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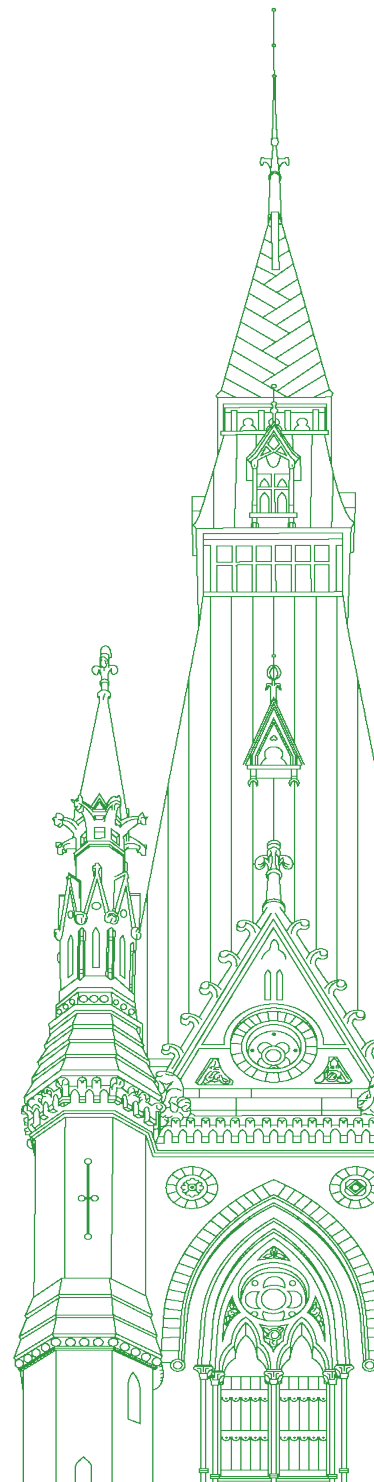
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Chair: Mr. Sameer Zuberi

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• (1305)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Today is February 10, 2023. This is the 24th meeting of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are participating by Zoom and in person.

I have just a few comments before we start. Before anybody takes the floor, you have to be recognized by the chair. For those who are participating by Zoom, there is a globe icon at the bottom of your screen. You can listen to either the original language in English and French or the interpretation.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our subcommittee is studying the issue of the Chinese government's residential boarding schools and preschools in the Tibet Autonomous Region and all Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties.

We have four witnesses with us, two in person and two participating by Zoom.

As individuals, we have Ms. Chemi Lhamo, community organizer and human rights activist; and Dr. Gyal Lo, academic researcher and educational sociologist. They are here in person.

From Human Rights Watch, we have Ms. Sophie Richardson; and from Tibet Action Institute, we have Ms. Lhadon Tethong, director. They are participating by video conference.

Thanks for being here today.

Each witness will have five minutes. We will begin with those here in person. I'll give hand signals at one minute and at 30 seconds, and then you'll have to conclude your remarks.

Ms. Chemi Lhamo (Community Organizer, Human Rights Activist, As an Individual): Chair, if you don't mind, can I make a request? Could Sophie go first, Lhadon go second, Dr. Gyal Lo go third, and I go last?

The Chair: We can do that. Usually, I recognize you, and for other interventions let's do that.

We'll start off with Sophie Richardson on Zoom for five minutes, please.

Dr. Sophie Richardson (China Director, Human Rights Watch): Mr. Chair, thank you so much for having me on behalf of Human Rights Watch. We appreciate the opportunity to participate. I also want to pass our congratulations on regarding the extraordi-

nary passage of M-62 last week, which was a wonderful effort to behold.

Human Rights Watch began tracking language-medium education issues in Tibetan areas more than a decade ago, when proposals to phase out Tibetan-medium instruction in Tibetan areas of Qinghai province prompted protests that were crushed. The January 2016 arrest of Tashi Wangchuk, a language activist, suggested that Chinese authorities were taking a harder line on the issue.

Nevertheless, it was extremely difficult to document policy shifts. However, in March 2020 we were able to publish research showing that, consistent with Chinese Communist Party Secretary General Xi Jinping's broad and aggressive assimilationist campaign of sinicization, Chinese authorities' claims that they were providing so-called bilingual education to Tibetan children were, quite simply, a lie.

Our research showed that the policy, carried out for the past decade across what Chinese authorities call the Tibet Autonomous Region and in Tibetan areas in other provinces, had actually increased Chinese-medium schooling at all levels except in the study of the Tibetan language itself.

Under the guise of improving access to education, Chinese authorities established compulsory bilingual kindergartens to immerse Tibetan children in the Chinese language and state propaganda from age three, in the name of strengthening the unity of nationalities. They also hired thousands of non-Tibetan-speaking teachers from other parts of China under the Aid-Tibet program and promoted ethnically mixed classes in which, if even one Chinese-speaking child was present, the entire class would be taught in Chinese rather than in Tibetan.

In September 2019, parents and teachers in six rural townships in the Nagchu municipality in the northern TAR told Human Rights Watch that, as of March 2019, their local primary schools had switched to using Chinese as the language of education. These are violations of international human rights law and of the Chinese constitution.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulate respect for mother-tongue education. UN committees on the rights of the child; economic, social and cultural rights; and the elimination of racial discrimination have all expressed concern over the rights of Tibetans to education in their own language and culture across China.

China's constitution guarantees minority-language rights. Moreover, these policies are also in profound contention with best practices with respect to education, which strongly suggest mastery in the mother tongue prior to learning other languages. It is worth noting that many of the Tibetan parents to whom we spoke stressed that they wanted their children to learn both languages, but not at the cost of learning in just one of those. These policies are a profound threat to Tibetans' identity.

The Canadian government should not only raise its concerns about these practices at bilateral meetings and international forums, but also actively support the preservation of Tibetan-medium education, including teaching materials and teachers.

I am happy to provide more recommendations, but I want to make sure not to exceed my time.

Thank you very much.

• (1310)

The Chair: You still have two minutes.

Dr. Sophie Richardson: I was much too efficient. My apologies. Congress is terribly strict.

Perhaps, then, I can fill in some of the details.

The Chinese government, we think, accomplished the implementation of these policies partly through some very deliberate ambiguity about what teachers and schools were meant to do, but often when faced with, for example, access to teaching materials that were Chinese-medium only, schools had no choice but to use those materials since Tibetan-medium materials simply weren't available to people.

Similarly restrictions on the languages in which the teachers who were being recruited were capable of teaching tipped the balance in many different circumstances.

I think the fact that we observed authorities persecute—not just prosecute but persecute—individuals who spoke up in defence of Tibetan-medium education makes very clear that what might be considered a not terribly incendiary academic matter in other contexts is part of a larger political campaign. It's also consistent with what we have documented with respect to other critical components of Tibetans' identity, not least the extraordinary encroachment on Tibetans' rights to religion and how it is practised.

We have seen similar changes in policy and management of religion by Chinese authorities that effectively encroach on individuals' abilities to live their identities as international human rights law guarantees them the right to do.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll continue with Ms. Lhadon Tethong for five minutes.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong (Director, Tibet Action Institute): Thank you very much.

Thank you for this opportunity and for making this happen. I will read my remarks and time myself. It's best if I help myself keep to the time.

My father was born in a free and independent Tibet in 1934. My eldest brother was born in a Tibetan refugee camp in India. I was born on the traditional land of the Songhees and Esquimalt nations in Victoria on Vancouver Island.

As a Tibetan and a Canadian, my two worlds sadly collided a couple of years ago when my organization, Tibet Action, began researching reports that Tibetan parents were being forced, coerced, to send their children, including those as young as four and five years old, away to boarding schools. In the course of our research, we found that China had been constructing a massive colonial boarding school system in Tibet, one that threatens the very survival of the Tibetan people and the nation because they so wholly and completely have targeted the future of Tibet—our children, and even the very youngest ones.

This school system is the cornerstone of a broader effort to wipe out the current and future resistance of our fiercely proud Tibetan people by eliminating our language, our religion and our way of life. The colonial boarding school system streamlines and fast-tracks this genocidal plan by ripping Tibetan children from their roots, stealing the language from their tongues and attempting to turn them into something they are not.

I have some high-level findings from our report. At least 800,000 Tibetan children across all of historical Tibet—not just the Tibet Autonomous Region, or what China calls Tibet—representing 78% of all Tibetan schoolchildren aged six to 18, are now separated from their families and are living in colonial boarding schools. This number does not include the four- and five-year-olds being made to live in boarding preschools in rural areas, because China is actively trying to hide the existence of that system.

These children are forbidden from practising religion. They are cut off from authentic Tibetan culture—beyond, of course, what the Chinese Communist Party approves of and what you'll see in the propaganda, which is people wearing Tibetan clothing and doing the Tibetan circle dance.

These kids are taught almost entirely in Chinese, with maybe one Tibetan language class, by mostly Chinese teachers, or increasingly more and more Chinese teachers, and from Chinese textbooks reflecting Chinese life, history, culture and values while completely denying Tibet's own rich ancient history and culture—our stories.

On top of this, they are subjected to intense political indoctrination. As Sophie has said in the past, even the youngest children are getting intense political indoctrination like “Xi Jinping thought”, which says they must be loyal to the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese nation first and above all else.

Of course, Tibetan parents have no choice but to send their children to live in these schools, because the authorities have closed the local village schools along with most privately run Tibetan schools or monastery schools. That's not to mention that Tibetans, having lived 70 years under Chinese occupation and facing intense violence from the state, know that you can't resist these kinds of central government directives at the grassroots level without facing severe, severe consequences. Parents who resist or refuse are threatened with fines and other serious consequences. Of course, the children have no choice.

One person from Tibet described the situation like this: "I know of children aged four to five who don't want to be separated from their mothers. They are forced to go to boarding schools. In some cases, the children cry for days, sticking to their mother's laps.... Both the children and the parents are unwilling."

This insidious policy to isolate children from their families so as to erase their Tibetan identity and replace it with a Chinese identity was developed at the highest levels of the Chinese Communist Party. It is a blatantly racist policy.

• (1315)

Just as Tibetan parents don't want to have to send their children away, Chinese people don't want to send their children away either. Actually, a backlash against school consolidation policies in China led the State Council to rule in 2012 that all levels of school should be, in principle, non-residential, especially for young children in grades 1 to 3. That very same State Council decreed in 2015 that, in so-called minority areas, officials must strengthen boarding school construction and achieve the goal that students of all ethnic minorities will study in a school, live in a school and grow up in a school.

The Chair: Ms. Tethong, could you just wrap up, please?

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Yes.

Since releasing this report, we've been asked many times from many people why the world doesn't know. How did we miss this? I just want to say that the total information blackout and lockdown of Tibet have resulted in such a dearth of information from Tibet that there's no foreign media. Tibetans can't get in or out. There is transnational repression and punitive measures against corporations who might quote the Dalai Lama, our government, and speak out in favour of Tibet.

This has resulted in this silence by design. What's happening in Tibet is a crisis that threatens our ancient civilization. It is, in a way, like a genocide 2.0, because it's happening in real time, right now, but with very few pictures, no videos and no one really able to report what's happening from the ground, unlike any other place on earth.

I would ask the Canadian government, all of you, to help us expose this system, because the Chinese government is trying to hide it, to pay extra attention to bringing Tibet up in every possible way with Beijing, and to continue to push the Chinese government for the human rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people, because they are working very hard to erase us, not just inside Tibet but in the world at large.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that, Ms. Tethong.

We'll continue on with Dr. Gyal Lo for five minutes.

• (1320)

Dr. Gyal Lo (Academic Researcher and Educational Sociologist, As an Individual): Thank you, all of you, for allowing me to speak to you about the system of the colonial boarding schools in Tibet.

I am here to share my research findings and what I have personally witnessed about the boarding preschools. This is a completely hidden policy of the Chinese government. Based on the more than 50 boarding preschools that I have seen with my own eyes, I estimate that at least 100,000 Tibetan children from ages four to six are now living separately from their parents, families and communities.

After I received my Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, I returned to Tibet in 2015. I then started teaching at Yunnan Normal University. The following year, my brother called me because he was concerned about his two granddaughters' behaviour. I went home to see them. That was the first time I came into contact with the colonial boarding preschools.

I picked up my two grandnieces, one aged four and one aged five, from their boarding preschool on Friday evening and then carefully observed them while they were at home. I saw clearly they did not hug their grandparents, and they had almost no emotional exchanges with their own family members. They sat a little further away from all of us family members, almost like guests or strangers in their own home. They conversed with each other only in Mandarin, the Chinese language. This was after just three months in the new boarding preschool in our local township. Prior to this, they spoke no Mandarin and were raised in an entirely Tibetan-speaking environment.

I realized that my family's case was not unique. The Chinese government was implementing a mandatory preschool education policy over all of Tibet. For the following three years during the summer vacations, I did academic fieldwork on this topic. I visited boarding preschools across all of eastern Tibet, in what China now calls Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan and Sichuan. I spoke to kids, parents, teachers and other village stakeholders, and my conclusion was the same as it was with my two grandnieces.

It is very important to understand that Tibetan parents have no real choice about whether to send their children away to boarding school. Even very young children in the rural areas of Tibet—just four to six years old—must attend a boarding preschool. Local village schools have been shut down in Tibetan villages. Private schools have been shut down. There are really no local options, and there is no Tibetan option left for parents who don't want to send their children away to those government boarding preschools.

This is all by design. The Chinese government invests vast amounts of resources and much careful thought into pulling Tibetan children out by their roots from our culture and their families. They do this by teaching almost entirely in Mandarin, the Chinese language, and by making the entire learning environment into a purely Chinese environment.

• (1325)

Even the pedagogical approach is very sophisticated. For example, students are shown Chinese cultural objects and then are told to close their eyes and imagine those objects. Then they are asked to draw what they imagined. Later on, they ask the kids to explain, in Chinese Mandarin, what they have drawn. This is a very intentional method to shift the children's entire psychological foundation from Tibetan to Chinese.

China is weaponizing the school system to intentionally commit genocide. I am deeply concerned for the well-being of those children, their parents and the future survival of the Tibetan identity and culture. If this colonial boarding school policy continues for more than 20 years—especially the boarding preschool policy—I fear that China will end our civilization and cause irreparable harm to our people.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Gyal Lo, for your testimony.

Last, we have Ms. Lhamo, please, for five minutes.

Thank you.

Ms. Chemi Lhamo: *Tashi delek.Anee.* Hello, everybody. I'm Chemi Lhamo.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the original caretakers of this land, to the elders of the past and present and to any who should be here and may be here today physically, mentally and spiritually.

I was born stateless into a Tibetan refugee settlement camp in south India. Until I was 11 years old, I carried not a passport but an identity certificate issued by the Indian government, which I needed to renew every single year to maintain my precarious political existence as a person with no homeland.

At 11, I immigrated to Toronto to a neighbourhood called “Parkdale”. Parkdale has one of the largest Tibetan communities in exile outside of India and Nepal. It's one of the very few places where Tibetans have recreated both our national identity and our cultural community in a safe place that allows us to be who we are, where we celebrate our culture, learn our language, study our scriptures and pass on our rich ancient heritage to the next generation. Every Wednesday, we gather in “Little Tibet” to celebrate those parts of our identity and culture that are banned and criminalized inside of Tibet.

Culture is often referred to as the way of life of an entire society. It's “the collective programming of the mind”. For a community, it guides the collective actions, thoughts and feelings. It's what makes us unique—human. It's part of what dignifies our existence and gives meaning to our lives.

However, China's colonial rule over Tibet has targeted and has continuously attacked every aspect of this culture: language, faith, music, literature, our nomadic way of life and our ancestral branches of knowledge that have allowed us to live as compassionate stewards of one of the most fragile ecosystems on the planet.

The Chinese Communist Party has basically severed our entire nation into two: those on the outside, who cannot go inside because we're denied visas; and those who are inside and who cannot leave because they don't have passports. That has been a fact of Tibetan life for a long time, and now the Chinese government's assault on Tibetans has reached a breaking point. Chinese authorities are targeting the three foundational pillars of our Tibetan identity—religion, language and our nomadic way of life—for a complete elimination.

This eliminationist project is being carried out in every space: in the monasteries, workplaces, primary and nursery schools, on the grasslands and in towns, in neighbourhoods and in private homes. There is no Tibetan space that remains beyond the intrusive reach of the Chinese state today.

Millions of nomads have been relocated from the grasslands into reservation-style housing projects, which basically land them in the middle of nowhere, with little to no access to jobs, so there's no future for young people to survive or even thrive. In the monasteries, monks and nuns are being slowly strangled with rules and regulations that push them out and block new ones from joining. For those who remain, there's no time for religious studies because they're too busy studying Xi Jinping's thoughts and the latest propaganda from Beijing that is forced upon them.

For anyone who is paying attention, there's no doubt that the Chinese Communist Party is hell-bent on trying to eradicate our core identity by turning Tibetans into Chinese. That alone is the final goal of this cradle-to-grave project of forced assimilation, starting with the mandatory enrolment of four- to six-year-olds in preschool boarding, not to mention nearly one million children being stripped away from their parents and forced or coerced into learning, thinking and even imagining in Chinese instead of Tibetan.

I stand here today as a Tibetan and a Canadian to ask you to please speak out for Tibet.

Our silence emboldens the CCP. That's why we see them blatantly sending spy balloons around the world. That's why they're setting up police stations in our democratic nations, interfering with our elections and threatening and intimidating Canadians on Canadian soil. It is imperative that we take a stand and we act.

Some may say that Canada has no place speaking out because of our own legacies, yet I say this is exactly why Canada needs to speak out. This is precisely why we have an even greater duty and more of an obligation to speak out. We know from our own mistakes about the intergenerational trauma and the grief caused by these types of schools and the genocidal legacies they leave behind for generations and generations after. We need to speak out about our experiences and what could be done differently and make sure that it never happens again, neither here nor anywhere else.

• (1330)

There's so much that we can do to help Tibet.

One, issue a statement that echoes the concerns of the four UN special rapporteurs and call on China to shut down these colonial boarding school systems inside of Tibet. That includes in Kham and Amdo.

Two, this body can definitely undertake a study to investigate the CCP's colonial preschool boarding, which there is no information about. The Chinese government is clearly hiding it and doing everything it can to hide this policy, because even it knows that this is wrong. We need to make sure that folks like Dr. Gyal Lo and the experts who are risking their lives to be here in front of you today to tell you the truth about these hidden policies of the Chinese government are taken seriously.

Three, impose sanctions on the Chinese officials and the architects who are overseeing these colonial boarding schools under the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act.

Finally, I want to thank you and each and every single person who's listening today, because together we can do this right and make sure that it does not happen again anywhere else.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lhamo.

Now we'll move on to questions. Our first round will be seven minutes. First will be Mr. Aboultaif and then Mr. Virani, and we'll continue on with the other members.

Mr. Aboultaif, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing today before committee.

Ms. Lhamo, you've answered some of the questions that I was going to ask by outlining the final strategy of the Chinese regime or the Chinese Communist Party for the Tibet region and the Tibet population. However, the question that begs to be asked about those residential schools is when this problem was known to the international community and to Canada. When was this issue highlighted?

You're talking about how 20 years from now, there will probably be a complete change of the culture, the education system and the way these generations are going to grow in the future. I think it would be important to understand when this issue became known to the international community and to Canada. What have you been hearing from the international community on this issue?

The question is for Ms. Lhamo and for the Tibet Action Institute and Ms. Tethong.

Ms. Chemi Lhamo: I believe Lhadon would be a great speaker to respond to your question, because they put out the report in 2020, and the international community has definitely responded. We see the U.K. has spoken out.

We've also attached, in the briefing document, the letter by Congressman Jim McGovern from the CECC that has called out China to shut down the colonial boarding schools.

We need Canada to step up. The U.K. has risen. The U.S. has risen. The UN has also done its own research to tell us that one million children are being ripped away from their parents. It's time for Canada to join in on that.

Lhadon-la.

• (1335)

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Thank you. It really has just been this last year. We put the report out and were briefing some governments behind the scenes just before last December. It was a year ago in December.

There has been some forward movement now, I think, with the UN special rapporteurs speaking out recently. They just put out a press release on Monday about their communication to the Chinese government, calling for more information on the school system and saying that it appears to be a violation of basically every agreement the Chinese government has made on any rights that Tibetans might have.

I think Dr. Gyal Lo always says it best. There have always been colonial boarding schools in Tibet the entire time the Chinese government has been there. He was part of the wave of academics, scholars and Tibetans trying to hold a line and push for Tibetan content and curriculum in those schools for years.

That space has steadily been shrinking, to the point now that, under Xi Jinping and the second-generation ethnic policies the last number of years, they've taken it to the next level in terms of primary school education no longer being taught in Tibetan, and now it's in preschool. It didn't used to be that Tibetans had to attend preschool, although it would be great if they were attending Tibetan language-based, mother tongue-based preschool. Tibetans would have no problem with that, and not having to do that in a boarding school but locally.

This is all new under Xi Jinping, and it's what we're seeing in general.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Dr. Gyal Lo, on eastern Tibet, as per your testimony, what I would be curious to know is whether you have had a chance to look at the academic curriculum that is imposed, let's say, on the students.

Dr. Gyal Lo: Let me address that in two parts.

The colonial boarding schools started in 1979 and have been running until now, but the situation is getting worse. On top of that, under the Xi Jinping regime, they've produced a new policy of having the boarding preschool education system.

I deeply engaged with the curriculum issue and the contents of the textbooks over the 10 years when I was teaching at my former university. For example, I produced two Tibetan knowledge-based textbooks. I also did some of the training conferences and, one year after Xi, China stopped that.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Would you be able to give us some examples from these textbooks that raise a flag over what the Chinese government is trying to do and how that is going to really affect the future of these younger generations?

Dr. Gyal Lo: Yes. They're ultimately making it a purely Chinese cultural environment for the kids in the schools.

For example, they shut down Tibetan objects, Tibetan historical figures and the Tibetan cultural environment in the classroom in 2018. Also, they're asking kids to wear Chinese soldier dress as their uniforms. Also, every day, they're required to sing the Chinese national song when they enter the school.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: I have a question to ask and I have about 30 or 40 seconds. Are parents able to visit their kids in those schools?

Dr. Gyal Lo: There are two types. At the boarding preschool, the parents are allowed only to pick them up on Friday evening and drop them off on Sunday evening. Those are the kids aged four to six. For other boarding schools, they can see their parents almost every three months.

• (1340)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Aboultaif.

Now, for seven minutes, we have Mr. Virani.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to start by saying, *tuchi che*. Thank you so much for being here.

Thank you, Ms. Richardson, for your contributions as well.

Thank you to the members of this committee and to the chair for facilitating this important meeting and this important study.

In my seven years of representing the community of Parkdale that Ms. Lhamo was mentioning, I've certainly learned a great deal about Tibet and the Tibetan struggle. In my role as chair of Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, I've taken some encouragement at certain times in terms of the way things were heading in terms of government policy and international reaction. This testimony today, however, is quite shocking.

The encouraging parts are things such as launching an Indo-Pacific strategy that specifically mentions Tibetan human rights violations. They are things like the vote that happened in December on relaunching a Sino-Tibetan dialogue that has been stalled since His

Holiness gave up political power to the Sikyong. Really, that dialogue process has been moribund for about the last 10 years.

I think that having this study is really critical and I'm glad we're having it, but what I want to know first of all is the impact on the children and also the impact on the parents.

Perhaps, Dr. Gyal Lo, can you tell us very specifically what would happen in the TAR or in any Tibetan majority region if a parent outright tried to refuse sending their kids to either the preschool or the boarding schools for ages six to 18? What are the consequences?

Dr. Gyal Lo: The parents have almost no possible way to oppose the policy to send their kids to schools, because they were warned first that if they don't send their kids to boarding preschool, later on they cannot get enrolled for either one, which means that they won't get an education. The second way would be simply to block their names from the government system whereby they get benefits or any welfare from the government. Then, if they still don't send their kids, they send the police to put them in jail.

Mr. Arif Virani: In that context, the children would be moved by force. Is that fair?

Dr. Gyal Lo: Of course. They need kids for maintaining the schools.

Mr. Arif Virani: Okay.

Ms. Lhamo referenced the legacy of Canada with respect to residential schools. We're all thinking about the indigenous plight for 150 years in this country. It's a horrific legacy. A lot of that legacy is also about children trying to escape, flee and run, and about children trying to resist.

This question is for perhaps Dr. Gyal Lo, Lhadon Tethong or Sophie Richardson. Is there evidence of children trying to get out of the system and of what happens to them if they do try to resist in the schools?

Dr. Gyal Lo: There are two options that are very clear. One option is to bring you back to the school. The other way is to put you into another school that is at a further distance so that you'll never be able to run away.

Mr. Arif Virani: They move you even further.

How has this been exacerbated by the rise of the surveillance state under Xi Jinping? I understand that there are two cameras for every human being in the PRC, for example. That is quite overwhelming. How does that impede one's ability to resist or flee in this context?

Perhaps Dr. Richardson can respond, and then Ms. Tethong.

Dr. Sophie Richardson: Thank you.

Human Rights Watch has done quite a bit of research about the surveillance state across China and the ability of authorities to monitor virtually any and all electronic communications but also, indeed, to use tools to track people's movement. I think it's fair to say that the Tibetan plateau is awash with this kind of technology. It's deployed in ways that prevent people from being able to communicate or organize.

Perhaps I can add something briefly about the impacts on children and family members. We had people talk to us about the inability of children to communicate with family members once they had really been forced to study entirely in Chinese. The children were not able to read traditional texts, obviously, and they were not able to participate in religious rites. They simply did not have the language comprehension to do so.

Those are some of the ways in which you can so clearly see the destruction to families and to the transmission of knowledge by simply switching out the medium of education.

Lhadon will certainly have more to add to that.

• (1345)

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Yes.

We've actually had reports from Tibet, although very limited, about Tibetan students in these schools protesting the crackdown on language and the removal of Tibetan. This has intensified over the last number of years. We try to look into these things, although it's virtually impossible, because the information blackout is so complete.

One thing I would say about the impact on children and families is that we've actually heard from a number of Tibetans who felt they had no other choice but to send their kids and who also felt, "Well, at least if my child learns the Chinese that I didn't, then they will have a better chance, because the world around us is changing so quickly." However, they later expressed regret when the kids who came home to them were in so many ways different and had grown so apart. It just broke them. It made them feel like they'd made the wrong decision.

Mr. Arif Virani: Ms. Tethong, perhaps I could go further with you on one issue. You mentioned the discriminatory application of these policies. I recall reading from that longer UN document that, while these schools exist, they're applied to something like 22% of minority children but 78% of Tibetan minority children.

Can you comment on that—the direct application or the over-application towards Tibetans and what you read in that vis-à-vis the Chinese government's policies?

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: In the most rural areas of China, where you would think that.... If this is really about what the Chinese will say, which is the challenges of the sparsely populated Tibetan plateau, the topography and how difficult it is to get to school.... In the most rural areas of China, the rate of boarding is around 20% averaged across. There's no comparison.

This is targeting not just Tibetan children, but Uighur and Southern Mongolian children as well. Of course, in East Turkestan—what they try to call the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region—there are different circumstances, because many of those kids' parents are in camps or in detention.

For the Southern Mongolians, they've really fought back against language policies in a way that has helped on some level to delay a bit more.... We don't know all of the details, because it's so difficult to get information, but we know that they are also boarding at a very high rate.

I think Tibet is always next level and, sadly, a little ahead of everyone else. Because of Tibet's political claims to independence and history, and the global support that Tibet has enjoyed, the Chinese government treats Tibet very differently in many ways, and earlier than the other places.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Tethong.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you now have the floor for seven minutes.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for taking part in the committee's very important study on this subject.

I want them to know that I am an ally. In fact, I am barred from China, if that gives them any reassurance.

Ms. Tethong, you said that some families regret their decision because they were convinced by the Chinese government, in a somewhat insidious way, to send their children to these boarding schools.

Can you tell me whether a family can refuse to send their child to a boarding school?

If they refuse to do so, are there reprisals, or can they be punished by the government?

[*English*]

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Thank you for that question.

There used to be more options, and they've been shrinking steadily every year. Tibetans could send kids to some Tibetan private schools, or the monasteries were running schools for secular education and these kinds of things. The Chinese government has cracked down on all of it.

When I say, "the choice to send them", some parents some years ago would have had somewhat of a choice between a Tibetan-run school or this school where they're going to get a strong Chinese-language education. In the case when they made that decision for whatever reason, that's what I was talking about. It's that kind of regret.

The consequences really.... One thing that is very clear to us in our research is that for many of the Tibetans who want to resist or who try to resist, they've gotten much better at pressuring people before they even consider getting to the point of not sending.

What parents are doing now—which reminds me of the stories of the residential schools in Canada that I have heard—is moving to urban areas, because there are day schools there. They'll separate the family and move with the child or the children to the urban area so that the kids can go to a day school, or they will live with the four- and five-year-olds. We've heard of nomadic communities taking turns, family by family, going and living near the school—though they can't even see the kids—so that someone from that community is near those kids. They're living in their car all week long.

Those are the kinds of stories we're hearing now.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you very much.

We heard that children were practically prohibited from speaking Tibetan. These children are forced to give up their culture and religious practices because they are in these Chinese schools that promote socialism.

What are the repercussions on the children once they've gone through this education imposed on them by the Chinese government?

What's the outcome when a young Tibetan is forced to attend this type of boarding school?

When they come out, are they the same person as when they went in, or have they changed completely?

[*English*]

Dr. Gyal Lo: Thank you for your question. This is a key question, I think.

As I mentioned in my statement, after three months they feel like they're becoming a guest and a stranger at home. This is how they pull our kids from their roots—by starting from home.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We have to be careful when making comparisons. However, there were Indian residential schools in Canada that uprooted children by force, which has been described as cultural genocide. There is now a reconciliation process in place here.

What we are seeing from the Chinese government towards the Tibetan people is cultural genocide.

Would you be prepared to state that?

[*English*]

Dr. Gyal Lo: Yes, definitely. This is a clear signal of the cultural genocide, I think.

Ms. Chemi Lhamo: Under the genocide convention, separating children from their parents is stated as a genocide. Even with the risk of its being a genocide, we, as part of the international community, have an obligation to ensure we intervene and, if need be, punish the perpetrators.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's exactly what I was getting at. Canada is a signatory to the genocide convention. As a signatory to this convention, Canada has certain obligations; it's not just a formality. There are obligations for all signatory countries, and Canada is one of them.

Do you think that Canada is doing enough as a signatory of the 1948 genocide convention?

The convention is clear: where there is even just a risk of genocide, parties must act, punish or prevent.

Do you think Canada is doing enough? If not, what more should it be doing?

[*English*]

Ms. Chemi Lhamo: We provided the recommendations, but I'm happy to repeat them.

In response to your question, "Do you think Canada is doing enough?", this is the opportunity to do something. It's been about a year and a half since experts Dr. Gyal Lo and Lhadon-la have been going around the world tirelessly. I know that Lhadon has had to spend time away from her own little ones, running back and forth. She was just in Ottawa. She has had to go on flights that were cancelled.

She is being separated for this very reason. The sacrifice being made is for Canada to step up and take actions to make sure that children are no longer being separated from their families, so we can act on our obligation to intervene.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: How should we intervene? That's the question we should be asking. As a committee, we wholeheartedly support you.

As parliamentarians, what measures do we need to take?

How can we intervene? Taking action is one thing, but how we do it is another.

Ms. Tethong, I think you wanted to answer that.

[*English*]

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Yes. I think leadership to raise this issue would be very helpful amongst like-minded nations at the UN. First and foremost, it sounds very basic, but the Chinese government is hiding this policy for a reason and is cutting off the flow of information for a reason. If no one knows it's happening, then there is no problem and no problem means no solution. First and foremost, we need to directly condemn this policy: to bring it out and to put Beijing on notice that the world knows. That's just basic.

Also, I think you will all appreciate the idea that Tibet is often mentioned as Tibet added on to long statements about other things, as in "and Tibet" and "we are concerned about Tibet". We appreciate the continued concern for Tibet, but I think that to really name specifically the policies and to talk about and look into the question of genocide, it then will become quite clear that what is happening is far beyond just a human rights violation.

That's something that also happens also to us. We get put into a category as if there are these individual violations, but Xi Jinping's approach, especially now, is so apparent. It's a total approach that is designed to eliminate Tibetans in a way that's clearly genocide, and it needs to be addressed in that way.

I think that for Tibetans, Uighurs and Mongolians our issues need to be looked at together. I think Beijing would love nothing more than for us to keep all of this in silos and say that this is an anti-terrorism issue, that this is a separatism issue.... It's just too easy to let them off the hook for the genocidal policies they have towards everyone, especially Tibetans, Uighurs and Southern Mongolians who are not Han.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Tethong.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you all.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll continue on with Ms. McPherson for seven minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you very much Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your testimony. This has been very helpful for us. I am a mother, and I can't even imagine the stories you've been sharing with us this week. When I heard your testimony earlier in the week, it was all I could do to not rush home and hug my children a bit closer. I certainly want to express my sympathies that this is happening.

I'm slightly overwhelmed by the testimony, to be perfectly honest. I, like many of the other members of this committee, am banned from China, because we have spoken out against the genocide happening against the Uighur people. I guess why I feel a little overwhelmed is that you raise the issue of making statements, using the Magnitsky-style sanctions and things Canada can do, and it seems so fully insufficient for what needs to be done.

I'd like to know, though, what China's response has been. The report has come out. You are speaking internationally. We've had the U.K. We've had the U.S. We've had other countries raise this and talk about this. Has China fully denied it? What has China's response been to this?

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: I'll answer quickly, and maybe Sophie could follow up with how China responds.

To the specific charges about the residential boarding school system, they haven't said that much, although they have had some direct responses. They haven't responded to the UN, but they put something out some time ago. I think it was through the Canadian Chinese embassy, if I am remembering correctly.

They completely deny it, and they point to their propaganda online that shows Tibetan children learning Tibetan, or they have these slick videos that show Tibetans learning Tibetan. Quickly, people will ask how we can say that they're not learning Tibetan when here they are, learning Tibetan.

I wanted to point out—and I think all Canadians can understand this—that one Tibetan-language class being taught in Tibet to Tibetan children, where they are studying nine or 10 hours a day in Chinese, is not enough. It will not result in these young people, especially separated from their families and communities, speaking Tibetan or being Tibetan in that way.

That is one thing the Chinese government will point to, and they have pointed to their very carefully constructed propaganda and whatever else to show this, like Tibetans dancing and singing. They have some stuff online that I think is really telling propaganda. The questions these interviewers will ask the young Tibetans, either in print or in video.... The answers of the young people are quite telling of how they miss their families, how they weren't happy for a long time and how they were homesick.

It's all there, but everybody knows to be very careful in Tibet in how you express yourself to the Chinese state media.

• (1400)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Ms. Richardson, is there anything you'd like to add to that?

Dr. Sophie Richardson: Thank you.

I could add quickly that the Chinese government now reflexively rejects anything that we publish as hopelessly biased and fictional. We, as an organization, have been sanctioned, which is not really relevant, except to show that there is never a substantive conversation about the facts. The Chinese government generally continues to insist that it is merely making education maximally available to the largest number of children, and that this is all to the public good.

I think it is worth pointing out that the 2010 decision to expand access to preschool education across all Tibetan areas, and particularly in the TAR, made preschool education effectively compulsory. When we are thinking about what the knock-on effects of that are, one of them is that it is now effectively impossible to enrol your child in a school at subsequent levels if they have not been to one of the state-run preschools, whether it is a boarding school or not a boarding school. There is no option anymore. There is no meaningful option to step away from the state-run system, because it would mean, effectively, taking your child out of all education at all levels.

However, the Chinese government has been particularly disingenuous in its responses to the concerns also raised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, both of which have repeatedly flagged a problem with Chinese authorities since the nineties. Typically, the state's response is to respond with the number of children in the aggregate who are being educated, without answering the question about access to mother-tongue education or the denial of that right.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Certainly, you talked about the multi-lateral institutions and the multilateral fora that have looked at this. Obviously, we saw with the Uighurs that the UNHRC was not able to get that study. They were not able to get the votes to make that study go forward.

Is that a role that Canada should play? Should we be trying to work with allied countries to inoculate against the Chinese influence on other countries? Is that a role that we can play?

Dr. Sophie Richardson: I cannot urge you strongly enough to do that. Canada was very supportive of the October vote. I really hope that governments will think about that episode not as a failure but as being 18 votes closer to “yes”. You were 18 votes closer to “yes”. These things are almost never adopted on the first go. I hope everyone is suiting up, not necessarily for the March session but for June, to go right back into the council and try to run the same decision memo.

You know this: You people voted last week, beautifully, movingly—thank you—for them. Those people deserve their rights. There should be a debate in the Human Rights Council about what's happening to Uighurs and about what's happening to Tibetan children. I think leadership from the Canadian government in this regard is incredibly important.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Ms. Tethong, I'll just prep something for my next round. You talked a little bit about the issues of Tibetans being separate from those of Uighurs, separate from those of Mongolians, separate from those of Hong Kongers perhaps, and separate from those of Taiwan. Whatever those issues are that we're dealing with with regard to Chinese aggression, maybe in my next round—I know I'm out of time here—you could articulate how we treat Tibet as separate but also as part of this bigger issue.

I know that I can't get you to answer that right now, but it will circle around.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1405)

The Chair: Thank you for that, Ms. McPherson.

We'll continue now with Ms. Vandenbeld for five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much to our witnesses for this vital testimony. I do take note that it was said that China is going to great lengths to try to have an information blackout and to not let it be known what is happening to Tibetan children.

I want to particularly thank you, Dr. Lo, as a teacher with a deep caring for children, for bringing us direct and recent testimony that you saw yourself. I think it is vital for this committee to be able to hear this but also amplify it. I actually thank all the members of the committee from all parties that we were able to get your testimony squeezed into our calendar to make sure that we had an exceptional meeting today and that we could have this on the record, which I hope will go some way toward making sure this is known in the world.

Ms. Richardson mentioned an attempt at sinicization. Ms. Tethong said something about looking at all of these issues together. As you know, this committee was the committee that I think was almost first in the world, of any parliament, to study the Uighurs back in 2018 and what was happening there at a time when China was trying very hard not to have information public on this. I note that there are some eerie similarities in the surveillance and in the attempt to completely eradicate people's language and culture by taking their children. I wonder to what extent this is something that....

I think it was Ms. Tethong who said that Tibet is the canary in the coal mine. Tibet is sort of ahead. At the same time, I imagine that these techniques and the technologies are being shared and learned from. We noted with the Uighurs that it was the same governor who had been in Tibet who then went to Xinjiang.

I wonder to what extent China is using this against all its minorities in a much grander attempt to eradicate different peoples.

I'd like to start with Dr. Lo, and then perhaps each of you could answer that question.

Thank you.

Dr. Gyal Lo: Thank you for your question.

Of course, over the years, when I was teaching at my former university, I had a number of such Mongolian and Uighur colleagues. We often experienced an exchange of ideas. In the university during official meetings we pretended that we didn't know each other, but in the evenings we invited each other to a certain place to have dinner together. We had that kind of experience. That experience was simply to not respond to the government's pressure on us as intellectual people.

Throughout those experiences it's clear: I can see the similarities between boarding preschools for Uighurs in Xinjiang and Tibetans in Tibet. It is exactly the same. There are no differences.

On the other hand, there are some strategic differences between China's treatment of Tibet and Uighurs. I can share with you a concrete example.

In 2017, Guanxiong Pei, a social science academic, did a social survey on what the difference is between the Tibetans and Uighurs from their perspective. He said to wipe out Tibetans from urban cities and get them back to their rural areas and then to kill all the Uighurs from every city in China. That's the kind of different attitudes they have on the Chinese people's side.

• (1410)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: On your own family members and the children acting like strangers in their home, I think every single parent, grandparent, aunt and uncle can relate and are mortified at that very thought. Thank you for that testimony.

Ms. Lhamo, would you like to talk a bit about the ways in which this is between different cultures and different races as well?

The Chair: Yes...with very brief comments, please.

Ms. Chemi Lhamo: Yes, for sure.

I want to start by saying that there's cross-movement solidarity. We've seen that with the Beijing Olympics. I was actually in Greece with my Uighur and Hong Konger friends, with some of us arrested and detained in different jails, but we were together.

On the Chinese government's tactics, it's so clear that China is constantly duplicating the tactics used by other authoritarian regimes, whether it is surveillance or ripping children away from their families.

I want to emphasize this point: Tibet has been on lockdown by design since 2008. Prior to 2008, thousands of people were able to escape. We oftentimes used to get information from experts like Dr. Gyal Lo. After 2008, only a trickle of them were able to make it through. In the past years, maybe five or a handful have been able to get out.

I would like to encourage people to think about what type of information we have heard from inside of Tibet and the type of access we have. We were able to see the concentration camps in East Turkestan. We have not yet been able to see the boarding preschools. Even the UN has not reported on those in their communications so far. On the boarding preschools, we still do not know, so access, access, access....

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll continue on to Mr. Genuis for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

This is obviously very moving and tragic testimony.

I want to start by asking if you know of instances or mechanisms of complicity by western corporations or consulting firms that might be involved in investing in or supplying equipment or technology for these boarding schools, and who we should be putting pressure on to end that complicity.

Anybody can answer.

The Chair: Feel free. That's for anybody. In general, if a witness has some commentary to give, even if the question has not been directed toward you, you can still contribute.

Yes, go ahead, please.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Sophie, did you want to do the DNA, just a quick DNA link...?

Dr. Sophie Richardson: Sure. This is not specific to boarding schools, but several years ago, when we were writing about the forced collection of biodata on Uighurs, we came across procure-

ment documents suggesting that a Massachusetts-based company, Thermo Fisher, had sold DNA sequencers to the Xinjiang authorities. It was not then, and it is not now, illegal to sell those sequencers. That doesn't mean it's a great idea, or consistent with ethics or basic human decency.

No amount of publicly beating up this company seems to have made it change its behaviour. It said it would stop selling that technology in that region. We and others subsequently found its technology being sold into the region, and it said it wasn't its fault. We could go into the details if you want.

Recently, we and others have found the same company selling the same equipment to authorities in the TAR, and we published in September showing that authorities are collecting—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry. Because of the tight time, could you give us the name of the company quickly? Are there other instances of other companies or consulting...? If people don't have that information at their fingertips, I think the committee would love to receive a written follow-up submission.

I know it may seem a bit obscure, but I think one key way that we try to combat these human rights abuses is to hold accountable those who have the capacity to hold accountable to a greater extent, because they're based in our society.

Dr. Sophie Richardson: I'll send the links to the relevant documents we've published.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Does anybody else want to add to this quickly? I'll the go to another topic.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Yes, I was going to say that we are looking into who there is that we could hold accountable, whether they are entities or whatnot. One thing that's an interesting new area that's really clear for us, especially because Dr. Gyal Lo has knowledge of all these people and characters, is the intellectual architects of the second-generation ethnic policies that Xi Jinping has adopted. The people overseeing the implementation of that...not just in Tibet. They're also in East Turkestan or the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

Those people are actually sanctioned by the highest level of the state government, the central government, to go into Tibet and East Turkestan and find the fastest ways to implement, across the board, Tibetan and Uighur children speaking Mandarin, and what the best methods are, psychological and otherwise, to get them to learn faster. If you can imagine, these people to us are not academics and they're not researchers. It's next level and it's genocidal, and the individuals involved should be held accountable, especially if they are deputized.

● (1415)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes, that anticipated my next question. I think we'd be interested in getting suggestions of corporations that might be involved and are complicit in this that should be highlighted and sanctioned. We are putting pressure on our pension fund to not invest in areas that are going to be complicit.

There's also individual accountability via Magnitsky sanctions. There have been, to my knowledge, no applications of Magnitsky sanctions to individuals involved in repression in Tibet or in Hong Kong. There's been some very limited use in the context of East Turkestan.

Do you have names of individuals you could forward to the committee saying, "These are people we know are playing a role specifically around these boarding schools, and they should be held accountable via Magnitsky sanctions"? Personally, I think that a very powerful tool for deterring this kind of involvement is clearly naming names around accountability.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Absolutely. We couldn't agree more. Actually, in December, the U.S. State Department sanctioned two officials in Tibet. I can send you the info. That was hugely momentous for Tibetans. It's new, and a lot has been going on in the world, so I don't think many people know about it.

The other thing is that we can absolutely send you some information about those involved.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: The committee would appreciate those names, I assume, to potentially include in a report.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

We'll continue now for five minutes with Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will come back a bit to what my colleague Mr. Genuis just said.

We are here, on the committee, to build a case and gather as much evidence as possible so that we, as parliamentarians, can take action or at least demand certain measures from our Parliament or the Canadian government.

Could you give us information you haven't shared with us yet on incidents related to these boarding schools? Could you send it to us so we can include it in the report?

My question is for all the witnesses at the meeting today.

Ms. Richardson, I see you nodding. Would you like to add anything?

[*English*]

Dr. Sophie Richardson: We would be happy to share the details of all of the reporting we've done on educational policy, abuses related to it and sinicization more broadly across the region, if that would be helpful.

Many of those documents also include—as Mr. Genuis was asking—the names of the relevant officials. Lhadon and others may wish to elaborate on that specifically with respect to the boarding schools.

Dr. Gyal Lo: Thank you for the question.

Of course we know who is the architect of that program. There's a certain name I've known personally for many years. I can provide his name.

Also, there are institutions settled by central China, the Government of China in Lanzhou. They are responsible for doing the research on the entire western minority area, which largely covers Xinjiang and Tibet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Lo.

We will take anything you can give us. We are lucky to have committee analysts who are extremely efficient and who will help us create a solid report.

Like most of my parliamentary colleagues who are here today, I worked on the Uighur issue, and the Chinese government has a similar modus operandi towards Tibetans. We have seen worsening human rights violations in China since Xi Jinping came to power.

I want to discuss this further because we are parliamentarians, and that makes him one of our counterparts at the international level. If we can gather evidence proving that human rights violations have worsened since Xi Jinping came to power, it would certainly help us shift into action.

Is it accurate to say that, under Xi Jinping, human rights violations have worsened? Do you have any examples to give us to strengthen our case?

Ms. Tethong, I saw you react.

● (1420)

[*English*]

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Yes, absolutely.

We have seen under Xi Jinping a crackdown that people liken to the Cultural Revolution. Some Tibetan cultural practices and things used to be tolerated or seemingly harmless, such as hanging prayer flags or building Tibetan Buddhist statues. Now they are being destroyed. People are being forbidden from engaging in really simple Buddhist practices with seemingly no political implications at all.

Also, there are restrictions on the monasteries and the process of recognizing reincarnated lamas. Lineages that go back generations are just being cut and broken. It's being done from every angle. There's also the blocking and banning of people—using surveillance—from going into the monastery or observing really important Tibetan Buddhist traditions, holidays or occasions. I can't even imagine not being able to go and do the circumambulation of the temple to build merit. Even for these very simple things, there is a total crackdown under him.

Dr. Gyal Lo: Can I add something?

[Translation]

The Chair: You only have three seconds left, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[English]

Please, Dr. Gyal Lo, go ahead.

Dr. Gyal Lo: In Xi Jinping's first term, he did not do that much, but as soon as he stabilized his second term, he dramatically increased this high nationalism combined with the domination of the Communist Party, which was increasingly put into the curriculum. That's one example.

The other concrete example I can give you is that in 2015, when I was sitting with Chinese scholars, they would say, "We can give generous autonomy to the TR, but the entire Tibetan region is too big." At the time we could talk about this, but in 2018, those Chinese scholars started detaching themselves from these long-term friendships with Tibetan scholars and other minority scholars. The entire social atmosphere was turned into high nationalism in society.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

[Translation]

Next, we go to Ms. McPherson.

[English]

You have five minutes, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much for all of this. It's given me certainly an awful lot to think about.

I would go back, though, if I could, to Ms. Tethong, to see if there's a response to that question. We did talk about it a bit, about how we support Tibet also within the context. Could you perhaps go ahead with that?

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Sure. I think I was saying that the Chinese government would love nothing more than for all of these issues to be addressed separately and in silos.

There are so many linkages, and there is a way that I think we need to.... The Tibetans, Uighurs and Hong Kongers are all working together within our limited capacities, and I think it would be great if we had more government advocacy and support for us, just in looking at our fights together and how they relate, and how Beijing could be addressed or made to answer for the way they're treating all of us, because then I think it's more powerful also.

I would say that it is really important at the same time to.... What I was saying was that Tibet gets a mention these days, and I under-

stand that it's because of a lack of information, but I also think that there's an added responsibility. If you look at the Uighurs and you look at the Tibetans over the years, in a way what they're doing to the Uighurs is because they didn't have attention or support, and because of the war on terror and all the reasons we know. Tibet had that, so China intentionally set a plan to end that global support and that spotlight and to turn it off.

I feel that we have an added responsibility now to work harder to see the whole picture. That's I guess what I would say. Despite information blackouts and lockdown, Tibetans have been risking their lives to get information out. There is quite a bit. It's harder to see as clearly, but I feel that we need to work harder to meet the level to which China has tried to obscure the picture. They're doing it not because things are getting better, but because they're getting worse. I think that's what next for the other places—I hate to say it.

How long before it's silence that's coming from East Turkestan? How long before it's silence that's coming from Hong Kong? What has happened to Chinese rights defenders and faith communities in China? This is not just about all of us and our faith being inter-linked. It's about the international community too. I think we know that.

• (1425)

Ms. Heather McPherson: It's absolutely terrifying. It brings to mind for me that we did see all the trouble the United Nations had in getting information about what was happening with the Uighurs.

Do any of you even have faith that the international community can get information? Even if we did get our United Nations examination, would they even have that access? Would we be able to get the information that we would require?

I see you nodding, Ms. Richardson. Perhaps you'd like to start.

Dr. Sophie Richardson: Sure. I think the key is for other governments, and particularly democracies, to match and exceed the ambition, the discipline and the resources that Xi Jinping is devoting to destroying human rights inside and outside the country.

The UN efforts matter partly because they are about holding the Chinese government to the same standards that you, presumably, would want the Canadian government to be held to and that governments have freely agreed to. Nobody made the Chinese government sign human rights treaties. It signed them itself. That's an agreement to play by the same rules and to endure the same degree of scrutiny.

If you can't have a conversation at the Human Rights Council about atrocity crimes being committed against Uighurs, I'm not quite sure what the point of the institution is. Do we want to give up on the institution? No. We want to make it function.

However, there's also the reality that, in the here and now, there are communities that need relief. That's where I think of some of the domestic measures that the Canadian government could lead on....

As Professor Gyal Lo, Chemi and Lhadon have mentioned, I think there's a lot of room to do everything from language and cultural preservation and supporting the kinds of efforts that are community-driven, to making sure Canadian civil servants who work on issues across China aren't offered the opportunity to learn only Chinese, but to learn Tibetan, Uighur, Mongolian or Cantonese. I think these all matter. However, if democracies don't come together soon to push back against a very concerning, clear plan of Xi's, the window is closing somewhat to do that.

I'm on sabbatical, so I'm not supposed to say these things out loud right now, but I find it highly disconcerting to see that, for example, an official from the Uighur region is being received in the U.K. and in Brussels. I find it very disturbing that the EU is going ahead with another round of a bilateral human rights dialogue with the Chinese government. This is a government that should be investigated and prosecuted.

Is there evidence out there to be had, and can it be gathered in the service of, for example, the OHCHR report about the Uighur region? Absolutely. Support that. Give it the political support, give it the financial support and give it the human resources it needs.

There's a lot of information out there to be assembled with a view not just toward documentation but toward accountability. People should be held accountable for these crimes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Absolutely, and I feel like one of the issues we have is that this is a multipolar world, and other countries are looking at the way that China is silencing its own population. That is a big risk.

• (1430)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

We're going to have two shorter rounds now for three and a half minutes. We're going to start with Mr. Virani, and then move to Mr. Genuis and continue.

Mr. Virani, you have three and a half minutes.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you.

I want to make sure I heard a couple of things clearly. I want to start by reading something and asking Dr. Gyal Lo if it sounds consistent.

This is a document from the UN report of the special rapporteurs, dated November 11, 2022, which describes:

Students are restricted in following traditional Tibetan religious practices connecting them back to their families and communities. There are very few Tibetan teachers in such schools, and the majority of teachers are Han. Teachers only speak in Mandarin Chinese and conduct all educational activities in Mandarin....

It continues:

Residential schooling of Tibetan children also produces deep and serious negative psychological and social impacts on such children, including the loss of family connections, apathy, anxiety, interaction disorders, feelings of loneliness, isolation, alienation, homesickness, and other forms of physical or emotional distress.

Based on your on-the-ground experience and understanding, having visited those 50 schools, would you say that's an accurate characterization of what you've seen?

Dr. Gyal Lo: That's accurate.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you, Dr. Gyal Lo.

Sophie Richardson, I want to make sure I'm crystal clear on this. You said in your opening statement that compulsory kindergarten can start as early as three. Is that correct?

Dr. Sophie Richardson: That is correct.

Mr. Arif Virani: I'm quite taken by this aspect of the sanctions movement, because—as it was rightly pointed out—we have issued some sanctions vis-à-vis Chinese leaders who were responsible for discrimination in Xinjiang. I'd echo some of the concerns you've heard from others about wanting the list of specific names. I think that's really critical.

Can I ask Lhadon and Ms. Richardson to help me a bit? I'm wearing my lawyer's hat now. I want to understand a bit more about the discriminatory impact. You mentioned a 2010 decision, Ms. Tethong. There was a ruling that schooling needed to be, basically, as local as possible, but in 2015, there was a carve-out that, if you're in a minority, it can be as far away as possible and that's okay.

Ms. Richardson, if you could answer this point about how the Chinese are not only violating international covenants but their own domestic laws, and if you could identify which domestic laws are in violation, it would be helpful for this committee.

It's over to the two of you, Lhadon and then Ms. Richardson.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Yes. The 2012 State Council decree, I believe it was, was about how education in principle should be local, especially at the youngest stages. That was in 2012, and this very same State Council.... Now, note the timeline of 2015 and Xi Jinping and this whole second-generation ethnic policy stuff that is taking off and his buy-in for that idea. In 2015, there is the State Council decision on ethnic education. I'm getting the name wrong, but the same State Council said that for children of ethnic minorities we should increase boarding school construction and that children of ethnic minorities should live in the school or grow up in the school.

That's the difference here. It's that this is not about education and the ideals of education and universal pre-K and whatever. This is about specific targeted policies for Tibetans, Uighurs and Southern Mongolians, and the idea that bilingual education is one of your mother-tongue language classes in a day is laughable.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Tethong.

We'll continue with our next round.

Mr. Genuis, you have three and a half minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

A few times it's been referenced that one way Canadians will process this information is through comparisons to the horrors of residential schools here in Canada. I wonder if anybody wants to reflect a bit more specifically—those who are making that comparison—on what you would identify as the similarities and the differences. Also, how does that shape Canada's positioning in terms of being able to speak specifically to these issues from our own experiences as a nation?

That's for whoever wants to dive into this.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Really quickly, I would say that I think it's really important that we're not trying to say that this is the same thing. The intention of the government, the policy aims at the highest levels, I think are the same—the idea to assimilate or to force assimilation or to commit genocide—but then, at the implementation level, we automatically get asked about abuse and neglect, because that's such a massive part of the story of residential schools in Canada: the horrors of residential schools in Canada.

We don't have enough information from Tibet. We assume that there are abuse and neglect, but the idea that... You can see a lot of slick propaganda online about these schools. The facilities can be quite beautiful and new and modern. The food can be fantastic. All of those things are true, and it's still wrong what they're doing.

The Chinese government knows how to do these things more now, in the way that they use “modernization” and “universal pre-K education” and all these ideas to mask the true intent, but then, in their policy documents and decrees, you can see the true intent.

• (1435)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Right, and I guess there are a few points of difference I'm gleaming out of that and that I think are useful to understand. One is that we know less about what's happening there right now than we do about the history of residential schools in Canada. That's understandable, given the timing and also the work that's been done here on the Canadian side, but then also it's being justified in modern progressive lingo around education, because the Chinese state is sophisticated enough to try to co-opt that discourse for its own advantage. Maybe what you're saying is that the ideology is similar, but the rhetoric and the justifications are different.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Absolutely, and the resources dedicated in a globalized world to the PR around all of this: That's the key. We know how much Beijing has invested in its global public relations strategy, essentially.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I might be almost out of time, but does anybody want to add to that in any way?

The Chair: Does anyone have a final word?

Ms. Chemi Lhamo: Yes. In short, the goal of this is to take the “Tibetan” out of the Tibetan children.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for three and a half minutes.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To answer Mr. Genuis, the difference is that Canadian civil society and politicians have denounced the residential schools. However, I don't think that China has done that. When the Chinese say we had residential schools in Canada, we tell them we're in the process of shedding light on those crimes, and they were indeed crimes.

So the Chinese can't criticize us on that issue. We're currently setting up discussion tables to promote reconciliation. I don't want

to expand on that. I want to go back to what I was saying about Xi Jinping.

As I understand it, we can impose sanctions under the Sergei Magnitsky Law on certain officials and certain institutions or organizations on Chinese soil that are currently helping develop these residential boarding schools—and are therefore participating in cultural genocide or assimilation—but the fact remains that the person overseeing this entire increasingly aggressive policy is Xi Jinping.

However, I don't hear Western governments criticizing Xi Jinping directly when it comes to these residential boarding schools. When the Uighur genocide comes up, no one points to Xi Jinping.

Wouldn't this perhaps be the best angle for democratic governments around the globe to take?

When we're talking about genocide, when we're a signatory to a convention like that and clearly one individual is overseeing the entire cultural genocide policy, the genocide of the Uighurs, shouldn't governments or parliaments around the world directly speak up against Xi Jinping via sanctions and by blaming him? I am putting that out there.

Ms. Richardson, do you have anything to say about this?

[*English*]

Dr. Sophie Richardson: I couldn't agree more.

This is a highly centralized political system, and it's also one that takes seriously the level of government from which a critique is coming. While I thought it was wonderful to see Prime Minister Trudeau at the vote last week, it would be equally important to hear him direct a critique to Xi Jinping specifically on this issue and many others.

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Ms. Tethong, would you like to say something?

[*English*]

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: I was just going to say that Tibetans from Tibet will always say that you have to understand that the Chinese leadership respects strength. To tiptoe around them and to do whatever, to bend over backwards to avoid any uncomfortable exchanges, we can see that's not their approach.

At the same time they're doing what they're doing and it's getting worse, in part because we all facilitated it by allowing ourselves to get caught up in endless dialogue with no action and to take the teeth out of every possible mechanism that could hold them accountable.

I think it's time to return to a stronger position, directly, exactly as you said, targeting the very people responsible at the highest levels.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I know that parliamentarians around the globe have economic agreements with China and when we stand up to China, it has an economic impact on people in our own constituencies.

I believe we need to be on the right side of history. Unfortunately, genocide has happened in the past and we've always been slow to react. Right now, extreme human rights violations are happening in China and the Canadian government isn't doing enough, in my opinion. You be the judge.

I believe Ms. Tethong hit the nail on the head. Canada has always shown leadership on human rights, and notice that a Quebec sovereigntist is telling you that.

In your opinion, is Canada able to lead as it has in the past on human rights in China?

[English]

The Chair: We're in overtime, so you have 30 seconds, please.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Absolutely, and I think Canada has demonstrated in more ways than one that, as a nation, we're committed to a relationship and a friendship with China. I think that has to be coupled with sticking to our values for the betterment of all.

I would say also that it's really important for us to recognize that, with what we saw in China—the protests by these young people recently against the COVID policies, the sentiments that many of them expressed and now they have been disappeared—this is not just about us. It's also about them and their rights and their freedoms.

I think there is more opportunity and hope than ever before, sadly because they have experienced the repression of the COVID policies and the craziness of the government overreach and the way that people have been treated, but they have expressed solidarity with Uighurs now. They have come out and risked their lives, so I think we owe it to them also to do more.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Tethong and Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Ms. McPherson, you have three and a half minutes.

Go ahead, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm trying to make some sort of ties in my brain. I sit on the Canada-China committee as well as the international human rights committee, and recently we've been talking about Chinese interference in Canada and the impacts that has had on Chinese Canadians and other folks in Canada.

I'm just wondering if you could talk a little bit about the intimidation tactics, which we have certainly heard of. There are reportedly Chinese police stations across the country, in places such as Vancouver and Toronto, that are being used as bases to intimidate people who are standing up for their rights and who are opposing or dissenting from China.

Could you talk a little bit about that, please?

Ms. Chemi Lhamo: Thank you for that question.

I've actually testified in front of the Canada-China committee regarding my own case in 2019, when I ran for U of T student union president. I was attacked with thousands of death threats and rape threats. I've spoken with CSIS, RCMP and any type of security, you name it. We've also recommended, in a report from Amnesty, that the least the Canadian government can do is to have a point person we could go to for support. We've been pointed everywhere, but there is still nowhere we can get support.

Onwards, because Dr. Gyal Lo has been here testifying publicly and telling you folks the truth about the hidden policies of preschool boarding, tomorrow if he gets a threat, he would come to me and ask me for advice and I'd have no good advice to give him. This is me with the privileges and access to Parliament I've had, with access to every kind of security available in Canada, and I have no response. I don't know what else to say in that regard.

The intimidation tactics are just all over, and with the police stations we are scared to navigate our own communities. We know spies are integrated within our communities. For years we've been telling folks, and now we still have not seen any action. We hope to see that soon.

• (1445)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Certainly, we have had representatives from the RCMP and CSIS and, of course, the Minister of Public Safety. I tried to make it very clear to him that what I'm hearing in my constituency office is that these people have nowhere to go. They have no one to talk to. They are getting the runaround and they are not being protected.

One of the other things we talked about was the creation of a foreign registry. Do you think that would be a tool that would be helpful for Canada to implement to protect people?

Ms. Chemi Lhamo: Yes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: That was very clear.

I think it's something the government has said they're interested in, but it feels to me as though we've had a very long time to do this. This is not new, as I think all of the witnesses have said. None of this is just starting. It's just that it's escalating. It's just that it's getting worse, and we have to act on that.

Are there any comments from those online as well?

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Sophie, do you want to go?

Dr. Sophie Richardson: I'll just add quickly that we've looked at this issue in Canada and a couple of other democracies with respect to Chinese government threats to academic freedom, in countries like Canada, the U.S., etc.

It's largely been about the freedom that students and scholars of and from China have to participate in university life and in debates and research, free of interference. I don't think we've seen any democracy or universities take sufficient steps to put protections in place so that people can really learn and study and debate.

Equally, Chemi's example is probably one of the best known ones, but we have had so many people essentially say to us, "We don't feel free to even introduce our ideas or debate them here on a campus partly because we don't think the institution understands what these pressures are, let alone how to put in place mechanisms for reporting or for effective push-back."

I think that's another area that could possibly merit some more attention.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Absolutely.

We are seeing research happening in the universities across the country, in a whole bunch of the areas where we need to make sure we're doing more to protect individuals.

Ms. Tethong.

The Chair: I saw that you wanted to comment.

We're over time again, so please give us just some very brief remarks.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: I think it's in Canada's national interest. It's not just about protecting us. I think if Canada protects people in our communities better from the threat that we know the Chinese government is posing, then I think in the community—where all of the information resides about what the Chinese government is doing to undermine our elections and whatnot—that information will come out more readily. I don't think right now people would feel very protected coming forward with any information like that.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We will continue to a final round of two and a half minutes each, starting with Mr. Battiste.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their testimony. I'm a Mi'kmaq person from a Mi'kmaq community. My aunt went to a residential school. I had cousins who went to residential schools. To hear this testimony and to hear the thoughts around killing the Tibetan in the child, it sounds eerily similar to what the Canadian experience was for first nations in residential schools. While there are some differences, to me, it is very horrifying and sickening to know that governments in this age can be doing things like this.

I'm really glad to be able to hear... We're doing a study on this, and we're bringing this to light, but what more can we do as the Canadian government and as first nations across Canada who have gone through this process and who would not want to see any other nation or any other religion have to go through what we went through for generations? What more can we do?

Dr. Gyal Lo: Thanks very much, again.

I came here to fight for the case of Tibet in China now. There are many Tibetans. There are my former students, colleagues and old friends. All of those communities that I visited... I have to raise the

alarm in the international community. My responsibility is to my people inside of Tibet.

Please stand up and support us to increase the pressure on China to at least stop or slow down what they are doing to our four- to six-year-old kids now.

• (1450)

Ms. Chemi Lhamo: One thing I would also really appreciate, as a young Tibetan Canadian who has been brought up in displaced areas all around the world, is meaningful connections with anyone who is listening. That's first nation, Métis and Inuit communities that come from that generation and intergenerational trauma.

We are currently going through it, and we need to find ways to find safe spaces and braver spaces to come together and heal, even though that is a long process. We need to continue to be in solidarity with each other to raise the alarm, as Dr. Gyal has said.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Does anyone online want to comment as well?

The Chair: Give very brief comments.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Yes.

We have so much to learn from the Tibetan side. I have found strength and guidance from listening to the stories from the survivors of the residential schools in Canada, because there is confusion.

If you send your kid to a school, are you choosing that school? When you've lived under the system of colonization and repression for so long, is it suddenly our fault that we're sending kids to these schools when there is really no choice?

In our Tibetan community, inside and outside of Tibet, we have a lot to learn. I would appreciate opportunities that Canada could facilitate—the Government of Canada, perhaps—for us to bring up our level of knowledge in our own community about the threat we face, because we are in it. It's very hard to see, on some level, where this will end up.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will continue to our next round.

Mr. Abouttaif, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Ziad Abouttaif: Thank you.

I have a quick question. I was going to mention the 17-point agreement and point number nine, which speaks about the education system. It's written on the wall what China intends, from point number nine of the 17-point agreement.

My question is on the role that Canada can play. In the October vote, we were 18 votes away. Can Canada work with the Five Eyes and with our allies to make sure that in the next round, we can get to that point so that, as an international community that cares about human rights, this situation achieves similar results as the Uighur situation that also exists in China?

Dr. Sophie Richardson: I can't encourage you strongly enough to pursue that strategy, to find all of the allies you possibly can. It was an unusual group that signed on in October, and I think more could be gained from having more diverse supporters. I think it takes a certain diplomatic initiative at the highest level, again, to match Xi Jinping's ambition and to push back against that.

It is doable, but I also think that democracies need to be deciding not just what to do with the Human Rights Council sessions in March, June and September of this year. They need to be thinking about what they should be doing five years from now and 10 years from now. They should be thinking now about getting other governments in Asia to run for the Human Rights Council so that China might not be re-elected. It came close to losing the last time it ran, and I think with some concerted diplomatic initiative, you could set that as a goal and achieve it.

Part of what the October vote showed was that the Chinese government is in fact within reach of international scrutiny at key human rights bodies, but it takes discipline, resources and ambition. I would project a decade out and work backwards on everything from colonial boarding schools in Tibet to the Uighurs to many other issues including Chinese human rights defenders and Hong Kong and transnational repression. There's room for all of this at the UN, and I think you would find that with Canadian leadership, you would have quite a few other governments coming along to support you.

• (1455)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: This is just a final thought: I think we would appreciate a long-term strategy. I know time is not with us, but time is also not with China. I think if we start putting in proper efforts, we can achieve some good results out of this and make sure we put the rights where the rights belong.

I know the time is short, but if you can brief us on a long-term strategy that can be adapted or utilized by any current or future Canadian government, that would be great. Thank you.

Dr. Sophie Richardson: I would support democracies running for Human Rights Council membership. I would leave no seat or committee uncontested. I would leave no review unattended. What else? I think there should be strong support given to independent civil society groups, including those based in Canada, to participate in reviews of the Chinese government on multiple different levels. Last but not least, I would love to see governments push for the establishment of a special rapporteur on China specifically, as we have seen in other countries in human rights crisis.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Aboultaif.

Now, given that both Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe and Ms. McPherson went over time, we're going to reduce this, unfortunately, to just one question each within a minute and a half.

Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, please proceed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're hearing more and more that China may move on Taiwan. Actually, it's no longer a question of if it's going to happen, it's a question of when.

If China were to move on Taiwan, what would that mean for the people of Tibet?

Ms. Tethong, could you tell me a little more about that?

[*English*]

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: I think that for every Tibetan, what seems impossible to others is, of course, totally clear and possible to us. The fall of Hong Kong was not something we thought was impossible, and now with Taiwan, yes, all Tibetans are concerned.

I also think we see in Taiwan what exists there: the people and the spirit. There's actually a lot that should be done to shore up Hong Kong support. This for Tibetans, I think, is key, because we didn't have it when we lost our nation. Maybe we should have worked harder to secure it, but it was a different time.

I just think the key here is self-determination and having the Canadian government and others support the self-determination of the people. It's clear that what the Taiwanese want, what Hong Kongers want and what Tibetans and Uighurs also want matters.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

If I may, I'm going to ask one last question, Mr. Chair.

What would be the direct impact on Tibetans if China were to move on Taiwan?

[*English*]

The Chair: Perhaps someone would like to comment on that very briefly.

Ms. Lhadon Tethong: Maybe Dr. Gyal Lo would.

Dr. Gyal Lo: I think it's very clear that they will formally make further harmful policies and then ultimately eradicate the Tibetan identity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Lo.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, if folks on the call would like to talk about that, I'm happy to cede my time to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

The Chair: Would anybody like to continue their thoughts on that specific question?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm going to take the floor again, because this is important to me.

We know that China will invade Taiwan. We know that Xi Jinping has the island in his sights. We don't know when it's going to happen, but we feel like it will happen soon. It will also surely affect cultural minorities in China, like the Uighurs and the Tibetans. That's my feeling, but I'd like to hear it directly from people like you, Mr. Lo, who are more in tune with the situation.

[*English*]

Dr. Gyal Lo: It is very clear from my understanding of the Chinese government what their thinking is. In order to stabilize the Communist Party's position, in order to lead China, they want to move toward it becoming another North Korea. The people were talking about this all the time when I was in China, in Tibet.

It's very clear that they're going to dramatically change their attitude. They will do the harmful policy as much as they can by pro-

moting their ideology about one nation—which means Han Chinese—one language and one country. They've already set up the agenda by saying that by 2035 China is going to be one nation, one culture, one country. Yes, it's very clear, I think.

• (1500)

The Chair: Thank you.

That was very gracious of you, Ms. McPherson.

We're now at three o'clock. I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here, and I am wishing you strength as you continue to raise the issue of Tibet and to educate people like us and civil society. We really are grateful for your being here today and taking the time, both by Zoom and in person.

I'll adjourn the meeting.

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