



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Special Committee on Canada- China Relations

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 028

PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT

Monday, June 7, 2021

Chair: The Honourable Geoff Regan



Special Committee on Canada-China Relations

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• (1835)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 28 of the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, September 23, 2020, the committee is meeting on its study of Canada-China relations.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on January 25, 2021, this meeting is in hybrid format.

I would like to welcome Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Thank you for being here this evening, Mr. Garneau.

[*English*]

I'd also like to welcome your officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, or, as we know it, Global Affairs Canada: Marta Morgan, deputy minister; Daniel Costello, assistant deputy minister, international security; and Weldon Epp, director general, North Asia and Oceania bureau.

Thanks to all of you for being here.

Minister Garneau, please proceed with your opening remarks. You have five minutes.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

It is a pleasure to be with you today, Mr. Chair.

China's increasing authoritarianism and coercive diplomacy are challenges for democracies around the world. All countries are reassessing and realigning their engagement with China, and Canada is no exception.

We are all trying to decide how we can reconcile our trade objectives, our security objectives and our human rights objectives. Given the circumstances, our approach to China is constantly evolving. It is firmly guided by our principles, values and interests, while acknowledging the complexity of our relationship.

China is rapidly becoming a global influence with which all countries must learn to coexist. That means that we must recognize situations in which it is necessary to cooperate with China, for ex-

ample on global problems like climate change. However, it also means that we are competing with China when it comes to trade and to promoting our values.

[*English*]

It also implies challenging China when human rights are violated or Canadian citizens and interests are jeopardized.

We must continue to work with our partners around the world to protect the rules-based international order and defend human rights and freedoms. Those are fundamental Canadian values that underpin our foreign policy.

Let me be clear. A path to any kind of long-term relationship with China implies the safe return of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor to Canada. Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor have been unlawfully detained for more than 900 days. Bringing them home is and must remain our top priority in our dealings with China, period. Both men received regular visits two weeks ago from consular officials, who remarked on their impressive strength and resilience. We continue to call for their release while pressing China to allow consular access to other Canadian citizens held in that country, namely Mr. Huseyin Celil, so that we can confirm his well-being. We also seek clemency for Robert Schellenberg and for all Canadians facing the death penalty.

Alongside international partners, we continue to call out China for its bad behaviour. We have called on China to put an end to the systematic campaign of repression against Uighurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in light of mounting evidence of forced labour, political re-education, torture and forced sterilization. We announced sanctions against four officials and one entity for their involvement.

We are also working with allies at the G7 Quad and Five Eyes to condemn China's growing militarization in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, where China claims vast areas, which fuels regional tensions.

China's economic might has emboldened its ambitions and interests beyond the Asia-Pacific region, where it has enjoyed enormous clout for centuries, to span the entire globe, including here in Canada. Growing competition with China and the pervasive use of digital technology forces us to work with other governments, businesses and universities to protect intellectual property and digital infrastructure and even to shield our democratic institutions from foreign interference and election meddling.

Hostile activities by state actors pose strategic long-term threats to Canada. They can undermine our nation's economic, industrial, military and technological advantages. Researchers and innovators, for example, are vulnerable to espionage and hacking.

Last September, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry launched the new portal called Safeguarding Your Research, which provides tools and advice to Canadians on how best to protect their intellectual property.

In March, the ministers of Public Safety and Innovation, Science and Industry announced the development of specific risk guidelines to integrate national security considerations into the evaluation and funding of research partnerships.

We are also working with other G7 countries to counter foreign interference, notably through the Canadian initiative called “rapid response mechanism”, which strengthens coordination across the G7 in identifying, preventing and responding to threats to G7 democracies through disinformation.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Unfortunately, we are currently seeing a resurgence in anti-Asian hate, since the beginning of the pandemic, in Canada and around the world.

Canadians of Chinese and Asian heritage are our neighbours, our colleagues, our friends and our family members. They should never feel that they are in danger or threatened because of their origin.

The Chair: Excuse me, Minister, but your five minutes are up. We need to start the first round of questions.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

I turn now for our first round to Mr. Chong for six minutes, please.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister, for appearing.

Recently Australia's ambassador to the United States said that the Biden administration is seeking closer research collaboration with its allies and was watching closely how allies like Canada managed China's interference with Canadian universities. He said that Washington will likely rule out research partnerships with universities and maybe even countries that disregard national security concerns.

The U.S. government provides about \$50 billion Canadian a year to the National Institutes of Health. A lot of that funding goes to Canadian researchers, compared to about \$3 billion from all of Canada's four granting councils.

Minister Champagne said in March that guidelines on research partnerships are forthcoming. When are they going to be released?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Our government is committed to supporting a research environment that is open and collaborative while also safeguarding our research, national security and economic interests.

Espionage and foreign interference activities by both human and cyber actors pose real threats to Canadian research integrity, intellectual property and business interests. Unlike the previous government, we take these threats seriously. That's why we recently announced that we will be taking additional steps to better integrate national security considerations into the evaluation of federally funded research partnerships. This announcement also builds on the ongoing work of the research security working group that was established in 2018 and brings together government, universities and national security partners.

• (1845)

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Minister. Do you have any idea on when those guidelines will be forthcoming?

Hon. Marc Garneau: We are developing those guidelines. I don't have a specific answer on me, but it's a very active file at the moment with Minister Champagne.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

President Biden signed an order that bans Americans from investing in a number of Chinese companies with ties to the defence or surveillance technology sectors. The ban applies to about 59 companies, including Huawei. Seeing that the Canadian and American economies are inextricably linked, is the government considering a similar ban?

Hon. Marc Garneau: I will simply say to your question that we have certainly taken note of the recent announcement concerning, I believe, 59 American potential investors or investors in China. It is something that we're looking at and taking note of, but no decision has been made.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

Minister, I have a question about Ambassador Barton. He was recently sent to Washington for secret talks for three weeks in April, rather than using our ambassador in Washington, Kirsten Hillman. This is somewhat puzzling. Some speculate that Ambassador Barton was carrying messages from the Chinese government in Beijing to the Biden administration. Is that true?

Hon. Marc Garneau: No, it isn't true. Let me clarify that Ambassador Hillman has been extremely engaged, along with Ambassador Barton, who did go to Washington after meeting with me and other officials in Ottawa before going to Washington. Both of them are working, as you know, on the issue of the two Michaels.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Minister.

On May 20, the European Parliament froze ratification of the European Union-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment because of China's sanctions on elected officials. Just several weeks ago, Australia cancelled two state-level belt and road initiatives because of China's threats. As you know, the Biden administration is leading a G7 initiative to create a new infrastructure financing fund to counter the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Will the government now reconsider its participation in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank?

Hon. Marc Garneau: At this time, we are not re-evaluating our involvement with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, but I will say that our policies with respect to China are continuously evolving.

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

I have a question on the Havana syndrome. Last year, the National Academy of Sciences concluded that directed energy weapons were the likely cause of the Havana syndrome. Canadian diplomats have reported suffering from the Havana syndrome and from unexplained health issues during postings not only to Cuba but also to the People's Republic of China. How many GAC employees have been affected by the Havana syndrome, and are you working with the U.S. State Department and Health Canada on this investigation?

Hon. Marc Garneau: With respect to the Havana syndrome, we are currently investigating its possible cause. I don't have specific numbers for you. I believe that's probably private information, but yes, some have complained that they have been affected by it. We are currently trying to understand the possible causes of this syndrome.

Hon. Michael Chong: Are you willing to consider ordering an investigation that culminates in a report, as the U.S. Department of State has recently done?

Hon. Marc Garneau: At this point, we're just trying to figure out what caused it and we haven't made any specific decisions beyond that.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

I have a question regarding China's foreign interference here in Canada. Since the government has come to office in 2015, has the government declared any Chinese diplomats accredited here persona non grata or requested their removal?

Hon. Marc Garneau: I will turn to my officials and the deputy minister on that. I don't have an answer to that question.

Hon. Michael Chong: Perhaps while—

Hon. Marc Garneau: I would turn to Deputy Minister Morgan or Mr. Epp.

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay. While she's looking that up, maybe I can ask you one more question.

I hope you now can answer the same question I asked a week ago about Mr. Schellenberg and Mr. Celil in the committee of the whole. What was the most recent communication between the government and Mr. Schellenberg and Mr. Celil, and what was the form of that communication?

Hon. Marc Garneau: The last consular visit to Mr. Schellenberg took place on March 17, and officials are trying to secure another visit in the next few weeks.

With respect to Mr. Celil, as you know, China does not recognize his Canadian citizenship. It has not been possible for us yet to have a consular visit, although we keep trying.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

We'll go now to Ms. Yip for six minutes, please.

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Minister, welcome to the committee. Thank you for coming to answer our questions today.

Ms. Morgan, would you like to finish answering the question that Mr. Chong asked?

• (1850)

Ms. Marta Morgan (Deputy Minister, Foreign Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Yes. Thank you very much.

I would just like to say that Global Affairs Canada recognizes that Canada can be the target of foreign interference activities, including by the People's Republic of China. We have a number of methods that we can use to address this, starting with raising these issues directly with the ambassador or with the consuls general here in Canada. We work very closely with our security partners whenever we have issues that need to be addressed like that.

Ms. Jean Yip: Thank you.

Minister, it's been almost a year since the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China passed the national security law for Hong Kong. This legislation was enacted in a secretive process, without the participation of Hong Kong's legislature, judiciary or people, and in violation of international obligations.

Can you outline what Canada has said publicly and what concrete actions Canada has taken so far since the passage of this law?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Thank you very much for the question.

We of course have been very preoccupied with the national security law being imposed in Hong Kong. Alongside our international partners, we've consistently voiced concern about Beijing's imposition of this law, as well as about other assaults on Hong Kong's high degree of freedoms under the Sino-British Joint Declaration. This decision further narrows Hong Kong's autonomy and the space for freedom of expression and public participation in Hong Kong's governance, and we have made this very, very clear.

Of course, we have also taken some steps with respect to, for example, the extradition treaty that we have with China and with Hong Kong. We have modified our travel advisories. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has also made it an easier process for those who may wish to leave Hong Kong to come to Canada.

Ms. Jean Yip: Many legislators and peaceful protesters have been arrested. How can Canada help? Many advocates have said that we are not going far enough. What can be done?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Canada has vigorously spoken up with respect to the fact that there has been this process of having fewer and fewer citizens of Hong Kong eligible to become legislators. It is now down to less than a quarter, and of course they all must demonstrate that they are "patriotic to China".

We've made it very clear in our communications with the Chinese government that these incursions on democracy, moving away from the one-country, two-systems rule and the basic law, are retrograde steps that are not acceptable and are having a major impact not only on the people of Hong Kong but on our relations with China with respect to human rights.

Ms. Jean Yip: Can you reiterate Canada's commitment to the promotion and protection of freedom of expression around the world?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Canada feels extremely strongly about freedom of expression. It is part of the basic values that are enshrined in our Charter of Rights. We will always speak up with respect to human rights.

As we know, in the case of China, there are numerous examples, whether we're talking about the Uighurs, about Tibetans, or about Hong Kong citizens, not to mention the detention that has been imposed on tow of our citizens, who were arbitrarily detained. These violations of human rights are issues that we bring up on a regular basis with the Chinese government.

Ms. Jean Yip: Thank you for your update on Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig.

It was reported this morning in the news that Ambassador Barton had some discussions with the U.S. administration while he was in Canada. What can you tell us about this discussion pertaining to Madam Meng and the situation of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Yes, Ambassador Barton did go to the United States. It was planned, because he's very knowledgeable about the situation with respect to Madam Meng Wanzhou as well as the situation in which the two Michaels find themselves. He is in regular contact with Huawei, both in China and in Canada, and also in the United States, because of the presence of legal representa-

tives of Huawei in the U.S. He is uniquely suited, along with Ambassador Kirsten Hillman, who is our ambassador to the United States, to work on this particular file.

I can't go into details, but I can tell you that both are very actively working on the file with respect to the two Michaels.

• (1855)

Ms. Jean Yip: I only have a short time.

We all know that the China of 2021 isn't the same as the China of 2016. Canada's approach needs to evolve with an evolving China. What would Canada's approach be with China?

Hon. Marc Garneau: You've said it very well. It's an evolving approach to China, because China has changed quite dramatically. I always use the example of the four C's. We have to coexist with them—

The Chair: Minister, I'm sorry. We'll have to wait for the other three C's, because Ms. Yip is out of time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being with us today, Minister. We are pleased to have the opportunity to talk with you on Monday evening every week.

How did you react on April 22 when your colleague, New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta, said it was not necessary on every issue to invoke Five Eyes to create a coalition of support around particular issues in the field of human rights?

Hon. Marc Garneau: I have no comments to make concerning what she said and what you have reported. I will simply tell you that our relationship with New Zealand is very close. It is a member country of the Five Eyes alliance, obviously, and they are also colleagues in our trading relationships under the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership or CPTPP. I have regular conversations with the New Zealand Foreign Minister.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I certainly understand that, Minister. You have said things that are obvious on which we are all in agreement. However, the question that concerns me—I do not know whether it concerns you as well—relates to the alliances we are trying to create to stand up to the superpower that the People's Republic of China has become, particularly in respect of arbitrary detentions.

The New Zealand minister said that it is not necessary on every issue to invoke Five Eyes to create a coalition of support around particular issues in the field of human rights.

Does that not throw cold water on the nations that are trying precisely to create coalitions to ensure respect for human rights, particularly when it comes to foreign nationals in the People's Republic of China?

Hon. Marc Garneau: I would say no, for two reasons.

First, it is very obvious that New Zealand is our ally when it comes to human rights. It has made that very clear by supporting the declaration on arbitrary detention.

The other reason is that we are involved in a number of multilateral forums, of which the G7 is one, that very strongly raised the question of human rights in China at the recent foreign ministers' meeting. We spoke with one voice. It is therefore not just the Five Eyes. It may be the G7 or other multilateral forums in which various countries speak out on China and human rights.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: What I understand from your reply, Minister, is that regardless of the fact that the minister says it is not necessary to create coalitions around human rights, or, at least, to use the Five Eyes to do it, you are not at all concerned by this.

I note that in recent years, the number of applications for export permits that were denied has gone from ten per year in 2019 to 58 per year in 2020. We might perhaps have hoped that the export permit granted to Turkey for equipment we sold it would appear sooner on that list of permits that were denied. What we mainly see is that among the 58 export permits denied in 2020, for applications to export dual-use items, some relate to products to be shipped to the People's Republic of China.

How do you explain this over-representation of the People's Republic of China in the list of permits denied for applications to export dual-use items?

- (1900)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Thank you for the question.

Approving an export permit is an extremely important decision that must be made with great care and according to very specific criteria.

I have said on a number of occasions that I will not hesitate to block export permits if we believe, for one reason or another, that it is not possible to take the risk of the equipment being assigned to a use that is not in compliance with the terms of the export permit. In the recent case involving Turkey, in fact, you have noted my decision to block and cancel 29 permits to which you alluded.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: That is very laudable, Minister.

Last Monday night, however, we discussed the issue of the Pratt & Whitney Canada aircraft engines that are awaiting a permit for export to the People's Republic of China.

In light of your previous answer, am I to understand that the reason why this export permit has not been granted for several years, thus jeopardizing the jobs at the Longueuil plant, in particular, is because you have reservations or fears about the potential use of those aircraft engines by the government of the People's Republic of China?

Hon. Marc Garneau: There are several reasons why we take great care in deciding whether an export permit can be granted.

I cannot give you all the details, since these are not matters that we discuss publicly. However, if an export permit has not yet been granted, it is because we are examining it carefully before making a

decision. It may be approved in some cases and blocked in other cases.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Is that true, even after two years?

Hon. Marc Garneau: I know a bit about Pratt & Whitney engines and I have to say that it is a very complex technology that has to be examined carefully.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

[English]

We'll now go to Mr. Harris, for six minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Chair. Thank you for joining us tonight, Minister Garneau. We're happy to have you here.

This committee presented a report to the House of Commons on February 25, 2021, recommending that the Government of Canada convey to the ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Canada that any interference with the rights and freedoms of people in Canada was unacceptable, will not be tolerated, and will result in serious consequences for those responsible.

Was that message communicated to the ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Canada, and if so, what was the response of the ambassador?

Hon. Marc Garneau: I will respond in general, and then I will refer to Deputy Minister Morgan.

We are very concerned about interference. As an advanced economy and an open and free democracy, Canada continues to be targeted by foreign states such as the People's Republic of China. This is not new, but it remains entirely unacceptable. Chinese government representatives in Canada, like all foreign government representatives, have a duty under international law to respect our laws and regulations.

I'll turn to the deputy minister regarding your specific question.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'd rather hear it from you, sir, while we have you. I can ask her that afterwards.

Alliance Canada Hong Kong and other witnesses have come before our committee in the past year telling us they've been interfered with. Human rights defenders who are protesting, Tibetan nationals who are running for student office and others have been threatened by agents of the People's Republic of China or parent agents.

What is the government doing in response in order to protect these defenders of human rights or citizens going about their business?

Hon. Marc Garneau: As I began to answer in the previous question, we do not hesitate to speak up in this case if we're talking about China, and to let China know through the embassy that we are concerned about interference with Canadian citizens in Canada and that this is totally unacceptable. We vigorously take action if we are hearing, or find out, about interference with Canadian citizens.

Mr. Jack Harris: The suggestion by Alliance Canada Hong Kong to this committee—and we've heard it from others as well—was that Canada should require any agents of foreign governments operating in Canada, including China, which we understand has a number of them, to be registered.

Is Canada considering putting in place a foreign agent registry to at least require people to identify themselves?

• (1905)

Hon. Marc Garneau: We're always looking to learn from the experiences of our international partners to see what may be advisable or possible in Canada. We take a whole-of-government approach to combatting foreign interference. The Government of Canada continues—

Mr. Jack Harris: Can you be specific about the question asked, sir?

Hon. Marc Garneau: We are continuing to look for new and innovative ways to enhance the measures in place to address foreign interference.

Mr. Jack Harris: Alliance Canada Hong Kong also complained that there appears to be a foreign takeover of Chinese-language newspapers in Canada by agents of China or companies that are related to the Chinese government. A suggestion was made that independent Chinese-language publications in Canada don't have the support they need. Would the Government of Canada consider looking at ensuring that there are independent voices able to communicate with the Chinese-speaking community in Canada, free from interference from the Chinese government?

Hon. Marc Garneau: We welcome hearing from Canadians on examples of possible interference, and we're always evaluating ways in which we can combat that to make sure that foreign countries cannot, with their agents, interfere with Canadians.

Mr. Jack Harris: On another topic—quickly, as it seems I have a minute and a half left—since GAC has a responsibility and one of their roles is to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or the export of dual-use technologies, according to the 2020 report on military goods from Canada, there has been a significant increase in the rejection of exports of dual-use goods to the People's Republic of China.

Why has that increased in the last number of years, from very few three or four years ago to a substantial number now? In 2020, 40 applications were refused. What kinds of items were refused export to China on the basis of this concern?

Hon. Marc Garneau: As I said to our colleague from the Bloc, we look at each export permit. I have to sign it, so I am responsible for it and for making sure that there will not be a misuse of anything we may export. A number of other factors are also looked at. Those criteria are there to make sure that if we agree to an export permit, we feel comfortable that the equipment—

Mr. Jack Harris: I understand the rules, sir—

Hon. Marc Garneau: —will be used for what it is intended to be used for within the rules.

Mr. Jack Harris: —but can you give us an example of the kinds of things that have been rejected by Canada for export to China?

Hon. Marc Garneau: No, I cannot give you an example, but I think you are quite right in talking about the items—I think there were 43—that were turned down for export to China.

Mr. Jack Harris: My time is up, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Harris.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We will now begin the second round of questions.

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister.

I would first like to say that I welcomed your opening remarks. I liked what you said, even if it sometimes seemed not to correspond entirely to the response of the Prime Minister or the government. In any event, it is a good start, because what you said is what we are actually seeing at present when it comes to China.

Obviously, the Chinese people, and Asian people in general, are not who we are talking about, since our comments are always directed at the regime.

On that point, the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Sajjan, came to see us a few weeks ago, and there was a comprehension problem regarding the geopolitical situation. I would therefore like to come back to the questions about the security and defence of Canada in geographic terms.

At present, China considers itself to be a near-Arctic region. Officially, is China a territory that is considered to be part of the Arctic region as a whole?

Hon. Marc Garneau: The quick answer is no, because China is not one of the eight countries that belong to the Arctic Council. However, like a lot of other countries, China wants to eventually be able to navigate in the polar region if conditions permit.

That is a reality we have to deal with, of course.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Your answer relates exactly to my next question.

The polar silk road was announced by Beijing in 2018. I imagine that our American colleagues must have a lot of concerns about that.

How is Canada positioning itself regarding that probable route?

• (1910)

Hon. Marc Garneau: We are adopting the same approach with all countries that want to navigate in the Canadian Arctic. If they are to do so, they must respect our sovereignty and comply with the environmental requirements we will impose on all countries.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Quite a few years ago, in 2008, Mr. Harper wanted to really position the border, in geostrategic terms, for Canada.

Are we able to clearly establish the borders of Canada in the Arctic at present?

Hon. Marc Garneau: That is a question that is currently being examined by an international tribunal. A number of countries are affected, including the United States, Denmark, Russia and Canada. In some cases, the territories that are claimed overlap.

The decision is going to have to be made by an international tribunal. It will not be made tomorrow; it will be made several years from now.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you.

You are familiar with the case of the Chinese researchers at a laboratory in Winnipeg who passed information to the Chinese regime. I would like to know where discussions stand with our American and foreign partners regarding the laboratory in Wuhan.

Does Canada still have relations with the laboratory in Wuhan, and if so, why?

Otherwise, where do discussions with the partners stand?

Hon. Marc Garneau: I cannot give you those details, but, as I have already said several times, we are in favour of a thorough examination of the origin of this virus and we support the proposal by President Biden. If we can help in some way, we will do so. This is important for scientific reasons. We have to understand where this virus came from, because it has devastated the planet and caused over three million deaths. I do not need to say more about that; you understand it. However, for scientific reasons, it is important to get to the bottom of things.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: My question was actually whether, at present, the laboratory in Winnipeg is still in contact with the laboratory in Wuhan, or everything has stopped since the incidents we are familiar with.

Are the two laboratories still in contact?

If so, how do our American partners see that?

Hon. Marc Garneau: That is a question I do not have an answer to, but I think that at this time there are no activities between the laboratory in Winnipeg and the one in China. However, Ms. Hajdu could confirm that.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Perfect.

We often talk about the two Michaels, but do you know how many Canadians are currently imprisoned in China?

Hon. Marc Garneau: There are more than two. I mentioned Mr. Schellenberg and Mr. Celil today. There are others as well. I am going to turn to my...

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Excuse me, but I do not have a lot of time left, Minister. I can tell you that 118 Canadians are being held prisoner in China at present.

Hon. Marc Garneau: I know there are others.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Your colleague Ms. Ng answered a written question, and there are 118 Canadians imprisoned in China.

We are familiar with the problems that the incarceration of the two Michaels is causing us, but, since we have 116 other Canadians imprisoned in China, how can we foresee an end to the negotiations concerning Huawei, for example?

Hon. Marc Garneau: The decision relating to 5G technology—I assume that is in fact what you are talking about—is a matter we are currently considering. The most important thing for us is to have access to 5G technology, which is going to open all sorts of doors. However, we want to do this with the knowledge that we will be protecting our telecommunication systems.

That is what we are currently looking at. Whether it is one company or another, we have to be absolutely certain that we will not be exposing ourselves to...

The Chair: Thank you very much. Forgive me for interrupting you.

Mr. Dubourg, you now have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am very pleased to see you this afternoon at the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations, Minister. I would also like to welcome the officials who are with you and thank them for their services.

Earlier, my colleague Ms. Yip asked you some questions. I would like to come back to two of them in particular.

First, Ms. Yip said that the China of 2016 was not the China of 2021, and that Canada's approach needed to evolve with an evolving China.

Can you tell us more about the approach that Canada has adopted in dealing with China?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Thank you very much for the question. I had started to answer, but I did not have enough time.

Yes, China is evolving and has changed since 2016. We have to change the approach we take to China. We have to take what I call the four "Cs" approach.

We have to coexist with China and sometimes cooperate with it, for example when it comes to climate change, which affects us all worldwide. I will take this opportunity to give you an example. Recently, we renegotiated an agreement with China regarding commercial flights between our two countries. That is an area in which we have to cooperate.

There is also the competition aspect. Obviously, we want to sell our products on the international markets, as does China.

On the other hand, we sometimes have to criticize China. That is absolutely essential, and we do it. We have done it on the subject of the treatment of the Uighurs, on what is happening in Hong Kong, and on the arbitrary detention of the two Michaels.

We have also criticized China's aggressive position in the South China Sea and toward Taiwan. We do not hesitate to speak frankly to China when it is necessary.

I would like to mention another important point. Today, we work multilaterally instead of speaking directly with China. We do this on a regular basis. We often take unanimous positions within the Five Eyes, the G7 and other multilateral forums. This makes the positions we take more effective.

• (1915)

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you, Minister.

I really like the analogy you use for the four Cs concerning China, whose name begins with a C. You are taking action on all fronts, and that's good.

The other question you were asked is about the two Michaels. They have been over there for 900 days. That's nearly three years.

Are you still in touch with the parents of the two Michaels? Do you continue to provide them with consular services? We are really worried, as this arbitrary detention has been extremely long.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Thank you for asking this question, which is not asked often.

The answer is yes. I am in regular contact with their families. In Michael Spavor's case, I am in contact with his father, Stan, his brother, Paul, and his two sisters. I am in contact with all four of them. The same goes for Michael Kovrig.

I would say that this is probably my most difficult task. I report to them on the situation. We have consular access, and the families really want to know how things are going. They actually mostly want to know whether progress has been made in terms of our efforts to get them released.

Those conversations can be difficult because, as you know, the two Michaels have been in prison for more than 900 days. Maintaining this contact is absolutely essential. They are suffering a great deal. I would also say that many Canadians are suffering, as we have lost two citizens who are very dear to us.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you.

As I don't have much time left, I will ask you a question about your relationship with the United States. You used to be an astronaut, and so you have privileged contacts with them.

What kind of a relationship would you say you have with the U.S. Secretary of State Mr. Blinken and the Biden administration?

Hon. Marc Garneau: I would say that relationship is excellent. Mr. Blinken and I hit it off. He speaks French very well, as he went to high school in Paris in his youth. So we often speak in French, and we have a very good relationship.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Dubourg.

Mr. Bergeron, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I fully appreciate what you said about how difficult it is to talk to the two Michaels' families. As a former Quebec minister of public security, I had to talk to parents and spouses of police officers who died in service a few times. I must say that those are very difficult moments, but they are particularly rewarding.

As my colleague Mr. Paul-Hus said a few minutes ago, we learned in *The Globe and Mail* that Global Affairs Canada reportedly issued an opinion that went against the Department of National Defence's decision to cancel joint exercises planned between China's People's Liberation Army and the Canadian Armed Forces on a base in Ontario. We heard the point of view of the minister and his officials when they appeared.

Why did you issue a contrary opinion when it was logical to cancel those exercises?

• (1920)

Hon. Marc Garneau: We have always been clear: we do not train with the Chinese army.

The relationship between Canada and China intensified after the Honourable Rob Nicholson, Conservative Minister of National Defence, signed the cooperation plan initiative in 2013. That is how all this began.

The last time the Canadian Armed Forces participated in bilateral military training exercises with China was in 2018. No bilateral military training with China has been carried out or planned since then, and no training is planned for the future.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I would like you to comment on the contrary opinion Global Affairs Canada reportedly issued concerning the Department of National Defence's decision to cancel those exercises.

Hon. Marc Garneau: I am not familiar with the details of that contrary opinion. Perhaps I could turn to my colleague, but you are telling me something new.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Am I really telling you something new?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Yes you are, Mr. Bergeron.

Deputy Minister Morgan, can you shed some light on this issue?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Yes, I can do that.

The Chair: Unfortunately we don't have time, as the 10 and a half minutes are up.

Hon. Marc Garneau: I understood 10 and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: We won't get an answer to that question.

The Chair: I may be to blame. I did not express myself well.

[English]

Now we will go to Mr. Harris for two minutes and 30 seconds, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: That was clear. I thought it was 10 minutes as well, Mr. Chair, but I'll have to settle for two and a half.

Mr. Garneau, the security issue comes to light every now and then. Before our committee, we've heard some security concerns about equipment being used or contracted by the Government of Canada. Nuctech, for example, has a standing offer for X-ray equipment in our embassies. In Beijing, our immigration department contracted a company being operated by the Beijing police to look after collecting data for immigration visas. You mentioned the 43 export permits being denied to China these last number of years. Is it fair to say that in the past we took less seriously these issues of security with respect to China? Is that something that the government is prepared to admit, or is everything going according to plan all the way down the line?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Well, in a general way, as I've said, our policies with respect to China are evolving. I can't speak in detail about specific things that happened prior to my arrival.

I will say, on the Nuctech situation, that we have said very clearly that we have not purchased any equipment from Nuctech and we will not use the Nuctech standing offer. However, we did learn from that. We did learn that we need to identify opportunities for improvement with respect to future procurement of security equipment. We've been public about that. We're taking action to implement improvements to the procurement process that were recommended in the review related to that.

With regard to the visa application centre, we're acutely aware of the risks of operating in any foreign environment. We have a rigorous procurement process, led by PSPC, for our contracts abroad. The role of the visa application centre in the immigration system is limited to logistical and administrative support. IRCC officials closely monitor the activities of the visa application centres to ensure that strict privacy standards, as detailed in the contract, are met. We have a lot of proof to show that we monitor this very carefully, so—

• (1925)

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Marc Garneau: —we are not concerned about VFS Global in China.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Harris.

We have a few minutes left. I guess we have time for four minutes for Mr. Williamson and four for Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Williamson, you have four minutes.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you.

It's good to see you, Minister Garneau.

Mr. Garneau, the House of Commons was notified by the law clerk that the minority Liberal government has refused to comply

with an order of the House asking that all uncensored records on the firing of the two scientists from Winnipeg's National Microbiology Laboratory be provided to the Speaker. Minister, I thought you were a democrat. This response from your government is surprising: You're going to ignore an order from Parliament to produce these documents. Why is that?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Thank you, Mr. Williamson.

Yes, I'm a proud democrat, but you will also understand that we have a responsibility as a government to ensure we don't jeopardize certain information that touches on privacy and commercial privacy and may also have security implications. That is why Minister Hajdu offered to send all of the unredacted information to the NSICOP, which is the ideal committee to examine it in detail and includes members from your party.

Mr. John Williamson: Do you think, then, that parliamentarians are incapable of safeguarding those concerns you raised, that the measures put in place whereby House officials review them to ensure they're not released are inadequate, that the House is not up to the job?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Williamson, you'll recall—because you and I were there, under the Harper government—when we were seeking all sorts of information about things that had happened in Afghanistan. We made similar arguments. It's probably very natural to make those arguments, but in the end, because of security requirements, it was not possible to share unredacted information on those matters with the committee.

Mr. John Williamson: That's very true. In fact, Speaker Miliken urged parliamentarians to be cautious. The order that was passed in the House last week did just that. It didn't call for those documents to be released immediately. Rather, they were to be sent for review, first by the law clerk and then by others who would review them to ensure the issues they dealt with—criminal probes, privacy and national security—weren't compromised, so you're wrong on that. The motion addressed the concerns. This is an example of the government not complying with the democratic will of the House of Commons.

Hon. Marc Garneau: In fact, you just described what normally happens before documents make it to a committee. They are examined by government officials—not by politicians—who make decisions about which information has to be redacted. That's the normal process.

Mr. John Williamson: You see no difference, then, between Parliament and the Government of Canada reviewing them. To you, it's just one big entity and it does not matter that accountability safeguards are in place and that parliamentarians are in a position to review these documents.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Well, that's precisely why the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians was created. I think it is a rather elegant solution.

Mr. John Williamson: It serves the government's, not Parliament's, interest, because it is—

Hon. Marc Garneau: No, it's all of Parliament.

Mr. John Williamson:—in fact reporting to a committee that reports not to Parliament but to the Prime Minister. These members can be removed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister can change the report. It is not arm's length; it is actually an instrument of the Prime Minister, not of Parliament.

Hon. Marc Garneau: You know, it is different from the standing committees, but because of security implications, it is also important to find an acceptable way to do it. I think that the NSICOP is the right way to do it.

Mr. John Williamson: Then the Liberal members on this committee who voted for the process in the House were wrong to have voted that way.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Williamson. Thank you very much. We'll go on now to Mr. Oliphant for four minutes please.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you again, Minister, deputy and officials for being with us.

On that last topic, it might be important to remind the committee that it is established so that the government, whether majority or minority, always has a minority on that committee. Thus, the Liberal government will have only five out of 11 possible members on the committee. This is something we fought for when the Harper government refused any parliamentary oversight on any security issues.

That's just Rob needing to get in there with that lived experience.

Minister, you have said that the China of today is different from five years ago. It is. One thing that has been required of you is to work multilaterally and to work with like-minded and sometimes even unlike-minded countries to find a way to deal with China. When it came to Hong Kong, our government issued many statements with the EU, the U.S., the U.K. and others. Recently you were at the G7 meeting of finance and foreign ministers, and a statement on the Uighurs and the horrendous situation in Xinjiang came out. You are also working on arbitrary detention. I'm kind of giving you a bit of a smorgasbord. Those are just examples of the leadership roles and the collegial roles you are taking on with respect to arbitrary detention.

I would like your thoughts on this way of working.

● (1930)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Thank you very much for the question and for the precision on the NSICOP composition as well.

We believe that if we are to transmit a message to China, that message, broadly speaking, is that we all operate on this planet according to international rules-based law and that it is not acceptable to practice coercive diplomacy between countries. Fortunately, our like-minded partners, such as members of the G7 and in particular our closest ally, the United States, feel the same way.

It is certainly not acceptable to arbitrarily detain innocent civilians from another country because you have a difference of opinion on a particular issue with that country. Sure, we can have differences of opinion with China, but you don't resolve those by imprisoning citizens from the other country. China is not the only country that is guilty of that, but it is an example.

We believe that if we act together multilaterally, we send a stronger message. That's essentially it. There was a very big section in the communiqué from the foreign ministers of the G7 when we met in London. You will probably see a similar important section when the leaders meet in Cornwall next week.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Do you know how many countries have signed on to this declaration that Canada has led the way on?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Yes. We're at 63 now. It was 58 when I made the announcement in February.

Of course, every time I speak to another country, I bring up the importance of it, because it could happen to them. We're building that. We are in fact moving towards the next stage with respect to the arbitrary detention declaration.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I've often thought that it's a two-way message. It's to countries that might perpetrate arbitrary detention. It's also a statement to our own citizens to say that we will absolutely have their back, as you have for the citizens arbitrarily detained.

The situation in Hong Kong obviously takes a whole-of-government approach as we're looking at it. This is an issue that I think every member of this committee, no matter what party they're from, is concerned about—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant. I regret that we won't have time for the answer to the question you were about to ask. We'll have to conclude with that.

Minister, thank you very much for joining us this evening. I'm glad, first of all, that the power in your phone and your notebook computer held out until your electricity came back on. It's good to see that happen.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the power came on and I'm even feeling some cooler air.

If I may say so, you run a very tight ship. You must be a Nova Scotian, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: That's a good comment. You can come back and see us again someday.

Thank you, Minister Garneau.

We will go on now to the second hour. We have the officials.

We have Mr. Genuis for six minutes, please.

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

I would like to use this time now to move the motion that I had provided notice of. That motion has been distributed to all committee members. The motion is the following:

That, in relation to the documents ordered by the Committee, on Monday, March 31, 2021, and Monday, May 10, 2021, to be produced by the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Committee publish on its website all the documents received from the Agency in their current redacted form, while underlining its insistence that the Public Health Agency fully comply with the orders for the production of unredacted documents.

Mr. Chair, this motion reflects the fact that, unfortunately, we have not received the unredacted documents. However, we have been given redacted documents. We've been asked by journalists to share those documents. There's a public interest in this information being made public. I think we have an obligation to do that.

We've received these documents. We've had plenty of time to review them. I think members will agree with me that there's nothing in these documents that can't be made public. The Public Health Agency of Canada—inappropriately, in my view, but it was still done—redacted information that they didn't want made public.

Given that these redactions shouldn't have taken place but did, we have no reason at this point not to make the redacted versions of the documents public. I think we have an obligation to do that.

I put forward this motion. I hope it can be dealt with quickly and that we can return to questions. I wanted to make sure that we got this done; hence, I moved the motion.

Thank you.

• (1935)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

I have to open the floor and see if there's any debate. I'll look for hands.

Go ahead, Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

I'm not opposed to the motion, but I also want to walk through it and think about it a bit with the committee and get the wisdom from members of the committee to understand what the value is of doing this in terms of a public good.

I have supported this kind of motion at other committees, but I wonder what the value is and why we should entertain this motion at this point when we still have a set of activities going on. We have a motion that has been passed by our committee with respect to the submission of documents to our committee. That motion then got somewhat doubled up and superseded by an opposition motion in the House, which was confusing for me as well, because it seemed that we didn't allow our committee work to continue while the House had another order at the request of the Conservatives. Now we're getting something that is again leapfrogging over a process that I don't think is finished yet.

I am looking for wisdom from members of the committee to find out how it is that we are adding to the public dialogue and discourse on this topic, what it is that we want to accomplish, and how it is perhaps going to be, if not necessarily in conflict with, but out of order with the number of steps that the House has asked to take place. I don't think we've resolved either the committee motions from May—when we made two motions that dovetailed, one into the other—or the House motion, and now we have this motion.

As I said, I'm not on principle opposed to this motion, but I also want to make sure that we're doing things in an order that is discernible in terms of our motivations.

I found it interesting when I read an interview with former member of Parliament Derek Lee, who has this as his fascination and his interest. He has written a book on the issues of parliamentary privilege. He talked very guardedly in that interview about wanting to make sure that all the things we do as a committee are for the work of the committee and the public good and are not simply motivated by partisan political activity.

I just want to dig into this a bit. I'm a little disappointed that it's happening when we have witnesses, who are taking time from their schedule to be with us this evening—and on my birthday, even, I would say.

The Chair: Oh. Well, happy birthday.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I like to respect witnesses and their time. These are public servants who are working for us and Canadians every day. However, I also think that we have some digging in to do on this particular motion, so I would like to hear from colleagues about it before we move on it too quickly.

The Chair: Happy birthday, Mr. Oliphant, and thank you.

Mr. Harris is next.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

I'm happy to join in wishing Mr. Oliphant a happy birthday. I'm sure he would probably be celebrating it some other way than joining us this evening.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Harris, let me interrupt for a moment. I can't think of a better group of people to be spending this birthday with, virtually.

Mr. Jack Harris: Well, I'm glad to hear that.

I have some sympathy for what Mr. Oliphant is saying, in that we are in the process of undertaking a study on what happened through PHAC at the lab in Winnipeg and we need these documents and this information to be able to do our work. I wanted to congratulate the enthusiasm of Mr. Genuis and others on the committee in pursuing that information. We all joined in that pursuit and in the motion before the House.

I'm a little bit concerned that it would be difficult for the public to follow what we're doing if we're calling for these papers, as in the title of Derek Lee's book, and we're not getting them. Then I guess the pursuit is to follow through on that in the House of Commons.

I wasn't there—I was busy at another committee doing a report—but I gather the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel has actually written to them since the question was raised by you, Mr. Genuis, in the House this afternoon, saying that we did not get the unredacted papers, and there's now a motion of privilege before the House. All of this seems to be perhaps piling on one procedure after another.

As to the release of these documents in a redacted form while we're asking for the unredacted ones, I'm wondering whether there is a value in that right now. Will it stop us from pursuing our work, or is it just giving other people an opportunity to comment on them while we're trying to pursue the other documents?

I'd like a little clarification on that, because I think the narrative to the public may just be confusion about various parliamentary procedures going on, as opposed to the substance of what is being sought by the committee with respect to these documents and papers. I wonder if you could explain that a little better.

● (1940)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Oh, I thought I had Mr. Lightbound, but now I have Mr. Genuis instead.

We have Mr. Genuis, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Very briefly, there are two separate issues. One issue is the continuing expectation that unredacted documents will be provided. That's one.

The other issue is that we already have some documents and we are operating in a democracy that is open by default. There's nothing secret in these documents. Let's make those public. While this process is going on over here with the unredacted documents, let's make the redacted documents public, because the public are interested. We've had journalists contact this committee. The public have a right to know. There's no reason to keep them secret.

Recognizing that there are two processes going on, let's just make public the documents we can make public. That's all this does.

The Chair: Mr. Lightbound is next.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Just like Mr. Harris and Mr. Oliphant, I am relatively well disposed toward this motion, but the elements raised by Mr. Harris, among others, are worthy of consideration and should be discussed in more depth in committee.

Could we talk about this after the witnesses leave, when we discuss committee business? This is my humble and respectful suggestion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lightbound.

No committee members seem to want talk about it right now. I cannot decide when we could discuss such a topic. If no one wants to debate it, I will ask the clerk to go ahead with the vote.

[*English*]

Oh, we have Mr. Harris, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'm certainly prepared to support this motion. The explanation makes sense. The only part that didn't make sense was the assertion of openness by default coming from someone who was active in the Harper government. I don't think we saw very much of that during the years that I was here when Mr. Harper was prime minister. Be that as it may, perhaps this is a new era of conservatism that we haven't experienced before.

Your explanation is a simple one. If we have these documents and they are redacted to the satisfaction of PHAC and don't contain anything that they wouldn't give to someone asking for an ATIP request, such as has happened in other committees, then making them public is not going to do any harm.

Mr. Oliphant was concerned that we might be causing confusion with three or four different things going on at once.

● (1945)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

I'm not seeing anyone else wishing to debate—

Monsieur Dubourg, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Mr. Chair, I would like to get a clarification. Could my colleague Joël Lightbound's proposal be taken into consideration?

Given the time, he is right to say that it would be good to be able to discuss or debate the topic, instead of going to a vote right away. It would be worthwhile to take his proposal into account. I am wondering whether my colleagues agree with me. That way, we could have more time to discuss it.

The Chair: As chair of the committee, I do not get to decide. The committee does. Members always have the opportunity to propose motions, but the committee members don't seem to want to debate the issue right now. Since that is the case, I must ask the clerk to proceed with the vote.

[*English*]

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now, to my understanding—Mr. Genuis may be aware of this—when a member uses their time to propose a motion and of course then speaks to their motion, they unfortunately give up the rest of their time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Outrageous.

The Chair: Well, I see that you're smiling. I suspect that you might have been aware of this.

I'll go on to Ms. Zann for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The minister stated earlier that our bilateral relationship with China is complex and multi-dimensional. In recent years, this relationship obviously has presented [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and has continued to evolve. We also know that many of our international partners are facing similar challenges. It has been stated many times that Canada believes it's essential to work with our closest allies to have a united approach when it comes to China.

Could the officials please explain to this committee how we are actually collaborating with like-minded partners on this crucial issue?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Our approach to China is evolving to meet the challenges of threats to our national security, to democratic values and to human rights. We have recognized that we need to challenge China on many of those issues.

I think a good example of that, when it comes to working with allies, is the work that we've done on arbitrary detention. As Minister Garneau mentioned, 63 countries have now signed on to our statement on arbitrary detention, which is practised by a number of states globally and goes against the rules that govern the international system.

We work very closely with international allies through the G7, for example. You saw an extensive statement coming out of the G7 foreign ministers meeting at the beginning of May condemning the human rights violations against the Uighurs. We work at the United Nations with allies at the United Nations Human Rights Committee, for example, to decry the human rights abuses being committed against the Uighurs and to seek unfettered access for the UN special rapporteur on human rights. There are many examples, whether it's with our G7 partners or with our Five Eyes partners. Sometimes we will work bilaterally, for example, with the United Kingdom on an issue.

I think one of the main messages I would pass is just the importance of building those alliances and working with allies. We are so much stronger when we work together. That's a critical part of our strategy and our approach going forward.

• (1950)

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you so much for that really detailed answer.

I'd like to continue along this line of questioning.

As you know, it's been about a year now since the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China passed the national security law for Hong Kong. Since the passage of this law, many legislators and peaceful protesters have been arrested.

Can you reiterate Canada's commitment to the promotion and protection of freedom of expression around the world?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Yes.

The protection of freedom of expression, the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights are critical values that guide Canada's foreign policy around the world. They are a key pillar of our foreign policy, and we work very closely with our allies on these issues.

Hong Kong is another good example. In March, Canada and our G7 partners issued a statement expressing grave concerns over the decision by the National People's Congress to overhaul Hong Kong's electoral system.

We worked together in early January, joining Australia, the United Kingdom and the U.S. in a joint statement around reiterating our serious concerns over mass arrests. This is not only vis-à-vis Hong Kong or only vis-à-vis China, but these are positions and views that Canada expresses in multiple fora when we see the need to stand up with our partners and promote human rights, democracy and freedom of speech.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you so much.

Have you seen a recent increase in the number of Hong Kong citizens who have applied to come and live in Canada through the new Hong Kong immigration program?

Ms. Marta Morgan: I think that question would probably be best posed to my colleagues at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, who follow the numbers very closely.

I would just say that the program is designed to provide a pathway for young Hong Kongers to come to Canada. We have such a vibrant people-to-people relationship. I think it's one element of our approach going forward.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you.

As the situation in Hong Kong continues to deteriorate, many Canadians are concerned for the safety of their friends and family. Given the long reach of the national security law, could and should Canadians, including those of Hong Kong descent, feel unsafe?

Ms. Marta Morgan: We remain deeply concerned over the rapid deterioration of rights and freedoms in Hong Kong. We believe that a stable and prosperous Hong Kong, where the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms are guaranteed, is in everyone's interests. That includes dual Canadian-Chinese citizens in Hong Kong.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Bergeron, go ahead for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for still being with us at such a late hour this evening.

Deputy Minister, you are probably expecting me to get back to my question, which you could not answer because I ran out of time.

According to *The Globe and Mail*, the opinion was published by Global Affairs Canada against the decision of the Canadian Armed Forces to cancel the joint exercise planned between the troops of China's People's Liberation Army and the Canadian Armed Forces on a military base in Ontario.

What is the justification for that contrary opinion from Global Affairs Canada when, logically, everything was pointing toward that exercise being cancelled?

• (1955)

Ms. Marta Morgan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As Minister Garneau said, we have not had bilateral military training commitments with China since 2018. It is normal for departments to have discussions on these kinds of issues, but no bilateral military training has taken place with China since then.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I completely agree with you. However, the fact is that, according to *The Globe and Mail*—unless the newspaper was misinformed or lied—it seems that Global Affairs Canada published an opinion against cancelling that exercise.

From the Global Affairs Canada's viewpoint, according to what requirement should that exercise have been held?

Ms. Marta Morgan: As the minister said, we have not had any military training exercises.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I do understand that.

Ms. Marta Morgan: We were reviewing our relationship with China at that time. That relationship has evolved a great deal since then.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I understand and thank you, but, once again, from the Global Affairs Canada's point of view, what would justify the exercise taking place despite everything?

[English]

Ms. Marta Morgan: The approach that we had in 2018 was very different. Our approach to our bilateral relationships with China is evolving and has evolved since then. It was a moment at which we were beginning to consider, in the early days post Madam Meng, what the correct path forward should be. We're assessing the situation.

That's probably the best answer I can give you in terms of what the thinking was at that time.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Would you now say, in retrospect, that the decision was the right one?

Ms. Marta Morgan: What I would say is that we must evolve.

[English]

We have to assess the situation. We have to evolve our policies. At that moment, we were refraining from cancelling existing bilateral relations. We were quite carefully assessing the situation.

[Translation]

This must evolve over time and according to the events taking place.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: My understanding is that, what worried you at the time was potentially contravening the bilateral agreement between the People's Republic of China and Canada.

I am putting the question to you again. Do you think that was the right decision, in retrospect?

[English]

Ms. Marta Morgan: Look, I would say that at the time, in the situation we were in, we were assessing and refraining from cancelling existing commitments until we better understood the situation. Clearly, in 2021, the situation would be different. As you've seen, we have not had any military exercises with China since 2018.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

My colleague Mr. Paul-Hus was saying he really appreciated what the minister said in his opening remarks. I will tell you that I also greatly appreciated some parts of his opening remarks, especially concerning the Uighur situation. I thought I detected in the minister's remarks a recognition of certain facts concerning, for instance, the forced sterilization of Uighur women.

When I listened to the minister, I thought I heard the various parameters defined in the declaration on genocide. In light of the minister's statement today, what is still preventing Canada from recognizing that a genocide is indeed taking place in Xinjiang?

• (2000)

[English]

Ms. Marta Morgan: In the declaration of the G7 foreign ministers at the beginning of May, we, along with other G7 foreign ministers, recognized the human rights abuses that are happening in China.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm sorry, but Mr. Bergeron's time is up.

[English]

Now we'll go to Mr. Harris for six minutes.

Go ahead, please, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Madam Morgan, perhaps you could now answer the question I asked Mr. Garneau. I'll repeat it for those who didn't hear it. It related to this committee recommending that the government convey to the Chinese ambassador to Canada that any interference with rights and freedoms of people in Canada is unacceptable, won't be tolerated and will result in serious consequences for those responsible.

In what manner was this conveyed to the Chinese ambassador? Can the deputy minister tell us whether there were serious consequences from the government for any persons who acted contrary to this requirement by interfering with the rights and freedoms of people in Canada?

Ms. Marta Morgan: We regularly raise with the ambassador to China issues as they arise. We remind the ambassador that Chinese government representatives, like all foreign government representatives, have a duty under international law to respect our laws and regulations and that any kind of activities that do not do that are unacceptable.

Mr. Jack Harris: Yes, I appreciate that.

Can you tell us whether or not any representatives, any embassy staff or any people accredited to Canada have been advised to leave or have had serious consequences for interfering with the rights and freedoms of people in Canada? Has that happened, to your knowledge?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Mr. Chair, we don't comment on specific diplomatic conversations, but I think it's clear that the messages that need to be conveyed are conveyed to the ambassador when issues like this arise. It's very clear that we have conveyed that Chinese government representatives have a duty under international law to respect our laws and regulations, and that includes the freedom of speech of Canadians.

There are a range of actions that can be taken. We work very closely with all of the domestic security agencies on these issues.

Mr. Jack Harris: You referred to serious action being taken and joint statements made with respect to matters in Hong Kong and the result of the security law and the changes to actions within Hong Kong itself. I'm wondering whether we're getting to the point where these joint statements aren't really effective. We just saw another sentencing of Jimmy Lai for another 18 months or 14 months on top of an existing sentence for participating in a demonstration that was unauthorized.

Isn't it time that we should consider Magnitsky-style sanctions against individuals responsible for this layer of oppression in Hong Kong and consider that these joint statements are not effective in actually changing any behaviour of the Chinese government in respect to Hong Kong?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Thank you for that question.

The Government of Canada has taken a number of actions vis-à-vis Hong Kong, both in working very closely with our partners in the G7 and in working with key allies. We have also suspended our extradition agreement with Hong Kong, and we carefully review all export permits to Hong Kong and have updated our export controls.

We are taking actions in the space where it makes sense for us to take actions there. We are working with our allies to communicate to the People's Republic of China that Hong Kong should benefit from the one country, two systems approach that was agreed to by the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Jack Harris: Could I ask you to comment on the statement of the New Zealand foreign minister regarding the Five Eyes?

It seems to me that the Five Eyes is an intelligence-sharing arrangement with several nations, but it seems that the Five Eyes designation seems to be used for some other kind of alliance. Do you think that use of the phrase is misused in the public eye and is giving the false impression that this is a different type of activity here?

"Five Eyes" names the countries clearly, but this is an intelligence-sharing operation and not more than that. Is that correct?

● (2005)

Ms. Marta Morgan: The Five Eyes is an intelligence-sharing operation, but I think the broader issue here is all the various ways in which we can work together in the various forums. Our Five Eyes counterparts are very close allies to us. They share our values. They share our commitment to democracy. They are among our closest allies, but there is also the G7. Working with the G7 through foreign ministers and through leaders is a critical alliance for us, as are our allies who work with us on the UN Human Rights Council. We need to broaden our allies. We need to have as many allies as possible.

Mr. Jack Harris: I understand that, but doesn't the minister have a point when she says that there are two different types of alliances, and one doesn't always include the other?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Well, I think that—

The Chair: I'm afraid it will have to be a very quick answer.

Ms. Marta Morgan: We have a very strong intelligence-sharing relationship among Five Eyes partners. They are also strong allies in other regards.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Harris. We will go to the second round now.

Mr. Chong, you have five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have some questions about the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. Is the secretariat of this committee, and the committee itself, part of the Government of Canada?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Excuse me, Mr. Chair; I am not an expert on the NSICOP, but my understanding is that NSICOP is a committee of Parliament that includes members of Parliament as well as senators.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Madam Morgan.

This is the whole problem here. It is not a committee of Parliament. In fact, subsection 4(3) of the act that governs this committee states, "The Committee is not a committee of either House of Parliament or of both Houses." In other words, NSICOP is not a parliamentary committee. It is not a committee of the House of Commons. It is not a committee of the Senate of Canada. It is not a joint committee of both bodies. It is a committee of the executive branch of government. Its secretariat sits on the Government of Canada's websites.

In fact, the website and the departmental plans are very misleading, and I would like to see that changed, because it does a great disservice to the public and to the integrity of our constitutional structures.

The title of the—

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant has a point of order. I'll stop the time.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I have a concern about this line of questioning with respect to a committee of parliamentarians. It is not directly related to either the responsibility or the authority of the deputy minister who is in our presence. Also, the tone of the question is accusatory—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Come on.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: —and I don't think it is parliamentary in the way that it is being expressed.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Come on, Rob.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I think that the public servants—

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, as you understand, as the chair, I have to hear a point of order. It doesn't mean that I'm going to rule in favour of the point of order, but Mr. Oliphant has the right to make his argument. It's important, therefore, that you show respect to members when they make their argument and not interject when someone is doing so.

Mr. Oliphant, would you conclude, please?

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Yes, and I would also humbly remind the chair that if he doesn't have control of the meeting, he has the right to adjourn the meeting, should there be an outburst from a member while someone has the floor. It is in the Standing Orders.

As I was saying, I have two issues. One, we have officials here on a very specific study. We are doing a study that relates to our work and we have invited them to come from Global Affairs Canada, from the foreign affairs area. We have the deputy minister of foreign affairs. It is not within her purview or her mandate to understand, to know or to relate to us what NSICOP is about.

The second issue I have is with the parliamentary tone, which I think is absolutely essential for us to maintain. It is decorum. The word is specifically in the Standing Orders when it comes to how a committee needs to operate and how committee members should operate.

• (2010)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I would just say that the dilatory tactics by Mr. Oliphant are very frustrating. I won't deny that I sometimes cross the appropriate tone, but Mr. Chong never does. He's asking pointed questions of a witness. This is bizarre, frankly, and just tries to waste our time here. Let's get back to the line of questioning.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Williamson.

Mr. John Williamson: It would seem to me that senior public officials should have a good sense about how the executive functions in relation to Parliament.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Dubourg, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In support of my colleague Mr. Oliphant's comments, I would like to say that, last week, we heard from the Chair of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICP. I think that was rather the time for these questions to be asked. So the questions being put to the officials in attendance are really inappropriate.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Dubourg.

[*English*]

Colleagues, this is a committee studying the Canada-China relationship. We are all aware of the motion that was passed by the committee regarding production of papers. We're aware that NSICOP has been brought into that, so I find the question to be relevant.

Mr. Chong, I ask you to continue, please.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The title of the secretariat's core responsibility was changed in the 2021-22 departmental plans from “assists the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians in fulfilling its...mandate” to “Parliamentary review of national security and intelligence activities”.

Whoever is responsible for this change needs to undo this change. The secretariat and NSICOP are not engaged in a parliamentary review. We on this committee and in the other standing committees of the House of Commons and in the joint committees of the Senate and the House and the committees of the Senate engage in parliamentary review. NSICOP is not a parliamentary committee. It's right in subsection 4(3) of the act. I would like the Government of Canada to ensure that the wording is changed as soon as possible in order to ensure that the information is accurate and consistent with the act.

I will move on to a quick question concerning the Winnipeg lab.

Global Affairs is involved with the granting of visas to those citizens who are arriving in Canada from countries that require visas. A scientist from the People's Liberation Army Academy of Military Medical Sciences, Feihu Yan, worked for a period of time at the Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory. When and under what circumstances did GAC issue a visa to Feihu Yan?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Mr. Chair, issues related to the Winnipeg lab are being handled by the Public Health Agency of Canada, in collaboration with other federal partners, so questions would be best directed to the Public Health Agency of Canada, and in the case of visas, to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay.

President Biden recently announced that he has ordered the intelligence community in the United States to conduct a 90-day investigation of the two likely theories about the source of the coronavirus, one being that a human contracted it from an infected animal and the other being that it was an accidental leak from the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Can you tell us what material support the Government of Canada is providing to U.S. investigators, seeing that the minister has indicated that the Government of Canada supports this investigation?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Mr. Chair, the Government of Canada is strongly committed to supporting the WHO and its scientific work to trace the origins of COVID-19. We believe that this is essential in order to detect and respond to future pandemics and biological threats. We support the work that the United States is doing to assess as well the origins of COVID-19, and should we be asked to provide assistance, we would be happy to.

We believe it is essential for the WHO to be provided with the transparency, the information that it needs, and we're committed to collaborating with our partners in any way that would be helpful.

● (2015)

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Ms. Morgan.

Mr. Chair, I have no further questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

[Translation]

Mr. Lightbound, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Since I am taking the floor for the first time this evening, I just want to say to all the committee members and certainly the witnesses that my thoughts and prayers are with the London community, which was today the target of a hateful and completely unjustifiable crime in Canada. Our thoughts and prayers are with the London community and with every Muslim community in Canada, which should not have to suffer that kind of an attack in a country like ours.

My first question is about the Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations, launched by Canada in February. Mr. Oliphant and the minister discussed it a little bit. So far, unless I am mistaken, 63 countries have endorsed the declaration.

Ms. Morgan, could you give us an update on the progress made in that respect?

Are any steps currently being taken to obtain the support of more signatories for that declaration, which I deem very important?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Thank you for the question.

Canada has really shown international leadership when it comes to ending that unacceptable practice of using arbitrary arrests and detentions to apply diplomatic pressure. The 63 countries that have endorsed the Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations account for one-third of the countries in the world. So we are very proud of the work we have done at the department.

Recently, on May 5, we released the partnership action plan with full G7 support, to turn words into action and put an end to that practice worldwide. We continue to talk to other countries, and I hope we could come back before this committee at some point to tell you that more countries have shown their support for the declaration.

[English]

It's something that I raise regularly in my bilateral conversations with colleagues, as does Minister Garneau.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Thank you, Deputy Minister.

My second question is about the Uighur situation. Along with a number of its international allies, Canada has imposed—as you of course know—sanctions on Chinese officials involved in the persecution of the Uighur population. We have seen China retaliate against one of our parliamentarians and, thereby, against our democratic institutions.

Is that kind of retaliation seen abroad?

What impact does that have on supporting stronger and necessary criticism of the Chinese regime?

[English]

Ms. Marta Morgan: China's sanctions against Canadian parliamentarians and democratic institutions are unacceptable. This is something that we have made very clear. It is an attack on transparency and freedom of expression, and we will continue to take action when these rights are violated.

As you may be aware, at the same time, sanctions were announced against parliamentarians, experts and organizations in the United States, the U.K. and the European Union.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: I will continue along the same lines as Mr. Chong for my last little question, which is about the investigation the Biden administration has launched into the origins of COVID-19.

According to your understanding of China and its current regime, what obstacles will such an investigation face in terms of cooperation, or lack thereof, from the Chinese regime to shed light on the origins of COVID-19?

● (2020)

[English]

Ms. Marta Morgan: With regard to the final report on the origins mission to China, which was conducted by the WHO, we saw that as an important first step, but the experts who were engaged in that report did not receive full access to data. They did not receive full access to samples, and they indicated that the findings are inconclusive. We need to continue to press for transparency in global health security and commit—

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bergeron, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As a signatory to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Canada has obligations under the convention. Article II of the convention reads as follows:

Article II

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Just one of those acts constitutes genocide. The convention goes on to state the following in articles III and IV:

Article III

The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide; (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide; (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide; (d) Attempt to commit genocide; (e) Complicity in genocide.

Article IV

Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

In his opening statement, the minister recognized that some of the acts listed in the convention are taking place. Why, then, does the Government of Canada still refuse to recognize that a genocide is under way in Xinjiang?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Canada is very concerned about the human rights violations being committed in China against Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, including forced labour and other violations mentioned by the member.

[English]

We have taken a number of actions. In particular, we are calling for an independent and unfettered investigation of the situation by the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Xinjiang into these issues. This is an issue on which we are working very closely with our allies, as noted before, to increase support and press for such an investigation.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

[English]

We'll now go to Mr. Harris for two minutes and 30 seconds.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Madam Morgan, last October on the 50th anniversary of Canada-China diplomatic relations, Minister Champagne, who was then foreign minister, spoke about a new framework for relations with China. Before this committee, he talked a little bit about that. Can

you tell us whether or not this new framework appears in any document that is to be delivered and when it will be made public and made available to this committee for discussion and review?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Mr. Chair, Canada's approach to China is evolving to address the threats to our national security and our core democratic values in the rules-based international order. We are continuing to challenge the actions of the Chinese government that are inimical to Canada's interests and values. We're managing specific challenges such as the arbitrary detention of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig—

Mr. Jack Harris: I'm sorry to interrupt, but I asked you specifically whether there was a new framework and whether it was going to appear in any document. To suggest that the relationship is evolving means either no, there isn't, or that the new framework is evolution. Could you be more specific about whether or not there is a new framework that will appear in a statement or a document that can represent what we expect in the future with respect to China?

● (2025)

Ms. Marta Morgan: Mr. Chair, Canada's approach to China continues to evolve. We recognize that we need to contest in areas where China is a threat, that we need to co-operate in some areas, such as climate change, where we share the global commons, and that we need to compete with China. This is an approach that recognizes the way that China is changing and the way that Canada has to adjust its approach, in particular to address the challenges that we've talked about during this committee appearance.

Mr. Jack Harris: I see we're very close to time. I don't even know if I have time for another question and answer.

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Jack Harris: I won't press the clock too much.

Thank you, Ms. Morgan.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Harris.

I appreciate it when members manage the time they have. Of course it's up to members to do that, although I try to assist with signals about how much time is left.

I think we have enough time for Mr. Paul-Hus and Mr. Oliphant.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul-Hus, we now go to you for five minutes.

Actually, you have four minutes. I have to be stricter in managing the time we have left.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Morgan, we regularly discuss our meetings with members of the G7, as well as those with our Five Eyes partners. In my first few years in politics, I attended a number of North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, meetings. I, personally, had the opportunity in Bucharest to ask the Secretary General of NATO, Mr. Stoltenberg, a question about defence.

NATO focuses mainly on Europe, but in 2018, we received threats from North Korea, and I asked Mr. Stoltenberg whether NATO was going to intervene on behalf of the western side of the alliance. He was taken aback by my question because Canada had never been one of the countries that could come under threat.

On the cybersecurity front, we rely heavily on our American counterparts. Internationally, when you speak with NATO members, do you discuss the respective capacity of members to assist Canada in defending against attacks from China?

Russia is another concern, but we are here today to focus on China.

Is Canada truly interconnected with the United States?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Thank you.

I'm going to defer to my colleague Daniel Costello on that question. Thank you for your question. Our relationship with NATO is extremely important to us as it relates to all national defence requests.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Costello.

Mr. Daniel Costello (Assistant Deputy Minister, International Security, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, deputy minister.

That's a good question, Mr. Paul-Hus.

Indeed, NATO talks a lot about that issue. While NATO is an alliance of European and North American countries, the rise of China and its conduct around the world right now are raising a number of questions about the repercussions for the Euro-Atlantic region.

NATO is trying to better understand the repercussions of China's much more aggressive posture. The alliance wants to understand what it means. NATO is also interested in China's technologies, systems and intentions globally. That has been the subject of recent discussions and reports. Although NATO focuses mainly on the Euro-Atlantic region, it still has to have an overall understanding of the situation.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: The North Atlantic Council can have more extensive discussions on NATO's diplomatic capacity and the fact that it is Canada's ally. I was speaking to the minister earlier about the importance of the Northwest Passage to Canada.

We rely heavily on our American partners, but I would think that, as partners of the alliance, NATO member countries in Europe could also bring pressure to bear to assist us.

Mr. Costello, are NATO countries reluctant to discuss Canada's north, or is it something they talk about?

• (2030)

Mr. Daniel Costello: Thank you for your question, Mr. Paul-Hus.

Naturally, the alliance discusses anything involving security threats or issues, including the Far North. A number of our allies in NATO belong to the Arctic Council and are, themselves, part of the Arctic region. I would say that, first and foremost, the NATO alliance is focused on defending shared values.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Costello.

Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus.

[English]

Mr. Oliphant, you have four minutes, please.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to go first to consular affairs with regard to the difficulty we have had with respect to China's respecting dual citizenship, because this issue was raised. This question is particularly with regard to Mr. Celil, whose family I personally am in contact with regularly.

Can you tell us what attempts are made by consular services in China, by the Canadian government, to try to get access to Mr. Celil?

Ms. Marta Morgan: Yes, the issue of dual citizenship is a challenge for us in terms of consular cases in China, particularly if citizens are travelling on their Chinese documents. Our ability to provide consular services is restricted. This has been the case with Mr. Celil. We continue to advocate for consular access to Mr. Celil, as well as access for his family. This is something that we do regularly with the Government of China.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

Minister Garneau announced recently that we would co-operate fully with the American government, with President Biden and his administration, with respect to their intelligence operations regarding the origins of the novel coronavirus.

Is this going to take activity from the government? Is it going to take resources? Are there co-operative activities already started, or will we be responsive in that activity?

Ms. Marta Morgan: I think this is an area where we are very aligned with the United States. In fact, on March 30 Canada was one of the 14 signatories to the U.S.-led joint statement on the WHO-convened COVID-19 origin studies that reaffirmed the importance of transparency in global health security and continued commitment to coordinating with our partners. We will work with the United States on this issue, whether it is through the WHO or whether it is through the collaboration of our security and intelligence agencies, as we do regularly, as requested.

That coordination and that co-operation to push for solid scientific work to trace the origins of COVID-19 will be across multiple fora and within the existing resources and partnerships that we have.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thank you. Those are all the questions I have.

I'd like to close with my personal thanks to the deputy, the ADM, and Mr. Epp as well, and to your whole team on the China files. It is a complex, complicated file. It takes every day and every bit of your energy to keep up, so thank you for your help to the Canadian people on that topic.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Oliphant.

Allow me also to thank the witnesses. We very much appreciate your presence with us today.

We'll now take a five-minute pause to prepare the new witness and to take a health break.

We'll see you shortly. Thank you.

● (2030) _____ (Pause) _____

● (2040)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

I would now like to welcome, as an individual, Dr. Peter German, barrister and solicitor.

Thank you for being here.

Dr. German, you may now proceed with your five-minute opening remarks, please.

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C. (Barrister and Solicitor, As an Individual): Good evening, Chairman and members of the committee.

Last week I received an invitation to appear before this committee, and I'm pleased to do so. I appreciate that you're working late in the evening and I also appreciate the interest that you're taking in this most important topic.

I was asked to appear primarily as a result of reports that I completed at the request of British Columbia's attorney general, David Eby, in 2018 and 2019. The first, "Dirty Money", related to allegations of money laundering in B.C.'s casinos. The second, "Dirty Money - Part 2", related to allegations of money laundering in other sectors, including luxury cars and real estate. Both reports are freely available on the Internet.

I should also indicate that I am currently president of the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform, a UN-affiliated NGO located at the University of British Columbia. ICCLR, as it is known, was heavily engaged in an exchange with Chinese universities and government during the 1990s and well into the first decade of this century. It was a robust program that involved lectures in China by our associates on matters related to criminal law and the rule of law, and hosting visiting dignitaries and scholars from China. We remain in contact with a fellow UN affiliate at the Beijing Normal University. If there is anything that ICCLR can do to further Canada-China relations, as we have in the past, one need only ask.

On a personal note, in 1996 I visited China with ICCLR and lectured at universities and at the procuratorate, the equivalent to our prosecution service, on the topic of money laundering. On other occasions, I visited Hong Kong and Macau. It is an amazing country and people. I am strong in my opinion that the Canada-China relationship is of critical importance to our country. Canada is much

better for its large Chinese diaspora, which has not only fuelled the economy but is hard-working, engaged in the community and proud to be Canadian. We need immigration from China and we need capital from China.

I'm also a retired deputy commissioner of the RCMP, having spent many years working on financial crime and heading that work in the force. As such, I visited numerous Asian countries and liaised with their national police services. The topic of interest to you, however, stems from my work on organized crime and money laundering, which resulted in the "Dirty Money" reports. In the first report, I outlined and provided graphs that depict how underground bankers in Canada and China were able to euphemistically "clip their ticket at both ends" by both facilitating capital outflow from China in violation of Chinese currency controls and launder the proceeds of crime in Canada. High-worth individuals would deposit money with an underground banker in China, fly to Vancouver and be given a bag of cash on arrival. They could do with it as they wished, and many chose to gamble at casinos. The source of wealth of the Chinese individuals was, in most cases, unknown, but quite possibly legitimate. Their goal was to invest or use their money overseas. The money they were given upon arrival was primarily the proceeds of domestic and international drug trafficking. This process became known as the "Vancouver model".

I will end by saying that China is known to be very tough on domestic drug trafficking. The issue is Chinese organized crime groups that operate around the world outside China, including the Big Circle Boys and the triads, which utilize familial connections and networks to distribute drugs manufactured in Guangdong province and elsewhere to the world. Let me be very clear, however: Canadians consume those drugs and buy the illegal commodities, so blame should not be unidirectional. Furthermore, it is important to realize that organized crime today is global in its reach, forms alliances as required, is not confined to one ethnicity and is not commodity specific.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you, and I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

● (2045)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. German.

[Translation]

We have time for one last round.

Mr. Paul-Hus, you may go ahead. You have six minutes.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good evening, Mr. German. Thank you for being here.

As you said, organized crime has a global reach, with criminal groups all over the world. Today, we are focusing on Chinese organized crime, which as we know, is firmly established in Canada. I'm curious as to whether you know much about the mechanism organized crime groups use to transfer money. One of my fellow members previously put forward legislation on foreign funding—what is known as the tunnel fund—a method that criminal organizations use to transfer money in the country.

Can you talk a bit about that?

[English]

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: As I mentioned in my opening statement, the issue is that because of currency controls, it is difficult to move money out of China unless you have approval. It's my understanding things have tightened up in that regard over the last few years.

What you find internationally—and this is not just between China and Canada but in the world generally—is that there are underground bankers. Underground bankers are money service businesses, but they are simply unregistered money service businesses. That's the easiest way of looking at it. They're not registered with FINTRAC in Canada. They are individuals who have a connection one way or another. They may have a family connection, or colleagues, or they may be members of a drug trafficking ring. All they really have to do is send a message from one to the other, between continents, and say, "I've got money. I'm holding money. You can give the money to Mr. A." No money actually flows back and forth. There are no wire transfers. There is a settling of accounts among the underground bankers at some time in the future, or the money they have received from a client is then sent to a third party, possibly to purchase drugs or whatever.

In answer to your question, what is most likely happening, and most common, is the use of these informal remittance providers known as underground bankers.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you.

I will now give the rest of my time to Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus.

[English]

I have a question about single-event sport betting. As you know, single-event sport betting is big business in Europe and Asia, where it's long been legal. In Europe, I've seen figures that it's worth about \$40 billion Canadian a year. Bill C-218 is making its way through the Senate, and it will decriminalize single-event sport betting.

What is your view on decriminalizing single-event sport betting without putting in place any additional protections, keeping the current system we have in place for regulating gambling?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: On one level, decriminalizing is a good thing, because if you don't decriminalize, it just continues anyway, but in the grey market. By decriminalizing it, by placing regulations around it, at least government gets control of this beast that's out there, and that people want, so to speak. It would also presumably provide revenue for government. It stands to reason that

you have to have an appropriate regulatory structure, or in this case, that the provinces have to have an appropriate regulatory structure to deal with it.

I have not read the bill, so I don't know the details of what's being proposed, but in general terms, I favour sports betting becoming legal, so to speak, getting out of the grey market, and having proper regulatory control around it.

● (2050)

Hon. Michael Chong: Canada has been listed in the State Department's reports, as well as in other reports, as being a laggard on money laundering, and has also been criticized for its opacity around beneficial ownership.

What measures should be put in place by the Government of Canada and the provinces to move us from being laggards in this area to being world leaders?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: I'll deal with the second part of it first.

In terms of beneficial ownership, we always have to keep in mind that there are two aspects to it. There's beneficial ownership of corporations and there's beneficial ownership of land. Land being a provincial responsibility, it falls to the provinces to deal with that. British Columbia now is the first province to create a beneficial ownership registry for land. We will hopefully find the ultimate beneficial owner of all the land in our province.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, if we are looking at beneficial ownership of corporations, that has to come from the federal government. We know the federal government has made an announcement that it's looking at a federal beneficial ownership registry for corporations, I believe, in 2025, simply because you can incorporate both provincially and nationally.

Somehow you have to bring this together. I certainly favour beneficial ownership registries for both land and corporations. The important thing, however, is.... There are a number of factors, but without belabouring it, there are two important factors that I see. The first is "garbage in, garbage out". You have to make sure there is some verification of what is going in or else it's worthless. There has to be a bit of a checking process—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. German. I'm sorry, but I have to interrupt, because Mr. Chong's time is up.

We'll go on now to Mr. Fragiskatos, please, for six minutes.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Mr. German, for your work, sir.

Is there a figure that exists for the amount of money that is laundered in Canada on an annual basis? I know that you're on record as saying that it's not possible to determine a figure, so I guess I have an answer in one sense, but can you perhaps tell us why it's difficult to arrive at an estimate?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Right.

The Cullen commission currently under way in British Columbia is attempting to do that, I think, so it will be interesting to see what their report says. Many people have tried. I'm not an economist and I'm not accountant, so I don't try. For one thing, there are so many different factors involved. It's not as if all of this data is transparent. Drug-trafficking organizations don't tell you. They don't supply financial statements.

We generally rely on the IMF and the World Bank, which estimates the percentage of GNP that is related to illegality, to criminal activity. I believe the figure is somewhere in the area of 3% to 5%. You also have to consider that we have not the grey market, and it quickly gets meshed in with criminal money, so it's an underground economy.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chair, I think I have two minutes left, if that's correct.

The Chair: You have a total of six, unless you're sharing your time.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I was going to share my time. I thought you were aware. My apologies. I'll be sharing my time with Ms. Yip. In any case, I think I have about a minute and a half left, so I'll ask quickly.

Mr. German, you're also on record saying this. I'll read the quote: "Thousands of families have lost sons or daughters due to opioids, fentanyl, heroin, cocaine. That's why this is important."

Can you shed some light on the personal issues at stake for families in this issue of money laundering?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Yes. Thank you, sir. I appreciate that.

I think people looked at money laundering as an abstract concept for quite some time. I'll speak about British Columbia. I think the "Dirty Money" report, the work the attorney general did here, and now the Cullen commission have made people realize that money laundering is the back office of organized crime. Organized crime exists to make money, and money laundering is the process by which they cleanse their money and get to use it.

If money laundering is the back office of organized crime, what does organized crime do? What commodities do they deal in? Illegal drugs.... If you look at downtown Vancouver, you see fentanyl. We are losing more people as a result of fentanyl deaths than we are from COVID—five a day here in Vancouver—and I know that we are losing people elsewhere in the country as well. That's the connection there. This is about organized crime. This is about making money from illegality of one sort or another, including drug trafficking, and people die as a result.

• (2055)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you.

I'll turn it over to Ms. Yip.

Ms. Jean Yip: Thank you.

Last year, you were quoted in Pivot magazine as saying, "All the things that make Canada a wonderful place to live also make it desirable for organized crime."

There are some items on the list, but I want to focus on the large ethnic diasporas. Can you elaborate on this point and how it helps to facilitate organized crime and how we can best insulate our ethnic communities from criminal activity?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Right. Every community.... I'll refer to "Caucasian" as an ethnic diaspora, because I am Caucasian. Every diaspora tends to have its own organized crime. It's a percentage. No country is without crime. Let's put it that way.

I look at the Caucasian community, and I look at outlaw motorcycle gangs, which are predominantly Caucasian. Who do they prey on? They tend to prey on people within their own community. If you were to translate that to the Vietnamese community, Vietnamese organized crime will primarily target residents of the Vietnamese community. Why? It's language, culture and those sorts of things—it's easier.

What we find with organized crime these days is that alliances are taking place all the time. As I mentioned in my opening statement, we now find that you will have gangs from different backgrounds that work together. The outlaw motorcycle gangs will work with Iranian organized crime and with Asian organized crime and so forth. This is not about one ethnicity. I think it's very important to point that out. That's why I always talk about outlaw motorcycle gangs as the example I prefer.

Ms. Jean Yip: Are there any agencies that could help specific communities? You mentioned the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] you know that there are resources out there, or at least somebody that has some cultural competencies, for example. Maybe you could [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Right now in greater Vancouver, we're seeing a lot of murders. In the South Asian community, it's gang murders. There's a real issue there. Ninety-nine per cent of the people in the South Asian community are wonderful individuals. You have that 1% who have gotten themselves involved in gang activity. They happen to be very young people, too. One would hope that the South Asian community could work within itself to help, but that's also the role of law enforcement and community policing. That's what it's all about. It's about having police officers who reflect the communities and who are able to work in the communities on a preventive level so that it's not just about enforcement.

I think there are a lot of different potential tools there that the community can use.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Yip.

[*Translation*]

We now go to Mr. Bergeron for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. German, thank you for being with us so late in the evening. You mentioned that we were working late, but so are you, and I thank you.

You said in your opening statement that the People's Republic of China does not go easy on domestic organized crime. In the first “Dirty Money” report, you talk mainly about Mexican organized crime groups and little about Chinese organized crime groups such as the Big Circle Boys, 14K and Sun Yee On.

Given the extensive control wielded by the Government of the People's Republic of China in just about every sphere of Chinese life, how is it possible that these organized crime groups operating abroad, for instance, in Canada, are beyond the reach of the Chinese government?

In other words, do you think it's possible that the People's Republic of China is using these groups to destabilize western democracies?

• (2100)

[English]

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Thank you for the questions, sir.

I suppose anything is possible. We're really talking about their state-sponsored or state-supported organized crime. I don't have evidence of that, so I can't say if that occurs or doesn't occur.

I should also point out that my reports were not fault-finding exercises. They weren't intended to point the finger at a particular individual. That is more the role of the Cullen commission, which is under way right now. I was asked to find out what is going in our casinos.

Clearly, the Big Circle Boys have played a role for some time, as have the triads. Yes, there's a long history in China of triads and there's the issue of the extent to which they have been allowed to exist. What their role is internationally and what relationship they may have with the Chinese government, I cannot say. It would be total conjecture on my part.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: What would you say about the role they play in organized crime in Canada?

You said your report dealt with what was happening in casinos.

Do those groups play a role in casinos, from what you observed?

[English]

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: I'm sorry, sir. Is there a role for whom to play in the casinos?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I am talking about Chinese organized crime groups.

[English]

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Yes, I see.

There's no question that organized crime has been in the casinos in British Columbia. Primarily, the persons involved were of Asian ethnicity. I can't answer whether they are Canadian citizens, permanent residents or visitors.

In terms of a lot of the “whale gamblers”—a term used to refer to those with a lot of money—there's no reason to believe that those

who did come over were themselves actually involved in criminality. They just wanted to get money out of China.

We do know that we've had loansharking going on in, I'll say, the Asian community in Richmond and near the casinos for many years. Loan sharks have been murdered. It's an example of that issue I spoke about earlier. We do know that certain things were happening in various diasporas.

Organized crime has definitely been at work in the casinos.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: What more can you tell us about the process you referred to, in your opening statement, as the Vancouver model?

[English]

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: “The Vancouver model” is actually a term that a professor in Australia, John Langdale, an Asian crime expert, coined. He was in Australia looking at what was taking place between Vancouver and China, and he could actually see this relationship I described of money leaving China and people arriving here, of money avoiding currency controls in China and somehow getting out of China. In fact, what was happening through the underground bankers was that people were depositing money with an underground banker in China; then they would fly to Canada and be given a bag of cash. The bag of cash tended to be dirty money, money that was evading taxes or underground economy money.

He saw that from a distance and coined it “the Vancouver model”. His view was that the underground bankers at both ends were getting a cut, because anyone doing money laundering will take a percentage. This one organization is actually getting a percentage of the money leaving China and a percentage of the money being laundered here in Vancouver, so it's clipping the ticket at both ends.

That is what is referred to as the Vancouver model. I came upon that through open source material, and it ended up in my report.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: How did Canadian authorities respond to the practice?

[English]

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: The issue of enforcement was raised, most specifically in our second report, in that it was very clear that the RCMP was under-resourced, having—

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: I'm sorry, Mr. Regan.

The Chair: I'm terribly sorry, but I do have to interrupt, as we're over the six minutes.

Now we'll go on to Mr. Harris for six minutes, please.

• (2105)

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for joining us today and sharing your knowledge about organized crime, Dr. German.

In part 2 of “Dirty Money”, you refer to the Chinese crime groups allied with the Mexican and Middle Eastern crime groups and talk about their creating partnerships for different illegal enterprises and commodities, but then you go on to say—with emphasis:

In addition, there have been multiple reports of state actors operating in Greater Vancouver.

Then, in the footnote, it talks about “hybrid warfare”, describing “states working in concert with organized crime to achieve...objectives”, including “economic subversion and threat finance, in which a nation state conducts offensive actions through financial vehicles.”

Can you tell us what this is about? You just indicated that you didn't have much evidence of state action, but this clearly refers to multiple reports of state actors operating in Greater Vancouver. Could you tell us a little more about that?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Right. Thank you. I'm glad you've read the report so thoroughly.

I think you'll find that those references actually refer to public source material that we have with respect to the move by the Chinese government to persuade people to return to China who have been involved in, or allegedly involved in, corrupt activity. There have been numerous reports of state-sponsored activity in an attempt to have these people return voluntarily.

Mr. Jack Harris: For what purpose is this? Is it for the purpose of prosecution?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Yes, I would assume it's prosecution.

Also, I think you'll find that it's pretty well documented publicly that China has made it very clear that it is looking abroad for those people who have been involved in illegal activity. However, again, that's illegal activity in China, so it is seeking these individuals who have essentially escaped its grasp. There's been a lot of controversy over whether these persons are really criminal offenders or are at odds with the political establishment.

Those comments are made in that context, involving those individuals and the criminality that they're alleged to have committed in China.

Mr. Jack Harris: It's been suggested that some of the influence actually goes the other way and that it's possible that the Chinese state actors are influencing the money laundering or are in cahoots with some of this organized crime to inflate the price of real estate in Canada—and maybe this is far-fetched, and perhaps you can comment on that—to support the casino business and all this illegality.

Is there any evidence of that? Are you aware of these kinds of allegations? A recent book was just published about that. Is that something you have given any credence to?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: As I said in my answer to an earlier question, I can't personally talk with authority about a connection between state-sponsored activity in China and organized crime in Canada. I know that Mr. Cooper's book is out there. Mr. Cooper

was heavily engaged as a journalist in what became my reports later on. He was very involved in and concerned about what was taking place in China. There were various reports on Global News, but there were also reports on other media outlets. It all led eventually to the “Dirty Money” reports and then to the Cullen commission.

He has done his own research. I have not read the book, so I don't know specifically what he's suggesting. I can't personally say that I knew of a connection, but I wouldn't expect that I, as an individual, would necessarily stumble upon that.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'll turn back to let you answer your question about the RCMP being under-resourced. You were there. The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians has reported in one of its reports that in fact the RCMP were so under-resourced from around 2014 on that they were focused on domestic terrorism, and files that were supposed to be dealing with organized crime, smuggling, and everything else were neglected to the point that we had this huge increase in money laundering in Canada.

Can you tell us anything about that?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: I would tend to agree with that, sir.

The RCMP made a conscious decision to abolish the proceeds of crime unit in 2013, as well as the commercial crime unit and the drug squad—a number of commodity-based units that had been around for many years—in favour of a new organized crime model. No sooner was that established than they also had to deal with the terrorism issue. On top of that, there's the issue of resourcing, of federal resources. That's more pronounced in the eight contract provinces, as opposed to Ontario and Quebec, where the RCMP are simply the federal police. I think these various factors contributed.

The RCMP, as I understand it now, has been given additional money in recent budgets to start the program up again. They're essentially redeveloping their financial crime program. There's no question that there was a gap. I've spoken about that numerous times. I've also mentioned it in “Dirty Money - Part Two”, and it has been a matter of public discussion.

• (2110)

Mr. Jack Harris: Do you think the Cullen commission is going to have a look at whether there is a Chinese government influence on organized money laundering in Canada, in B.C.? Is that part of their remit?

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: I don't believe it's necessarily part of the remit. They've taken a fairly expansive view, but I do not know if they've gone that way at all. I'm not connected to the Cullen commission. I gave two days of testimony, but that's my only involvement.

Mr. Jack Harris: I think my time is up, sir. Thank you.

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Harris.

Mr. German, thank you so much. We very much appreciate your appearance here this evening.

Colleagues, that concludes the public portion of the meeting. I'll ask all colleagues now to log off this Zoom and log on to the in camera meeting, which will take a couple of minutes to set up. We'll see you shortly.

Thank you again, Mr. German.

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Thank you, sir.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you, Mr. German. It was very interesting.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. German, thank you very much for coming.

Dr. Peter M. German, Q.C.: Thanks. I'm happy to answer any questions offline that you might have.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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