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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 30 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*]

This is a hybrid meeting, pursuant to the motion passed by the House on January 25, 2021.

[*English*]

I would now like to welcome a fellow Maritimer, the Honourable Dominic Cardy, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development at the Legislative Assembly of the Government of New Brunswick.

Thank you very much for being with us tonight.

Please proceed with your opening remarks. You have five minutes.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, As an Individual):** Mr. Chair and members of the committee, it's an honour to be able to be part of this conversation around an issue that I think is of great importance to our country, at a time of increasing global instability.

Very briefly, my particular interest in this subject doesn't just stem from my current position as Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development in New Brunswick but from having worked as a democracy activist in multiple countries around the world—coincidentally, Cambodia and Nepal. I happened to be living in those countries when China took an interest in those countries and effectively, economically—and in both cases functionally and politically—colonized them over a very brief period of time in the last decade—the decade before last.

When we look at any discussion around China, I think it's important that we look at the reality of the horrifying headlines we've seen here in our own country around residential schools in recent weeks. As we like to say about past sins that our country has experienced, “never forget and never again”. In this case, we appear to be doing just that in both cases with China, and not only that but

amplifying it as a massive system of residential schools and internment camps—functionally, concentration camps—is rolled out across the hinterland of one of our largest trading partners.

Rather than speaking up against this vociferously and making that the centrepiece of our foreign policy, as you'd expect of a country that led the fight against fascism and for democracy in the Second World War and that has been a voice with its soft power in the intervening decades, instead we are amplifying that message. I'm speaking here specifically not just about our general foreign policy failures but about the experience of the Confucius Institute, a Chinese Communist Party branch operation that's operating inside public schools and universities in different places across Canada.

Here in New Brunswick, the Confucius Institute gained a foothold back in the late 2000s and expanded to reach many thousands of New Brunswick students at both the primary and high school levels over the course of several years. Programs supposedly focusing on culture and language in many cases included overt political propaganda. This included having elementary school students drawing maps of China that would erase the border with Taiwan. This included the denial of the reality of Tiananmen Square, and it included the disciplining of students who raised questions around China's abysmal human rights records. These are things that are happening in Canadian schools.

Knowing this, and with the background that I had, when I became minister at the end of 2018, I resolved to try to end the Confucius Institute's programs in New Brunswick, which resulted in an interesting series of lobbying efforts. The first one was with the former premier of New Brunswick, Shawn Graham, working as a lobbyist for Chinese interests, attempting to get me to maintain my relationships with the Confucius Institutes operating here in the province and New Brunswick curriculum-operated schools operating in China.

Then, when that didn't work, somewhat surprisingly there was the visit of the consul general of China to my office without any of the normal diplomatic protocols that I'm well aware of from my past life in international politics and diplomacy. He attempted to pressure me into reversing a government decision, including threats of economic retaliation, turning this into a two-nation issue rather than a question of a disagreement over schooling. That, in turn, led to members of the Chinese diaspora reaching out to me, expressing grave concern over the fact that their country of birth was reaching its tentacles into not just Canadian politics but our education system, which you would hope would be the place where what we would have as Canadian values....

No matter how much we may argue around parliamentary and legislative tables across the country about what that would mean, it certainly does not include concentration camps, mass murder and any of the myriad crimes routinely committed by the People's Republic of China and its various apologists supporting it around the world.

I'm looking forward to answering any questions that I can, specifically about the Confucius Institute's operations here in New Brunswick, the reaction to the decision to cancel the programs and anything else related to this subject.

Thank you so much for the time to be able to appear before this committee.

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

I gather we may be interrupted once or twice—probably twice tonight—throughout the whole meeting for votes. I'm sure the clerk will advise me if the bells begin to ring because I'm not sure that I'll know. Then I'll seek unanimous consent to continue for a reasonable time to get us close to the time of the vote so that we can hear more.

We'll go now to the first round of questions.

Mr. Williamson, you have six minutes, please.

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Cardy, it's very good to see you here tonight.

I have many questions, so I'm going to get started right away.

As you know, I'm a member of Parliament from New Brunswick. I followed the headlines as they were happening in our province, as you and your government were moving to put some distance between the Confucius Institute and the education system.

Can you tell me, first off, what did you make of the lobbying effort, particularly from former premier Shawn Graham? Do you find that unusual? Are you concerned that this employment of former politicians is pervasive across the country and could spread?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Thank you very much for the question.

Certainly based on my reading on the Confucius Institute and my study of Chinese foreign policy operations, this has become reasonably standard. There is an effort first off to start with the soft-sell approach, ironically I think playing on Canada's growing awareness around issues of race and racism, and saying, "How could you possibly question the motives of us, a poor developing country trying to make our way in the world? All we're seeking to do is share love, harmony and understanding through dance, through language and through music."

Underneath that, there's a harsher reality. We've seen that harsher reality, of course, in the way that China has actually behaved.

Specifically on your question, I didn't find it surprising. I did find it disappointing that a former premier would choose to present the views of a clearly hostile foreign power that has actively engaged in suppressing its own citizens, and also arbitrarily detaining Canadians, of course, as we are well aware.

I find it depressing, but perhaps not surprising. Hopefully, things can change. I'm always an optimist.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Yes.

Unfortunately, recently we had former premier Stephen McNeil in Nova Scotia, lecturing Canadians about turning the other cheek when it comes to standing up for our values.

Could you talk to us a little bit about the conversation you had with the consul general in your office? I think it's important to underscore just how bizarre and unusual... For China, which is normally very attuned to diplomatic niceties and protocols, to show up at your office unannounced is highly unusual.

Could you talk to us a little bit about that meeting, that conversation, and whether there was any follow-up subsequently to that in any other kind of venue with Chinese embassy officials?

● (1840)

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Absolutely. The consul general from Montreal arrived—I gather also had meetings with other ministers—and made it quite clear that there could be economic consequences for any erosion of ties between the Government of New Brunswick and China, including threats around lobster sales and a number of other specifics.

In my conversation with him, he clearly hadn't done much background reading on where I come from. I have a range of publications that were recently made accessible online around China democracy issues, ranging back about 15 years.

His first goal was to make it again sound as though this was simply a misunderstanding. He repeatedly said, "Look, the way you should allay any concerns you have is to come and visit China. You can come. We'll be happy. We're going to show you around. We'll show you a great time. You'll see that China is in fact a democratic country." I expressed some surprise on hearing that, but it basically continued along those lines.

There was a significant push-back when I made the point that you made in your line of questioning—that this is a country that is routinely willing, in the first instance of receiving any criticism, to say that this is an interference in its internal affairs, its domestic affairs, and it violates the rights of national self-determination and the autonomy of the state. When I questioned how this didn't apply, he said that this was about schools. I said, "Well, that's odd. If this is about schools, then you're talking about lobsters as well. There seems to be a bit of a mixed message here."

Again, that didn't particularly surprise me. If you read the reports from our own intelligence services, from the Australian government, from other democratic governments around the world, including some emergent democracies that are far further down the GDP list than we are but are increasingly awake and aware to what China is up to, this is part of the pattern.

You start off with the soft sell. You start off with the all-expense paid trips. I don't think it's any coincidence that we see a large number of western politicians suddenly parroting Beijing's line on a multitude of different issues, because most of those folks have taken advantage of Chinese hospitality.

The next stage up from that is the veiled threat: If you do this, then even though this is purely about education, inexplicably lobbyists become part of New Brunswick's education system. Even though this has nothing to do with the Communist Party or the government—this is all about a very informal education exchange—again, Beijing could be willing to make decisions around its economic relationship with Canada based on what happens here in New Brunswick.

The efforts to threaten and cajole, I don't think would have been acceptable from anyone else. I can only imagine the horror with which most folks in Canada, me included, would react if we ever had representatives of the American government behaving in a similar way.

I'm not surprised. This is part of a traditional pattern. Again, my hope is that through conversations like this, we can move to recognize the threat that China poses and move quickly to try to distance ourselves from a country that does not share our values.

**Mr. John Williamson:** I have one last quick question. I only have a few seconds left and you only have a few seconds.

What access did the Confucius Institute have to the data on students' private information, curriculum and things like that?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** We had members of the Chinese Communist Party who were working for the Confucius Institute who have access to the databases and student information of New Brunswick students. I heard about that from members of the Chinese diaspora, who are extremely concerned about that fact.

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

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

**Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Thank you for coming to the committee to answer our questions. I read with great interest your biography. You have an interesting history.

Despite your advocacy, the Confucius Institutes are still permitted in New Brunswick until next year. If this is so concerning, why not close them down now and not next year?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Because, as I think all of the members of this committee are well aware, cabinet ministers don't make decisions unilaterally, nor do any individual members of a party or government.

I was very pleased that we were able to move immediately to end all of the Confucius Institute programming available to the younger years and, pending the end of the contract next June, to restrict the programming to a couple of courses based purely around language at the high school level. I can assure you that I've been monitoring closely to make sure that none of the efforts to censor or intimidate Canadian students is repeated, including, particularly, students of Chinese extraction.

• (1845)

**Ms. Jean Yip:** How are you able to monitor their progress?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** As you would expect, with a foreign government managing programs inside a Canadian school, I certainly don't feel any compunction in making sure that I check in regularly to find out what's happening in those classrooms. I think any responsible minister would do that. If there were concerns raised about any sort of class, whether it was a curriculum area that was receiving a particular controversy or...you would make it your duty to make sure you were up to speed on that issue.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** What has the Chinese community in New Brunswick, as parents, talked to you about regarding the Confucius Institute? You mentioned that in your opening statement. Perhaps you could elaborate on that.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** I can, and this is somewhat sad. Many of them felt the need to communicate, and in one case reached out to me to have a meeting off-site in an open area, because they were afraid of being surveilled. Others made it clear that they were using emails that they had registered specifically for the purpose of communicating with me. A few did write to me directly.

They expressed real concerns about the potential impact on family back in China if they spoke out openly about the issues that they felt were definitely present with the Confucius Institute's programming. They definitely felt censored, as you would expect from any citizen of a country that, again, routinely tortures and murders large numbers of its own citizens and has shown no compunction about extending that ill treatment towards citizens of other countries.

Given Canada's not particularly strong record in standing up to that poor treatment, I can certainly understand the concern they have. All I could do was to promise them that I would protect their confidentiality and do my very best to be a voice for the hundreds of millions of people in China who are desperate for change and desperate for the sorts of freedoms that we enjoy every day.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** What exactly were their concerns as parents? What did they raise with you that made them so afraid?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** It was on a number of different bases. The first was educationally that their students were being given misinformation. Subjects were being censored, information was being presented as fact that was not fact, and most of this material was not in the material that was supposed to be covered by the courses that the Confucius Institute and the New Brunswick government had agreed on.

Beyond that, the concerns they had either as New Brunswick permanent residents, or in some cases Canadian citizens, was that they felt that, if they spoke out in any way that could be linked back to them or their name, there would be repercussions for their families back in China. This is a concern that's been expressed, again, in a number of different government reports here and abroad about the increased influence of Beijing over members of the Chinese diaspora and efforts to try to mobilize and weaponize them—often against their will—to be agents of influence and to do so in a way that, again, does not necessarily in any way reflect what they want to see, what they would like to do, their beliefs or their politics.

When you have a government that behaves as Beijing does and enjoys the levels of impunity that the country continues to enjoy, then it's not surprising that they continue to abuse their position in this and a multitude of other areas.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** Can you share with this committee what type of analysis was done in the decision to shut down the institute in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** The analysis from my perspective was quite simple, which is that I do not, did not and would not tolerate supporting a program run and managed by a foreign political party operating in our public school system. That struck me as inappropriate, regardless of any of the other concerns that we've been discussing here this evening.

That was certainly my perspective when I took the job as minister. I was elected in September 2018. I started conversations around this file nearly immediately. That was very much one of my positions going into the job, and I moved quickly to accelerate the process of eliminating the Confucius Institute from New Brunswick public schools.

**Ms. Jean Yip:** Wasn't a study done to track the different reasons why it should be shut down?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Absolutely. I did that research based on studies around the world on the Confucius Institute. I'm sure you and your committee have access to that information. If not, I'd be very happy to provide a long list of links on that subject. The number of those reports has grown exponentially since I began this conversation in 2018.

There is a huge body of evidence talking about why the Confucius Institutes are a danger to the countries in which they're located, and I used that as the basis for this decision.

There absolutely was an extensive study. It was done largely as part of my time as minister. The evidence I received afterwards, from the way this program was operationalized in New Brunswick schools, only confirmed my decision.

● (1850)

**Ms. Jean Yip:** Maybe you could share with us—

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

Are you looking for a written...?

**Ms. Jean Yip:** No, I'm just enjoying our conversation too much.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid your time is up, but thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, go ahead for six minutes.

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

Minister, good afternoon and thank you for joining us today.

I'm happy to be hearing from you. I see behind you the Acadian flag, and I'm very glad. You see behind me a blue, white and red flag. Make no mistake, that is not the French flag, but in fact the Acadian flag, as that is where I hail from. My ancestors come from the village of Sainte-Anne, on the Saint John River. The British actually built Fredericton on its ruins.

In the beginning, I was pleasantly surprised to see that the education minister of one of Canada's provinces wanted to meet with us concerning security issues involved in Canada-China relations. It was even more interesting that, in testimony delivered on April 19 of this year, Michel Juneau-Katsuya, former member of CSIS and expert on intelligence and national security, told us that a former director of the Confucius Institute in New Brunswick was forced to leave Canada following activities much more akin to espionage. He added that he investigated a case where a former director had asked an employee of the provincial government to obtain an official email in order to have access to the provincial government's information.

Did you have access to that information before you decided to partially sever ties, for the time being, and eventually completely sever ties between the Government of New Brunswick and its school system and the Confucius Institute?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Bergeron.

I also thank you for the Acadian solidarity. From my office, I can see Pointe Sainte-Anne, which is where the old Acadian village was built.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** That is the old cemetery where my ancestors are probably buried.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Okay. I will say hello to them when I get back home this evening.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Ha, ha!

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** No, I did not have that information when I made the decision, as that decision was based on concerns that predated my election in New Brunswick, as I mentioned.

I was sure I was making the right decision because I had examined, starting in the 2000s, the situation around the world, especially because I was living and working in countries close to China—in Cambodia and in Nepal—where China's influence manifested quickly, completely changing those countries' political culture in a few months, and that is not an exaggeration. It was clear that the Beijing government was using a lot of similar tools to try to influence us. We cannot have that pretension here. They see Canada as a small country, rich in resources, but with a small population and lacking a strong foreign policy, to put it politely.

It was in that context that I told myself I could not do much as a provincial politician. It bothered me to see an operation controlled by the Communist Party of China in New Brunswick's schools that was engaging in propaganda in the classroom. I did everything I could to eliminate those classes as quickly as possible. Given the opportunity, I would have obviously liked to bid them farewell last year and even before that. We now must wait until June of next year. I very much look forward to June 2022.

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

I do understand what you are saying, and I must say I found it rather unusual that Mr. Juneau-Katsuya specifically focused on New Brunswick in his testimony. I was wondering whether there is a connection between the fact that he focused on New Brunswick and the fact that a minister from that same province had undertaken measures against Confucius Institutes and wanted to meet with this committee's members on security consideration in the Canada-China relations. In his testimony, Mr. Juneau-Katsuya actually referred to Confucius Institutes as spy satellites for Chinese authorities. According to what you just told us, the institute is a propaganda vehicle, so to speak, in New Brunswick schools.

Would you also say that these are spy satellites for the Chinese regime within the province of New Brunswick?

• (1855)

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** I don't want to contradict the gentleman who said that. Clearly, we are seeing other countries where one of the objectives of Confucius Institutes is to monitor the Chinese community and, more specifically, to protect Beijing interests.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** I want to come back to the statement made by former premier Shawn Graham, that the relationship with Confucius Institutes would not be terminated just to prevent political talk.

Are you under the impression that politics were indeed discussed in the Confucius Institute's courses?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Discussions on politics are rather forbidden there, despite the fact that the New Brunswick curriculum is based on the principles of multiculturalism, liberalism with a lower case l, absolutely—

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm sorry, but Mr. Bergeron's time is up.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Like Ms. Yip, I really feel like I've not had all of my speaking time. However, I know that you are an extremely rigorous time keeper, Mr. Chair, so I gladly submit.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron. I am happy about that.

[English]

Now we have Mr. Harris for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister Cardy, for joining us tonight.

You said that you started being concerned about this in 2018 when you became Minister of Education in New Brunswick. Was this a concern of yours for some time before that? Was action taken by you to either condemn the Confucius Institute or make an issue of it?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** No. I was only elected in 2018. I had previously, in my time in opposition, raised the issue on several occasions. I had become concerned about Chinese efforts to basically reverse engineer a tool that Canada used to great effect for a number of decades, which is using soft power against liberal democracies.

It had become something I was experiencing a growing worry about, especially based on my time living in China's near abroad, both in Cambodia and in Nepal. There, Chinese influence went from significant but not determining, to being dominant, to put it politely, in the space of less than a year on both occasions. That is well documented, as any reading of the Nepali or Cambodian press would show.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I'm interested in New Brunswick, of course, because we're talking about something that has been going on.... For how long has the Confucius Institute been active in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** It's been since 2007.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** In how many schools do they play a role in your public school system?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** In 2016, they were operating in 28 schools. We have several hundred schools in the province. That number is down to two or three at the high school level, with language-only classes.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Would they have also been operating in universities in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** I don't believe so. That is a separate department here, so I can't answer that question with certainty. In conversations with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, he was not aware of any operations of the Confucius Institute. They didn't have a formal relationship.

It's worth noting that—if you read the reports from multiple intelligence agencies across democracies—if you have a Confucius Institute presence, it often extends itself to a variety of areas that aren't necessarily part of people's day jobs. In this case, in a town with several universities, I'm sure that was something where the Confucius Institute had an interest as well, but you would have ask them about that.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Are you telling us, then, that you based your decision to try to do away with the Confucius Institute not on what you knew about them operating in New Brunswick and what they did there, but on your knowledge of how they operated elsewhere? Is that right?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** That would not be correct. I had previously, as I mentioned, in opposition, raised the issue. Again, I have written on the subject, not widely but a couple of articles that I received correspondence on, over the years, of Chinese influence and—

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Okay, so you would have had people complaining to you about things that had happened.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** I had people complaining. I had both Chinese and non-Chinese Canadians complaining to me about the Confucius Institute's operations.

• (1900)

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I take it, then, there was a formal relationship, some agreement with the Department of Education that you were working on.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Yes. It was renewed in 2012 and 2017, prior to the election of the government of which I'm part. Somewhat bizarrely, the most recent renewal removed the ability for New Brunswick to withdraw from the contract. That clause was removed at China's request, and that request was acquiesced to by the Brian Gallant government.

This is part of what led our having to run out the rest of this contract in a much more limited way in the high schools, with the language courses, because of the language used in that contract, which was also unprecedented in any of the international documents I have ever seen signed by any government, including ones with much lower capacity than you would expect the Government of New Brunswick to have.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Do you have any idea how this would have started? Was there some sort of economic deal between the New Brunswick government and the Confucius Institute, or China-Beijing, to sponsor these institutes? How did it come about?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** There are a couple of folks who had built connections between New Brunswick and China over the last number of decades and had opened up schools in China, using New Brunswick curriculum, for example. I highlight Dr. Francis Pang, who has been prominent in that. He introduced the opportunity for New Brunswick to host the Confucius Institute back in 2007, and following that there was an agreement signed in 2008, I believe it was. The schools continued again uninterrupted until 2018, and then they were curtailed, as I mentioned.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Am I right or wrong in assuming that it may have been thought to be benign when that was started?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** I think so. Having talked to some of the people who were part of that original discussion, I think that was the point of high optimism around China, and the idea that the liberalization of trade would result in the liberalization of politics. I can understand that, and I think that a lot of well-meaning Canadians in politics felt that was an appropriate path up until quite recently.

Clearly, that's absolutely no longer the case, and I'd argue probably we've been somewhat slower than we should have been in catching on to a serious change in Beijing's intentions toward democracies over the last 15 years.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Aside from the development of this idea of exchanges, was there a lot of interest in New Brunswick in China, or learning the Chinese languages and that sort of thing? Was that something that prompted it, or was that something that just developed as a matter of government policy?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** I certainly have never heard of anyone having expressed strong desires for Chinese language programming, as much as I think that's an excellent idea. One of my goals is to work with the Government of the Republic of China, Taiwan, to try to replace any programming that's lost because of the ending of our relationship with the Confucius Institutes, with a country that

will respect our democratic values. We're already in those discussions, and I hope those will come to fruition very shortly.

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

[*Translation*]

We are now beginning the second round.

Mr. Paul-Hus, go ahead for five minutes.

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

Good afternoon Mr. Cardy. Thank you for joining us today.

I want to begin by saying that you are very brave for daring to implement such reforms. I hope that people around Canada are opening their eyes to what is currently happening at Confucius Institutes.

Here is my first question. On March 5 of this year, the U.S. Senate voted against the department of education funding universities affiliated with Confucius Institutes.

Do you think the federal government should consider that kind of an approach?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** We must take all possible measures to reduce Beijing's influence in all our institutions, our politics and our economy.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** That's quite clear, thank you.

Did you receive the federal government's assistance when you decided to move forward? I am talking about intelligence services—either CSIS or the RCMP. I assume China pressured you indirectly. You actually mentioned threats to stop buying lobster, for instance.

Did you get any help from federal agencies in gathering the evidence you needed to influence the New Brunswick ministerial office?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Concerns were occasionally expressed by federal elected members. However, those concerns were not addressed to me, so I cannot comment specifically on that aspect.

As for other agencies, I had discussions with CSIS, just to exchange information. With my years of work abroad in diplomatic affairs, I found it somewhat strange to see a diplomat pressure a member of provincial cabinet with no support from a professional team or a federal representative. Based on my experience, that was exceptional.

• (1905)

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** I understand.

Did you discuss this with your counterparts from other provinces, such as the Quebec minister of education? Did any of your colleagues ask questions?



**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Yes. I spoke with the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, which brings together all the provinces and territories. This year, the council adopted a proposal submitted by New Brunswick to limit all school contact with China owing to the treatment of Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, Uighurs, religious minorities and a thousand and one other reasons that justify a distancing from China. I received the council's support in that effort.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** That's excellent. I yield the floor to my colleague Mr. Williamson.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus.

[*English*]

Mr. Cardy, you referenced “soft power”, but that's a bit of an understatement. When this debate was happening, I was hearing from constituents in New Brunswick Southwest, from lobster sellers in particular, who were quite concerned about losing market access.

Could you talk about the drama that was taking place, the threat that China was making and how this is a soft power with an iron fist behind the glove?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Absolutely. Again, I think that is very much in keeping with China's ability to play off some of Canada's political class's best instincts—a tendency to want to listen and to accommodate and to be reasonable. In this case, on the one hand, you had friendly discussions: Think of the children. Why don't you come and visit China? As the consul general said, you can see that China is also a democratic country and that people who visit China come away transformed—which I'm sure they do.

On the other hand, other people in the same city are passing on a very clear message of economic bribery, making it very clear that what is being said in one room, that this is an education issue and it has nothing to do with the economy, isn't what is being seen in another room: You'd better get him under control; otherwise, it will cost you tens of millions of dollars in lobster sales.

I think that speaks for itself.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Could you talk too about the fallout? We've seen in Australia that despite the embargo, they have found new markets. Has there been an economic fallout in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Lobster prices are, I believe, close to record highs at the moment. Come down to New Brunswick, enjoy our lobster rolls and help protect democracy at the same time.

**Mr. John Williamson:** I think I'm out of time. Thank you very much, Mr. Cardy.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

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

Ms. Zann, you have five minutes, please.

**Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Hello, Mr. Cardy. It's been a while since we met.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** It's nice to see you.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** It's nice to see you. I believe it was here in Nova Scotia, when we were both members of the New Democratic Party. I was a backbencher in the Darrell Dexter government that was actually making trips to China and increasing trade with China.

Did you advise Mr. Darrell Dexter, who was the premier then, that it was not a good idea to do?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** No, I don't recall having conversations at that point with Mr. Dexter. I think anyone who is in regular contact with me certainly knows my feelings on China and the need for Canada to disentangle ourselves from that government as quickly as possible. I don't recall any specific conversations with Mr. Dexter on that subject.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** You were, of course, the leader of the NDP in New Brunswick at that time. Our lobster sales in Nova Scotia have also increased with China. In fact, I believe they are one of our largest buyers.

Apparently, Premier Higgs was also concerned about jeopardizing New Brunswick exports to China, because he said recently that the province would respect its contract with the Confucius Institute and keep the Beijing-funded program through to 2022. Have you had a chance to talk to him about that?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Yes, I believe I covered that in some of my earlier comments. The previous government, under Premier Gallant, signed a contract that removed the right of New Brunswick to cancel the contract. Again, that's something I have never seen in any contract, no matter how inept the lawyers involved happened to be. That seriously restricted our ability to finish the contract 100%.

We cancelled all of the programs in nearly every single school and restricted it to a couple of high school-based, language-only programs, with careful attention to make sure that we no longer had students being disciplined for raising the Tiananmen Square massacre, other human rights abuses and so on.

● (1910)

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Of course, education is a provincial issue.

Are you suggesting that all provinces should follow your lead and cancel Chinese language training?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** No, I think we should encourage Chinese language training. We just shouldn't use the Communist Party of China to be the language teachers.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** In Australia, where I come from, Chinese language is very important. They are very much encouraging students to learn Chinese because, of course, China is such a big player on the world stage.

What do you suggest going forward?

I noticed that you said that we need to play hardball, but a number of the people who have testified on this committee have said that hardball doesn't necessarily work and that you have to walk a fine line with China. What would you say to that?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Look at the 1930s.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Could you explain that?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** We have an aggressive regime that has no respect for any of the values we hold dear, that suppresses democracy and that is currently incarcerating several million Muslims in concentration camps, forcibly sterilizing them, and women are being forced to take People's Liberation Army soldiers and members of the Chinese police force into their homes. This isn't me saying this; these are all backed up by multiple reports internationally. They are committing genocide, according to numerous international actors.

If we're going to say that Canada has any moral authority in the world, at what point do we use it if not against a country that behaves in that way?

I'm all in favour of engaging with countries—

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** I'm sorry. I just need to ask you one more question.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** —that may be difficult, but I am not in favour of working with countries as—

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Can I ask you another question?

Are you considering a federal run?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** No, I'm not. I'm very happy where I am.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Okay, thank you very much.

What about the National Democratic Institute, the U.S.-based democracy promotion agency? Can you tell us a little bit about that, please?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** I'm not sure what relevance it has to the hearing, but I'm more than happy to.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Well, you worked there in the 2000s.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** The National Democratic Institute was founded in the early 1980s in Washington, D.C., as part of four different non-governmental agencies, one linked to the U.S. Democratic Party, one to the U.S. Republican Party, one to the U.S. body representing organized labour and one to a body broadly representing U.S. business interests.

NDI would work in countries around the world, usually countries coming out of civil conflict, to build new democracies. My specialty in those areas was that I would work on election-related programs for campaigns and training of scrutineers, which the Americans call polling agents, working with parties on internal party elections.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Did you work in Latin American countries as well?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** No, I don't speak Spanish. I worked in Asia and Africa.

**Ms. Lenore Zann:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Zann.

[*Translation*]

We now continue with Mr. Bergeron for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you once again.

I wanted to let you know that an article published in *La Presse* in May 2013 said that, in a secret report from 2006 on Confucius Institutes, Canadian intelligence agencies wrote that China wants the world to fall in love with it and with all things Chinese. According to CSIS, that soft power goes hand in hand with the Middle Kingdom's campaign to increase its military and economic powers.

Is that information you already had when you decided to gradually sever ties with the Confucius Institute, or are you hearing it again in your discussion with us today?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** I did not have direct knowledge of that information, but it is found in many public reports of agencies from democratic countries around the world. So it is not a surprise, as it reflects the reality of the time.

A number of changes have been implemented by President Xi's new regime. Since the end of the Mao era, Beijing has gradually been eliminating the transparency of authority. A dictator of a country with one political party eliminating measures that prevent his full control of power is a reason for concern.

I think that China's actions over these past few years, since President Xi came to power, are good reasons for concern. All you have to do is look at China's foreign policy in the South China Sea or with its neighbours, the way it treats its own minorities, the imprisonment of Canadian citizens without a valid legal reason and strictly for political reasons, as well as the impossibility of discussing those violations among parliamentarians here in Canada

• (1915)

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Has New Brunswick had to face economic retaliation following your decision?

Do you anticipate such retaliation in terms of the fallout from the cuts concerning Confucius Institutes?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Not at all. New Brunswick is a small province. I hope that our actions will inspire other provinces and that the Government of Canada will take action.

I don't think there will be major consequences here.

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

[*English*]

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

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

Mr. Cardy, in our province, Newfoundland and Labrador—and I suspect in most provinces—the Department of Education takes a very close scrutiny of and control over curriculum and materials and what's taught, particularly in the public schools of the province. Was that the case in New Brunswick?

Did they miss something, or did they not have any control over what the Confucius Institute program was offering to the students in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** There was a level of control that was supposed to be in place, but the standards weren't lived up to, which is how we ended up having elementary school students being told that Taiwan was just another part of China. I think there was a bit of overconfidence in terms of expecting China to live up to their side of the bargain.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Did this gradually get into the curriculum, or was it something that started off with the curriculum by doing all of the things that you have been complaining about in terms of how they dealt with students and how they disciplined them, for example, for bringing up Tiananmen Square?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Those were only in the context of the classes that the Confucius Institute teachers were offering.

This is a good moment to note something that I didn't say earlier, which is that when the consul general came to visit me, he was accompanied by a translator, and after saying the Confucius Institute had absolutely nothing to do with the Chinese Communist Party or the Government of China, it turned out that the translator who was with him was a Confucius Institute teacher.

Again, never at any point was I made aware of those teachers or any agents of the Government of China acting outside of those classes in those schools.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Did you have any trouble convincing any of your cabinet colleagues to support your decision to rid the province of the Confucius Institute?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** I can't speak about what happens in cabinet.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** It still took several years to do.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** It took a couple of months after my government was elected. We were elected in September 2018, took power in November 2018 and began to prepare this effort later in November of 2018.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Do you have any plans, Mr. Cardy, to ensure there is some Chinese language programming available in the province of New Brunswick at either the high school or the university level to provide the kinds of alternatives that have been urged upon us—by several witnesses, by the way—particularly to protect the Chinese people in Canada?

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Absolutely. We've been working with the representatives from the Republic of China, Taiwan, who have an astonishingly high-quality educational exchange program that I'd encourage everyone to look into.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Harris.

Now we go to Mr. Genuis for five minutes, please.

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

On a point of order before I start my questions, it looks like the House is about to start bells. Can we maybe pass a motion to give us 15 minutes here so that we don't have to be interrupted?

**The Chair:** I think what I would need is unanimous consent for that.

I am seeking unanimous consent for us to continue for 15 more minutes. I'm assuming it will be a 30-minute bell when the bells start ringing. Is there unanimous consent?

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

It is only with unanimous consent, Mr. Genuis.

Please begin.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** The bells are ringing now. Can I seek unanimous consent for 10 minutes?

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** On a point of order, the bells are ringing. No.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Five minutes...?

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** No.

**The Chair:** We have to—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Don't you want to hear from the minister? Do you need half an hour? Come on, Rob. This is incredibly rude to the minister.

**The Chair:** Order.

Mr. Genuis, I'm sorry. The rules compel me to suspend the meeting.

• (1920)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Well, that's disappointing.

**The Chair:** Minister, I very much appreciate your testimony. It's good to see a fellow Maritimer.

Thank you so much.

**Hon. Dominic Cardy:** Thank you, sir.

Thank you to the members of the committee.

• (1920)

(Pause)

• (2105)

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]





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