

# Intelligence agency-incited furor over lurid claims China interfered in Canada's 2019 and 2021 elections

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Canada's media and political establishment are in the grips of a China "under the bed" furor following leaks from a highly-placed source or sources within the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Canada's premier intelligence agency.

The principal conduit for these leaks has been the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's "newspaper of record" and the traditional voice of Bay Street. On a daily basis for most of the past three weeks, the *Globe* has published major, generally lead, articles devoted to disseminating lurid allegations of a nefarious Chinese plot to undermine Canadian democracy.

This relentless anti-China propaganda, which has been enthusiastically taken up by the opposition parties and most corporate media outlets, has a two-fold purpose. First, to demonize China in furtherance of the US-led, Canadian imperialist-supported military-strategic offensive against Beijing; and second, to destabilize and push the Trudeau Liberal government sharply further right.

The centrepiece of the *Globe's* hysterical campaign was a lengthy February 17 article, under a headline that occupied half of the front page of its print edition, that purported to describe Beijing's "sophisticated strategy" to influence the outcome of the 2021 federal election. Citing "secret and top-secret" documents that were "shared among senior government officials and Canada's Five Eyes intelligence allies of the United States, Britain, Australia and New Zealand," the article alleged that China's goals were to ensure a minority Liberal government and defeat Conservative candidates viewed as being more hardline towards Beijing. Conveniently enough for the intelligence agencies' fear-mongering campaign, this was precisely the outcome of the 2021 vote.

The allegations led to a flood of articles in the *Globe* and other outlets, all citing unnamed "sources" within the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) Canada's top domestic spy agency. The public has been bombarded with a deluge of generally vague, unproven allegations straight from the powerful national security apparatus without having any possibility to verify them. CSIS, notorious for violating the law, trampling on democratic rights, carrying out mass surveillance and lying to the special courts that are meant to monitor its activities, is essentially saying: "Trust us."

Over recent days, calls have come from across the political spectrum, former intelligence officials, and media outlets for a public inquiry into the alleged interference. The official opposition, the Conservative Party's far-right leader and former "Freedom" Convoy champion Pierre Poilievre, has led the charge. Poilievre accused Trudeau of being "perfectly happy to let a foreign, authoritarian government interfere in our elections as long as they're helping him."

The latest to speak out was New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jagmeet Singh, who appealed Monday for a "thorough, transparent and independent investigation." The Conservatives demanded that Trudeau's

chief of staff, Katie Telford, be called to testify at a hearing of the House of Commons Procedures and House Affairs Committee, which voted last week to expand a pre-existing investigation of alleged Chinese involvement in the 2019 election to include the 2021 vote.

The Trudeau Liberal government has repeatedly come under attack from right-wing opponents and the social democratic NDP for years for its purportedly overly friendly stance towards Beijing. However, Trudeau and the Liberals have shown themselves to be more than willing to fall into line behind US imperialism's aggressive diplomatic, economic, and military push to isolate and prepare for war with China. In December 2018, Trudeau approved the effective kidnapping of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou at Vancouver International Airport on the basis of trumped-up charges from the United States that she violated US sanctions against Iran.

A significant expansion of Canadian military operations in the Asia-Pacific has been implemented by the Liberal government, including the participation of Canadian vessels in provocative US-led "freedom of navigation" exercises in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. In May 2022, the Trudeau government banned Huawei and ZTE, another Chinese tech giant, from its 5G network. Late last year, the Liberal government presented its Indo-Pacific strategy, which it boasted had been developed in close cooperation with the White House, and which underscores Ottawa's readiness to assist US imperialism in massively escalating its military presence in the region and tightening its economic assault on Beijing.

Trudeau supports claims that China meddled in the two most recent federal elections. But he has rejected suggestions by the opposition parties that his government has failed to act decisively enough against Chinese interference, and suggested the leaked documents, or the interpretation being given them, do not tell not the whole story. Last Friday he said it was necessary to remain "vigilant" against foreign interference, but he avoided calling for a public inquiry.

Trudeau added that he "welcomed" the ongoing investigations by the House of Commons Procedure and House Affairs Committee, which has served as a platform for intelligence officials to amplify their unsubstantiated claims. In yet another move targeting China, the Trudeau government announced Monday that the Chinese-owned Tiktok social media app will be removed from all government mobile devices.

But the Conservatives, NDP, and the corporate media remain dissatisfied. Following the 2019 elections, the Conservatives and NDP united in the House of Commons to establish a committee on Canada-China relations, which became a mechanism for promoting anti-China propaganda and applying pressure on the minority Liberal government to take a harder line against China. Even after Trudeau banned Chinese tech firms from the 5G network, criticism continued due to the delay in reaching the decision in comparison with Ottawa's "Five Eyes" allies.

The further ratcheting up of the campaign over recent weeks must be seen in the context of US imperialism's reckless provocations over Taiwan. In February, Washington confirmed it would treble its troop presence in Taiwan, which Beijing considers part of China. A top US general has openly speculated that a war with Beijing will begin by 2025. At the same time, having pressured the Stalinist regime in Beijing into abandoning its Zero COVID policy, which has resulted in the deaths of over 1.6 million people in less than three months, Washington is now reviving the thoroughly discredited Wuhan "lab leak" conspiracy theory as to the most likely source of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Tuesday, the first meeting of the House Select Committee for Strategic Competition with China was held in the House of Representatives. Its stated goal is to develop a two-year plan for "economic decoupling" from China, which is the prelude to a shooting war in the Asia-Pacific.

It is to prepare public opinion for such a conflict that Canada's main media outlets have been retailing unproven allegations from CSIS for weeks. A sampling of lead articles in the *Globe's* print edition based on unsubstantiated revelations from CSIS over the past two weeks include:

- Wednesday Feb. 15: Ottawa ends research funding with China military institutions

- Friday, Feb. 17: CSIS documents reveal Chinese strategy to influence 2021 election

Followed by three large subheads: Beijing had two goals: to seek return of minority Liberal government and defeat Conservatives perceived to be hawkish; Chinese officials and diaspora groups were used in disinformation campaigns against Conservatives; Undeclared cash donations among tactics employed to support preferred political candidates

- Saturday, Feb. 18: CSIS documents show China warned "Canadian friends" of foreign-interference investigations

- Monday, Feb. 20: CSIS documents detail how China targets Canadian politicians, business leaders

Followed by three large subheads: Beijing's goals are to obtain wide range of intelligence, neutralize critics of its politics; Consulates, visa offices, Bank of China instructed to alert Beijing to influential visitors; China colour-codes its tactics: blue for cyberattacks; gold for bribes; yellow for sexual seduction

- Tuesday, Feb. 21: Committee to probe Chinese interference in 2021 election

- Wednesday, Feb. 22: Canadian military found Chinese monitoring buoys in the Arctic: Former lieutenant-general says devices likely used to observe US nuclear submarine traffic

- Thursday, Feb. 23: Freeland warned bank founders about risk of Chinese coercion: Toronto-based Wealth One, shareholders under investigation by CSIS and Finance Department

- Friday, Feb. 24: Ex-Chief electoral officer urges inquiry into China interference: "The legitimacy of government is what is at stake," Kingsley says in calling for independent review

The *Globe* has refused to make public any of the alleged documents upon which its lurid allegations are based, or identify the source or sources involved in the illegal leaks because, as it has admitted, they could face prosecution. This has not prevented the entire media and political establishment from treating CSIS' claims as the gospel of truth. Trudeau has come under attack from the Tories and much of the media for suggesting that the source of the illegal leaks should be investigated.

The *Globe* has been joined by other news outlets, among them Global News. In an interview broadcast Sunday on the channel's West Block political talk show, former CSIS head and national security adviser to the Trudeau government Richard Fadden demanded a public inquiry into Chinese "interference" in the 2019 and 2021 elections. "I think in this case, the allegations are so serious they need to be looked into," Fadden

commented. "I think a public inquiry is really the route to go."

The broadcaster also alleged without providing any evidence that Liberal MP Han Dong received support during his election campaign from the Chinese consulate. The article, based entirely on anonymous CSIS sources, claimed that the Liberals supported Dong running as a candidate despite receiving warnings from CSIS about his ties to China. Trudeau denied the allegations.

Global News has conducted a months-long campaign against alleged Chinese interference. It began with a November 2022 story, also based on CSIS "secret" documents, alleging that Beijing was responsible for "payments through intermediaries to candidates affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), placing agents into the offices of MPs in order to influence policy, seeking to co-opt and corrupt former Canadian officials to gain leverage in Ottawa, and mounting aggressive campaigns to punish Canadian politicians whom the People's Republic of China (PRC) views as threats to its interests."

Workers must decisively reject this filthy pro-war, anti-China campaign. Those behind it, principally CSIS and its corporate media conduits, have a lengthy record of lying to the public and engaging in thoroughly anti-democratic practices to justify the criminal actions of Canadian imperialism around the world. As Canada's premier domestic spy agency, CSIS was involved in US-led renditions of "terrorist" suspects and helped create a Canadian version under which suspects were identified to authoritarian regimes when they travelled abroad, detained, and tortured with information provided by CSIS. The spy agency was also complicit in "Five Eyes" intelligence gathering operations around the world, and lying to the courts about its activities.

As for the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's "newspaper of record," it recently marked the first anniversary of the far-right "Freedom" Convoy with an editorial whitewashing the support given by a substantial faction of the ruling class to this fascist-led extra-parliamentary movement. Those who initiated the menacing three-week occupation of downtown Ottawa called explicitly for the violent overthrow of the elected government and the installation of a junta to dismantle all COVID public health measures. The *Globe's* passionate defence of "democracy" clearly only applies when it suits the predatory interests of Canadian imperialism and its US ally.



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