of foreign influence activity. They're not relying necessarily on trained agents. They use cut-outs. They use proxies. They use community groups, and they use diaspora organizations and community leaders.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you.

Is it true or false that Chinese foreign interference against elected officials and public servants in Canada is very well documented by the various agencies?

[English]

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** Yes, that's true.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you.

[English]

This is from a Global News source.

[Translation]

You apparently have information about China's efforts to influence Canadian politicians.

[English]

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Again, I am not going to speak specifically to one state, but every Canadian politician is potentially susceptible to foreign interference activity. Every Canadian politician needs to be aware of that and then learn how to defend themselves. The best way to defend themselves is through awareness and discussion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Without naming names, do you have any specific, well-documented cases of the Chinese regime interfering with Canadian politicians?

[*English*]

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** I can say that we definitely have seen specific cases of hostile activities of states against politicians. In those specific cases, we definitely brief our government on the challenges that are being faced.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Sahota, you have up to five minutes.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This has been an interesting conversation. Of course, unfortunately, it's not overwhelmingly enlightening. I feel like we're going a little bit in circles from where we started. I was talking with the analysts earlier. The job of this committee is to gather all of this information from all of the wonderful witnesses we have had, but due to our not having certain security clearances and not being able to get the information that's needed—and Mr. Calkins was even referring to that—it's hard to make proper recommendations that will improve the oversight we have in Canada and get the best results with the most protection of our democracy for Canadians.

A lot of what we've heard from previous witnesses—or at least the witnesses we had on Tuesday—was that perhaps the threshold is too low and maybe we should be having a higher threshold to sound the alarms, and that our job is to gather information, not necessarily to analyze that information.

Would you be able to leave this committee with some type of recommendation as to what more we can do as a government and as a committee to recommend something to government, so that Canadians have confidence in our system? It's not about the one riding or political gain from one party to another and, to some degree, it's disappointing that this is the conversation we've ended up having throughout this study.

It's about our democratic system. It is about that larger picture that you were talking about, Mr. King, which you said you might not be able to answer to. However, I am sure that, being on this task force, you probably do think about those larger issues, because I think about them at night. It keeps me up wondering where we're headed with our institutions and our democratic system. I'd really like any of you to provide us with some insights as to what our recommendations should be.

• (1205)

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** I can start. Thank you very much for the question.

One of the things that I think we need to do is to make sure that our security agencies actually have the tools we need in order to do our jobs. The CSIS Act was created back in 1984. In terms of a lot of the challenges we're dealing with today on the technology side, the creators of the CSIS Act did not foresee those kinds of challenges.

The other thing within the CSIS Act is that we cannot share classified information with provincial or municipal partners. We need to be able to do that, but section 19 of our act specifically prohibits it. Just to be able to have the tools we need as an agency to be able to properly investigate and advise the government on threats would be extremely valuable.

**Mr. Lyall King:** Perhaps I can add a few comments as well, Madam Chair.

I think we'll be very honest, and my colleague Adam has stated this: This is a learning process for all of us.

Adam, you mentioned that 10 years ago you wouldn't have imagined sitting here before committee. I wouldn't have imagined sitting here before committee two years ago, I can tell you.

We're making a concerted effort, I think, to be more transparent, putting out our information and declassifying information more and more. I'll give the example of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, where CSE has declassified information and literally put out on Twitter feeds that we've observed activities and instances of Russia sending misinformation about, say, Canadian Forces operating in Ukraine.

Those things can change. I think we are on a path of being more and more open, and I think we will continue down that trend. I think that's one thing. I would suggest it's as much a culture... Within our organizations to wrap our heads around that, it doesn't happen overnight. I think instances like war will trigger a drastic response.

I think that's a thing and that is not unique to Canada. I've heard that reflected from my Five Eyes colleagues also.

I'm sorry, Lisa. You look like you want to speak. Please go ahead.

**Ms. Lisa Ducharme:** I just wanted to make sure we didn't run out of time.

From the RCMP perspective, the RCMP does face challenges with transitioning security and intelligence information into criminal investigations. I know that there's been a lot of discussion on this with our elected officials and our senior policy-makers, but that issue is one area that the RCMP is continuing to closely collaborate on.

If you're looking for recommendations, that's another area from the RCMP perspective that continuously challenges us in this foreign actor interference space.

**The Chair:** That was excellent timing. That was on the dot.

We'll now restart the round. The way rounds work is that all will now have six minutes, and then we will use our time accordingly.

We'll be starting again with Mr. Cooper.

You have up to six minutes.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll direct my questions to whichever official is in the best position to respond.

Is it true that Beijing security agencies might try to compromise Canadian officials who travel to China—yes or no?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Yes.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Okay.

Is it true that Beijing's consulate in Toronto uses an extensive network of community groups to conceal the flow of funds between Beijing officials and network members—yes or no?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** I'm not going to speak specifically to that question just due to the requirement to maintain operational secrecy. What I will say, and what we have said, is that hostile states will use whatever avenues they can to engage in foreign interference activities.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** That would include using embassies and consulates to direct money to proxies.

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Again, I wouldn't speak specifically in regard to money, but I would say that they will use whatever avenues they can in order to achieve their objectives.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** So that's yes.

Is it true that the staff of politicians who are targeted provide information or relay information to foreign-state bad actors, such as the PRC?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Again, I'm not going to comment on any specific operational questions, but I would say, as I noted earlier, that any Canadian citizen, any electoral official, is susceptible or can be approached by a foreign hostile actor in order to engage in foreign interference activities.

• (1210)

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Do you have evidence that's happening?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** I'm not going to speak about any specific investigations, but as I noted, we need to build our defences against any foreign interference activity and make people aware that they are being targeted or could potentially be targeted.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Is it true that a greater Toronto-based network involving candidates, aides, an MPP and unelected public officials...? Did that exist at the time of the 2019 election or at all, yes or no?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** I'm not going to speak, again, to any specific operational questions, but what I will again reiterate is that we need to maintain strong defences against foreign interference and make sure that we educate all Canadians, including MPs, with regard to the potential threat that they face from foreign-interference actors.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** All right.

Ms. Henderson, you said again—and you said it before—that the best way for politicians to protect themselves is with general awareness. That's fine and well, but that's insufficient. You further said, in answer to an earlier question, that politicians are being targeted and that, when politicians are targeted, that information is conveyed to the government. What you didn't say is that the information is passed on to the politician who is targeted. Why not?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** What we will do as an organization, if we determine that individuals are under potential threat from for-

eign-interference activities, is to have discussions with individuals. We will also go out and approach everybody—

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** How often does that happen?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** I don't have any figures at this moment, and I'm not going to speak to operational specifics, but I will say—

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Where's the transparency? Where is the sunlight?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Part of the sunlight is being able to have this ongoing conversation with regard to foreign interference. Canadians, I think, feel very comfortable, and the more we have this discussion and make awareness—

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** It's a conversation—

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Now we have a point of order.

We all just eat into all of our own time by just... I asked very kindly, and I think I've demonstrated my intentions here of trying to be really good for the sake of all of us. Letting one person speak and one person answer is important because this is a study that we all agree is important.

We might not like the questions and we might not like the answers, but it's important that we hear the questions and we hear the answers.

Mr. Turnbull, does that echo your point of order?

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** You read my mind, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Excellent. I'm hoping for a career after politics. It might be just that.

I'm actually going to ask Ms. Henderson to respond, and we're going to have a really tough conversation and an important one.

Ms. Henderson.

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it goes back to the importance of having the conversation and the importance of raising awareness. There are many Canadians who I would call “unwitting”. They wouldn't even know that they were being approached, and that's why these conversations are fundamentally important.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** If you're an unwitting target, wouldn't it be all the more important to be informed?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** If they're unwitting, it may not have raised to that point where anybody is aware. The more we can have those conversations about the types of things that individuals can look for, then they can say, “I think there's something happening. I need to talk to somebody.” Then we can have that greater conversation.

It doesn't just come from us. It comes from all Canadians creating that greater awareness to make us much more resilient as a country.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** I would just say that I don't see any evidence that's happening. The suggestion is made that it is, but no examples can be cited. We know that there's no evidence that concrete action has been taken. It's well established that interference has been ongoing, but no one has been charged, let alone convicted.

In the face of that, having these general conversations about foreign interference really doesn't seem to address the fundamental issue at hand.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

A lot has changed. It's interesting because sometimes I get a text message. I have Ryan here from my team, and I always take a screenshot of it and ask, "Is this spam, or is this real?" Oftentimes, he'll say, "Don't answer it"—or "Do answer it." It's interesting how much the world is changing. I'd like to believe that I'm hip and cool. It turns out that's not the case.

Mrs. Romanado, you have up to six minutes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Henderson, you mentioned that all levels of government were targeted. Under section 19 of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, you don't have the ability to share information with the provinces, territories and municipalities.

Is there currently a way for federal agencies to work with the provinces, territories and municipalities when it comes to their elections?

[English]

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you very much for the question.

There are several ways we are working hard to get the message out. We provide many unclassified briefings. In some cases, individuals within those other provinces or municipalities, or even in some cases industry, can get a clearance sponsored by the Canadian government and that will allow us to have greater conversations.

The other thing I can say that the service does a bit more in the background is that we will engage our threat reduction mandate in order to mitigate any threats. Sometimes that will enable us to engage those partners as well.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Mr. King, I'll ask you the same question.

**Mr. Lyall King:** Thank you for the question.

[English]

I'll just note as well that the cyber centre does engage regularly with provincial, territorial and some municipal bodies. In fact, we do things like regular threat briefings. To be quite fair, it's around cyber-threats and information we can share. It would be in an unclassified manner. It's an ongoing thing. It's not just during an election. It's to better enable them to understand the threat and build up

their own defences, so that we're providing them with what we're seeing in terms of trends.

That's an active thing, and that goes for some of the provincial electoral bodies as well. There's engagement there on a persistent basis. I would have to clarify about the classification of those discussions, but they are ongoing and persistent.

Perhaps, Lisa....

**Ms. Lisa Ducharme:** Madam Chair, just to let you know, a number of provinces have their own legislation regarding threats to elections at that level. The RCMP is uniquely placed to work with those police of jurisdiction on both a proactive and reactive basis to educate them on indicators of foreign actor interference and to provide them with support. We are connected with our police of jurisdiction partners at the provincial and municipal levels, exchanging information on such issues.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** I just want to focus a little on conversations we've been hearing about the fact that members of Parliament on this committee do not have the same security clearance that would allow you to share some of the information that has been requested.

I understand that the 2019 election report has been sent to NSI-COP, and that was studied at that time by the members. I'm not sure if the Conservatives were on that committee at that time or not. I understand that the 2021 election report will be tabled with NSI-COP, which has the necessary clearance to dig a little further and ask those questions. Is that accurate?

**Mr. Lyall King:** I would have to verify. I imagine it will happen. We welcome, honestly, review by oversight bodies to have a look at what we're doing.

Absolutely, we've had conversations with NSICOP on previous activities, so I imagine that would be forthcoming. I could not verify with you today whether they've received the 2021 report and are looking at that actively, but they do have the clearances. We do disclose the information to them unredacted. We are at their will to answer questions.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Perfect. Further to that, you were talking about reviews.

Ms. Henderson, I think you mentioned that the CSIS Act was created in 1984. I was 10. Look at the colour of my hair. We can imagine some people here probably weren't born.

Talking about cybersecurity, Canada is working to increase our capacity and our capability in cyber. I used to sit on the defence committee and was parliamentary secretary in a previous government, so I'm fully aware of cyber-capabilities and our strive to increase those.

Given the fact that the CSIS Act was created in 1984, and with these new technologies that we're hearing about, further to my colleague's question earlier, what would be the proper mechanism to make sure we update that act so that it captures what you need to do and what our agencies need to be able to do the work they need to do?

• (1220)

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** You will all be aware, of course, that five years ago we did Bill C-59. It had some very important additions to our act, but as I said, it's very old.

Some nations do a regular review just to make sure it's all up to standard and can allow the agencies to engage and do what they need to do into the future as well. The CSIS Act has withstood the time, but it is time for a review and to have a good close look at it.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Is there anything further? I only have about 30 seconds left.

If not, I will cede my time to the next speaker. Thank you.

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** I will say one thing, if I may. Another thing we need to look at within the act is our ability to use big data and crunch big data. We don't have that ability at this point.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a quick question, and I'd like a quick answer.

I think it was Ms. Henderson who said the following: we informed the government of foreign interference activities. I'd like to know more. What did it involve, and when did it happen?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

The service regularly provides intelligence assessments and intelligence reporting to the government to advise them of threats to national security under our act.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** We probably won't know what it entailed.

But could we know when it happened? Was it in 2019, 2020, 2021? Can we have a month, a date?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you for the question.

The only reason I'm taking time to respond is because we give out information regularly.

[*English*]

We write assessment reports on an ongoing basis, looking at the situation that we're dealing with. I would never say that it was just a certain month or even a certain quarter, but regularly.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** This means that information must have been circulating about possible alerts, which led *Global News* to make such a release.

I wanted to talk about the registry of foreign agents, since Mr. Martin was here, since Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Burton, whom I'm sure the witnesses are familiar with and who are two experts on China, came to talk to us about what the Five Eyes, including Aus-

tralia, were inspired by, and how they responded and equipped themselves.

One of the things they both mentioned was that a registry of foreign agents would be necessary to intervene with more vigilance and to act. I'd like to know if this registry, which could be put in place quickly, could help fight foreign Chinese influence.

I'd like to hear Ms. Ducharme's opinion.

**Ms. Lisa Ducharme:** Thank you for the question.

Madam Chair, I'm going to answer in English so I can be more specific.

[*English*]

From the RCMP perspective, if I'm understanding the question correctly about a foreign agent registry, the RCMP would find that valuable for Canadians, as it would identify foreign actors undertaking certain activities who are operating in the interest, or not, of the Canadian public. Obviously, this is a topic of much interest right now. We are supporting our elected officials in those discussions, in close collaboration with our security and intelligence partners and Public Safety.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** How urgent do you think it is to get this registry up and running?

**Ms. Lisa Ducharme:** Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

If I understand, your question is how urgent it is, in our opinion. Any tool that supports the RCMP in their activities is good progress in the right direction. However, we want to get this right, in close consultation with Canadians, respecting Privacy Act issues, respecting all of the legislation that exists that complements and is related to this particular endeavour, and again, in close consultation with our elected officials and partners on the way forward.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Chair, I'd also like to know what Ms. Henderson thinks.

Is a registry urgent and necessary to get the job done right?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you very much for the question.

[*English*]

I am in agreement with what my colleague Ms. Ducharme said, because we certainly see the benefit of this. We have provided our advice to government and policy-makers. We need to get it right when we do that.

As Adam noted earlier, the conversation is ongoing. We are providing advice and engaging with our partners to help track the best way forward.



[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Chair, what I see is that there are restrictive issues around the protocol and around the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act that limit the possibility of moving forward. I also understand that there are tools that should be put in place urgently.

I would like to give the witnesses the minute I have left so that they can express how important it is to act now.

Mr. King, I'd like to hear your comments on this.

[*English*]

**Mr. Lyall King:** Thank you.

Yes, I'd support my colleagues' view when it comes to the foreign registry. It's not a domain I would play in, since CSE is a foreign intelligence agency. These are more domestic-related pieces.

I think the items you noted are fair.

I'll go back to the protocol, and the notion that it is, perhaps, restrictive. I think it's always good to review—I'll put it that way. It's always good to review in order to see whether or not we have it right. I'm not going to say whether we have it right or wrong. I think the supporting mechanisms behind it are good and sound. They've been proven so over a couple of elections. I think we found that it's good.

It's another question when you put information out publicly. I think we should always have the conversations to evaluate whether or not we've done the right thing.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I'm sorry for Mr. Fisher.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Blaney, you have six minutes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Through you, as always, my first question is simply this: How does an MP become aware they are targeted? Is the MP or party notified—or both? You talked about the government being notified. Is the government the only one? I'm trying to get that clear.

The other part of that question is this: What is the protocol during an election, compared to pre-election time?

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you very much for the question.

Again, I would go back to some of the comments I made earlier. We need to educate our MPs so they can potentially recognize they are being approached. The service has produced certain documents. One is called “FI and You”. I believe that's the name of it. It's an unclassified document. It sets a base level, so individuals can look at it and say, “Okay, yes, this has happened to me,” and then reach out for a conversation. The service has, on some occasions.... As I noted, when we determine someone is being approached and there is a real threat, we will go and have a conversation with that individual.

Let's be honest. We can't see and do everything. We require Canadians to recognize when they are being approached and the fact that they are a very valuable asset. They have a voice, and people could be trying to use that voice. They really need to be aware of that threat to their own security.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you.

The next question I have is for the RCMP.

I'm curious. I've heard stories from folks who feel they've been exposed to foreign interference. There are people from vulnerable communities who want to come forward and talk about things that may be happening within their ethnic community. Sometimes, when they go to the RCMP—depending on the community—there's no awareness, so they get passed around without a resolution to the problem.

I'm wondering what tools and resources are available to everyday Canadians to report information related to foreign interference. Is there a need for the RCMP to have a little more training, in order to address those issues in a more meaningful way?

• (1230)

**Ms. Lisa Ducharme:** Madam Chair, the RCMP takes all threats of intimidation and state-backed harassment and foreign interference very seriously. It has a national security information network that has been set up to receive complaints either via telephone through a 1-800 number or via email. However, most often, when individuals may feel targeted, the first place that they will go to is their local police of jurisdiction, or if they feel there's an imminent or a pending threat, they should be advised to contact 911 immediately.

The RCMP works with the police of jurisdiction in proactive and reactive information sharing to increase awareness of indicators of foreign actor interference and whatnot, but as mentioned there is the national security information network. It's an RCMP system that is managed 24-7, 365 days a year, by trained RCMP telecommunications operators. CSIS also has a reporting system for that, so together, when we receive tips that are credible, we collaborate on that.

There are multiple ways and means for individuals to report, but as I mentioned it's usually through 911 if they feel immediate threats or their first place is the police of jurisdiction.

I hope that answers your question.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, somewhat. I appreciate that.

I did appreciate one of the recommendations.

I think it was you, Ms. Henderson, who talked about opening the CSIS Act for sharing information with different levels of government. Right now it's pinioned in at just the federal level but not the other levels, and I can imagine that for provinces, territories and municipalities it would be very useful to know that information.

Knowing the reality of our world, that how foreign interference intersects in our communities is an ever-changing, growing and developing reality, I'm just wondering if there are any other changes to the act or to any other legislation that would be helpful to allow the work to be done in a more meaningful way.

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** As I noted earlier, another very beneficial tool would be the ability to use big data and crunch data, of course respecting the privacy of Canadians. We still need to be able to use the data to determine trends. It helps us get leads. It helps us set ourselves up in order to follow the investigative route. I don't think we can underestimate the value of being able to use data. It will help us in our investigations.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** My last question goes back to that idea of misinformation, especially in different types of social media and other media outlets. Should the Canadian government have a clearer process to publicly identify foreign-based sources of disinformation, like a public naming or revealing, to let people know that these are sources that might not be safe for us to gather information from?

**Mr. Lyall King:** That's a tricky one if you're saying you want to have a list—don't go here or you could be at risk here—because it shifts over time and the problem is that platforms can be used by anybody. To single one out because there may be a presence of some nefarious activity there, that could be detrimental to others who use the same platform when it's in fact not used solely for that. There are encrypted messaging apps that exist that we use to communicate with one another because we trust them more, to be quite frank, sometimes, and that the public uses and that bad people use.

It's kind of a difficult thing to draw a line and say this bad and this good. As well, this sort of issue does shift over time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Calkins, you have up to five minutes.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Thank you.

Through you, Madam Chair, my question is to Mr. Fisher.

Can you just confirm something for me? I think you said several times at this committee so far in your answers that you don't measure votes or voter intention as part of your assessment for interference. Did I get that right?

• (1235)

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** What I was trying to communicate is that, when we're investigating foreign influence activity during an election or outside of an election, we're not necessarily focusing on impact. We're focusing on the activity of the adversary. If they're acting in a way that is deceitful and against the interests of Canada, that's what we focus on. Whether they're successful or not is secondary to our purposes.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** It just seems odd to me, because the purpose of an election is for the political actors who are operating lawfully in the country to move votes back and forth. How would you know if somebody is actually interfering in an election if they weren't able to adjust any election results?

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** Again, we'd be looking at the activities. If it's an agent of a foreign state who is, for example, looking to get the vote out for a certain candidate and is messaging in that regard, that's what would concern us. Whether the agent had success or not would be secondary, but any attempt of foreign influence activity would be something that we would take seriously and look into.

I hope that answers the question.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Sort of.

We've heard from other witnesses this week that our intelligence services do not have a functional working knowledge of what's being said or reported in Chinese-language media. It's not only here, but everywhere, so that would be Mandarin and Cantonese, I presume. It's also been reported that only 18% of senior Global Affairs Canada officials have met the language requirements for their positions.

I'm wondering if we have the assets to fully understand what's being communicated in this country in languages that would not be our official languages, because 18% is a pretty low number.

**Mr. Lyall King:** I'm not going to speak to government officials and their language requirements specifically, but we always look to increase our capability when it comes to foreign languages.

It's the same with any skill set. These can be rare and hard to come by, depending what our focus is with respect to the intelligence requirements and the questions we need to answer. It's not always easy to find or to get people moved through security processes and clearances either. There are a number of things we have to contend with that, maybe, others do not in terms of building capabilities.

Would I say we need more? I would always say that we need more. That stands for cyber-skills as well, and people with science, tech, engineering and math backgrounds. It's difficult, but we do our best. We have some capability, but I think we would always say that we would like to have more skill sets and languages.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Testimony that we heard earlier in this meeting alluded to or alleged that the Chinese Communist regime in Beijing has a disproportionate number of employees here in their various consular activities. They gave us numbers for what other consulates from Japan and other countries might have, and the numbers they gave us were staggering.

Would your assessment of the operatives, agents or consular officials here from China be disproportionate? Do you think they have too many people here?

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** My light has come on, so I'll try to answer that.

I'm not a diplomat. I don't know what is normal or abnormal in terms of consular representation, and I wouldn't speak to that specific assertion. What I would do is echo what my colleagues have said, which is that hostile foreign states will use any platform in order to further influence foreign activity, and that can include consular representation.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** You've talked a bit about your ability to collect, mine and get data, crunch numbers and so on. I've suggested that I think.... My sense is that the government does a good job of gathering the information. I'm not confident, based on the fact that other countries are very public about the fact that they've hauled people to the mat for foreign interference, and we don't have any examples here in this country.... I don't know why operatives in other countries would be any different there than they are here.

I'm running out time. I wonder if you are missing some tools to haul people to the mat who are interfering in our democracy. Is that the problem?

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** I'll really quickly echo what my colleague from the RCMP said, which is the requirement to address intelligence to evidence. That is an obstacle for us. Our inability to translate intelligence that's collected in a very covert way into an evidentiary arena that can assist law enforcement is a challenge for us.

● (1240)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

For the record, when the “beep beep” happens, that means you've run out of time. It's the end of the time.

Ms. O'Connell, you have up to five minutes.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, through you to our witnesses, I'm going to make a couple of comments first, and then I'll get to my question.

One of the frustrating pieces of this study.... I was a member of NSICOP and had that security clearance, so I do understand how difficult it is to receive that clearance. I understand the quality of that information. I understand the sensitivity of it and all of the protections that go along with it. I highly recommend that, if other members have the opportunity from their party to be part of NSICOP, you absolutely do it, because you learn a lot. It's done in a way that is sensitive and secure and in a way that protects our national interests.

There's always this debate around what should be shared publicly so Canadians can know and prepare themselves but also the risks of sharing that information, because then our adversaries also get that information. Sometimes it's not the specific details; it's operational information. It's frustrating. I'm sure you'd love to answer these questions and give all these details, but in doing so, in providing that to Canadians, you're also providing that to China or Russia or other foreign state actors. Even I sit here frustrated sometimes.

What's also a little frustrating is the nature of these conversations. Because they are so sensitive, they become a political opportunity for some to hold up documents that are redacted. How salacious. What a public prop that can be. There's also an opportunity to call in witnesses and ask them to tell what they heard in a meeting, knowing that it was a classified meeting and that those details can't be shared. How salacious and how political it is to look for this smoking gun instead of talking about.... I give credit to all my colleagues across the floor, too, for trying hone in on some recommendations for how to improve the system in Canada.

I don't think anybody has said that everything here is perfect and there are no improvements to be made. Of course not. It's going to be evergreened because the nature of threats is constantly changing.

I also want to point out some of the areas we're criticizing. How well does SITE work? How well does the critical election incident public protocol work? Is NSICOP the right place to look at this stuff?

I remind this committee that none of those things existed prior to 2015—none of them. Security threats and foreign influence didn't just begin in 2015, but there have been things put in place to make that better, to give parliamentarians more opportunities to access this information and to allow Canadians to see more. Seeing the CSIS director's public comments, CSIS has come a long way. If you follow any of these things—and I did for a long time—and read those speeches, they have come a long way in sharing information. Can they go further? Yes, I think so, but how do we have that conversation?

I've used a lot of time, but I want to ask about the details of that balance of sharing that information versus the very real risks. That can include things like how we collect information. What we don't know could be useful to adversaries.

Ms. Henderson, because I called out CSIS for clearly making a distinction, what is your thought process on that balance of risk versus communicating with Canadians?

● (1245)

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** That is a very important question.

I can honestly say that it's a very difficult balance to strike. Whenever we are doing assessments or sharing information, we are trying to look at what we can say that will still enable us to get the messaging across but also protect our sources, our techniques and our tactics, so we aren't giving too much to an adversary but we are still able to inform Canadians the best we possibly can, without harming them through making weaknesses in our national security structure.

It's a balance we try to strike, and we're constantly learning and evolving as we go. I appreciate your comments that we have come a long way.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, the floor is yours for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to say that I'm sorry for leading the witnesses down a slippery slope. As we can see, the government isn't doing very well.

I'm going to ask some questions, because I'm thinking of people back home and, in any case, I'm one of those who doesn't seek power. So I'm sincere.

When we talk about the level of infiltration of the United Front and the Chinese Ministry of State Security, in relation to political parties, do the witnesses think it would be necessary to have a look at the registry, including volunteers, constituency workers, in fact, any individual or platform that revolves around the candidate?

I'd like to know what you think, Ms. Ducharme.

**Ms. Lisa Ducharme:** Thank you.

If I understand correctly, your question is about the foreign agent registry.

[English]

Where do we stop and where do we start?

Again, this is a discussion that is under way right now with our senior policy-makers and in consultation with our experts at applicable global security and intelligence agencies. We'll provide input into that, but ultimately the discussion at that level will be what the appropriate scope is. What's the appropriate breadth and width of where the registry will start and stop?

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Chair, given that we've only heard from one witness, would it be possible to ask the witnesses to provide us with additional information on proposed amendments or changes to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and on what can be done to amend the protocol or on the urgency of setting up a registry?

We can draw inspiration, we don't need to reinvent the wheel. We can fast-track this.

I think I have 30 seconds left. I'd like to hear Mr. Fisher tell us if he agrees with his colleagues about the registry.

[English]

**Mr. Adam Fisher:** Yes, I agree with what's been said by my colleagues with regard to a registry.

I think it would be a useful tool that would bring some baseline transparency. As has been mentioned, it's something we're discussing with the policy departments that lead the development of tools in response to the threat.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This has been a very interesting conversation. It is frustrating. I think we're just trying to get clarity. I reflect on the fact that, if this was easy and not complex, wouldn't that make life a lot easier for the process?

I really appreciate the comments made during testimony about the fact that this is evolving. Adapting to that evolution is a key part of this process.

I'm hearing a lot about what's happening in terms of monitoring the foreign interference. I'm curious about the other side, which is what's happening around deterring that. Is there any place where actions are happening, but there are no laws? Technically that means nothing is happening that is inappropriate, but there's a concerning trend. How are we going to address that? Are there gaps in legislation that could help address those things?

What I'm really trying to wrap my head around is where the slippery slope is. Do we have the appropriate rules in Canada to deal with that slippery slope so that we don't get to the part where we're over the edge? In terms of that, is it a question of creating more transparency like other countries have done with tools like the foreign agent registry?

I hope that makes sense. I'm just trying to figure out where the gap is and how we can start to fill that.

How do we use those processes to inform Canadians in a more fulsome way, not necessarily of the details but of the processes in place to protect politicians, people who are running to be politicians and the country at large, and for addressing foreign interference?

• (1250)

**Ms. Cherie Henderson:** Thank you very much for the question. There are no simple questions in this. I appreciate that.

I would say that one thing we haven't spoken about too much—I think I mentioned it earlier—is that the service does engage its threat-reduction mandate. You will not be aware of that. It is behind the scenes, but it is one way that we are able to engage and mitigate the threat in some areas. We do that. That's legal. We do everything legally and respecting the rights of Canadians and people within Canada.

I think we're out of time. I apologize. I heard the buzzer.

**The Chair:** We are sorry too. Thank you so much.

We will go to Mr. Cooper.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I will be moving a motion at this time. I will first read the motion into the record. I move:

That, given the Global News report published by Sam Cooper on February 8, 2023, revealing that national security officials drafted a warning for the Prime Minister in June 2017, alleging that Beijing agents were assisting Canadian candidates running for political offices and included well-documented evidence of Beijing's efforts to infiltrate "all levels of government," the Committee,

(a) add additional meetings as required to its study on foreign election interference;

(b) invite the following witnesses to testify in public on the contents of the report: Katie Telford, Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister; Michael Wernick, Former Clerk of the Privy Council; and Daniel Jean, Former National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister; and,

(c) order the production of all memoranda, briefing notes, e-mails, records of conversations, and any other relevant documents, including any drafts, which are in the possession of the government, with respect to the matters referred to in the Global News report, provided that the documents, which may be redacted to protect the identities of employees or sources of Canadian or allied intelligence agencies, shall be deposited with the Clerk of the Committee, in both official languages, within two weeks of the adoption of this motion.

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion?

Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Chair, I didn't have an opportunity to speak to my motion. I moved a motion.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** You moved it, so....

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Now I would like to speak to it. That is the normal process.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** On a point of order, the normal process is also to share motions in both official languages, and I would like to request that from Mr. Cooper, because we'd like to actually read the motion. I need to see it in writing.

I would also ask, Madam Chair, if possible, if we could have a little bit of time to discuss the motion as a team, just a very short recess to take a look at it.

**The Chair:** Let's get this motion circulated first. I'm not sure who all has it. It is in both official languages. We'll just get that circulated.

Go ahead, Mr. Cooper.

• (1255)

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is a relatively straightforward motion. It arises from yesterday's Global News article that reveals that Katie Telford, chief of staff, had requested a memo that was then prepared by Daniel Jean, the former national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister. That in turn was passed on to Michael Wernick, the then clerk of the Privy Council. The contents of that memo note that there is well-documented evidence of an active campaign of interference by the Beijing regime, which threatens the national security of Canada and which involves the corrupting of politicians, including by assisting Canadian candidates running for political offices.

In light of this report and given the scope of the study, I think it's appropriate that we hear from the three individuals named in the report.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

Just to confirm, there is no relation between you and Mr. Sam Cooper...

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** There is no relation, I can assure you.

**The Chair:** I just would not want you to have any unintended consequences.

Mr. Turnbull, the floor goes to you.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I would just ask for a short recess to have a team huddle and talk about this. We haven't had a chance.... We had no notice. We didn't know this was coming. It would be helpful to have that time.

**The Chair:** Ms. Blaney would like to huddle too.

[*Translation*]

Do you agree, Ms. Gaudreau?

[*English*]

We'll pause for a couple of seconds. If we could come back quickly, because we do have an informal committee—

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Madam Chair, can we release the witnesses?

**The Chair:** It was a pleasure to have the SITE task force here. I know you might want to stay because it's exciting. I see some nodding of heads in all directions.

With that, thank you so much for your time.

Thank you for your service. We do appreciate all that you do. Have a great day.

• (1255)

(Pause)

• (1300)

**The Chair:** I'm calling the committee back to discuss the motion that's on the floor.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Madam Chair, I'd like to propose an amendment to Mr. Cooper's motion.

I'll read it into the record:

That, given the Global News report published by Sam Cooper on February 8, 2023, revealing that national security officials drafted a warning for the Prime Minister in June 2017, alleging that Beijing agents were assisting Canadian candidates running for political offices and included well-documented evidence of Beijing's efforts to infiltrate "all levels of government," the Committee,

(a) add additional meetings as required to its study on foreign election interference; and

(b) invite the following witnesses to testify in public on the contents of the report: Michael Wernick, Former Clerk of the Privy Council; and Daniel Jean, Former National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister.

**The Chair:** There is an amendment on the floor. We want to focus. Let's do this quickly.

The amendment on the floor removes the first name from (b) and all of section (c). I want to make sure we're all on the same page.

Go ahead, Mr. Cooper.

• (1305)

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I say, without hesitation, that I oppose this amendment, which would significantly water down the motion.

Katie Telford, chief of staff to the Prime Minister, is a material witness to the report and memo. She is the person who reportedly requested that the memo be prepared. It is also unclear, from the report, whether that memo was completed, date-stamped and sent to the Prime Minister, or whether he was made aware of it. In order to get to the bottom of the memo and what the Prime Minister knew—whether he failed to act—it's important that we hear from Katie Telford.

It's similarly important that, in order to ask questions of the three material witnesses, we have a production of documents to inform our questions to those witnesses.

This is just an effort to—let's say it for what it is—cover up the facts. [English]

**The Chair:** With no other people on my list, I am going to call the question on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I'm frustrated that I didn't get a chance to speak.

**The Chair:** I was looking around to get a signal for names. I apologize for that.

We'll go on to the main motion as amended. Is there debate on the main motion as amended?

Go ahead, Mr. Nater.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** It's disappointing to see the motion effectively gutted, including all the relevant documents. I'm just putting that on the record.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** That was before the vote. I wanted to try... We're looking for consensus, we just talked. I had good arguments, but there you go. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The question is on the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** I understand from the analysts that we anticipate the draft report in both official languages coming to us hopefully late tomorrow, and then hopefully next week on Tuesday we can get in-to looking at the draft report for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Stay tuned. If it's not here to us by late tomorrow, then we'll revisit next week's schedule.

With that, we have an informal committee visit. I look forward to seeing you all.

Have a good weekend. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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