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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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• (1545)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Good afternoon, everyone.

We're a little delayed and we give our apologies to Madame Morin. We had some votes in the House, and as all members know, it's important that we stick around for them.

We want to welcome each one here to meeting 46 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security It is Wednesday, December 8, 2010.

In our second hour we anticipate being able to have some committee business time. In our first hour our committee will have a briefing on the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Appearing to testify before us today is Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin, former national security advisor to the Prime Minister and associate secretary to the cabinet.

We thank you for being able to make yourself available to us today. I also want to congratulate you on the new position that you have begun. We look forward to your opening comments.

Before we do that, I see Mr. Holland has his hand in the air.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): I have a point on the second order of business. If you seek it, I wonder if you will find unanimous consent in the second hour to deal with the mental health and additions study. We're close to having it done. We really wanted to have it done prior to heading into the Christmas break.

The Chair: Maybe we can wait until we get to committee business.

Go ahead, Mr. Davies.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Out of respect for Madame Morin, who has taken time out of her very busy life to be with us today and has come from a far distance, I wonder if we can make sure we take one hour with her. The second hour is only committee business, so perhaps we can take that full hour and shorten the second hour to 45 minutes.

The Chair: Madame Morin, are you able to stay for one hour?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin (Former National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister and Associate Secretary to the Cabinet, As an Individual): I am at the disposal of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

All right. Madame Morin, we would—oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead, Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): I know there have been some previous discussions, and we haven't had confirmation of what Mr. Holland was saying. Our side had asked that we push our motion ahead about dealing with clause-by-clause study of Bill C-23B.

The Chair: Those are things we can discuss once we move into committee business.

Go ahead, Madame Morin, please.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

Distinguished committee members, it's a great pleasure to be here today.

[English]

I have not prepared an opening statement, so I am at the disposal of the committee today. I will turn it over to you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: All right. We will move into the first round of questions. This is a question that came out of a motion to look at the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

Mr. Holland, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Mark Holland: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Madame Morin, for appearing before the committee today. I'm not sure whether or not you have been following the proceedings of the committee. As you may be aware, Mr. Fadden was before the committee talking about comments he made on CBC television on this notion that certain municipal officials were under the influence—whatever that might mean—of foreign governments, and that foreign governments were exerting control over Canadian citizens with an attempt to try to influence Canadian policy.

I've had an opportunity to travel the country and talk to many of the groups that feel these very broad assertions have had a very detrimental impact upon them. They feel as though they're constantly being watched, and that there's a cloud of suspicion hanging over them.

Regarding those comments, Mr. Fadden said he had talked to the centre about those concerns—the centre presumably being the PCO and perhaps yourself.

Did you have conversations around these types of concerns with Mr. Fadden?

• (1550)

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Thank you for that question.

First of all, I'm well aware of the session Mr. Fadden had with the committee back in July. It is a fact that Mr. Fadden had mentioned to me early in 2010 that at some point he intended to come to brief me on matters concerning foreign interference.

I would like to add that the matter of foreign interference, of course, is not new. There is a reason that it was provided for in the powers of CSIS in the act in 1984. We have been aware of this vulnerability in the country for a very long time.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Fadden said he wanted to brief you. Did he, in fact, brief you?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: He didn't at that time.

Mr. Mark Holland: At what time did he brief you?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Fadden indicated to the committee that he had given me a heads-up early in 2010. As you can well imagine, when I was national security advisor, I would have received a heads-up on a whole host of matters on the part of not only Mr. Fadden but other heads of departments and agencies also.

Mr. Mark Holland: Sure, but in the spring of 2010 you were made aware of Mr. Fadden's concern, a concern that he took so seriously that he went on national television and made a proclamation about what a threat it posed to Canada. Obviously he must have used similar language to you in the spring about how seriously he took the matter.

When he informed you of this, what conversations did you have with the Prime Minister's Office, with any ministers, or with the Prime Minister himself on this matter?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: When Mr. Fadden gave me a heads-up early in 2010, I did not have any conversation with anyone about this because it was strictly a heads-up. I did not feel that I had to pursue the matter.

As I said, I would receive a heads-up on a whole host of matters, and you just put them aside and wait, essentially, to be briefed on the matters. It would be the same, by the way, if we were talking about a counterterrorism case or any other case.

Mr. Mark Holland: He went on national television and stated with enormous urgency that there was this threat to national security. He walks in and shares this grave threat. He's the director of our intelligence agency. He feels that it's a grave enough threat that mere months later he appears on national television and talks about it.

Did he couch it in those same terms? Did he stress to you what a clear and present danger he thought this was to national security in the same way that he did on national television? Did that then just stop with you?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: First of all, I would not agree with the premise that the director couched the matter in terms of a grave attack or a threat to national security.

Mr. Mark Holland: But he did say it was a serious threat, and he said it on national television.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: He did say that foreign interference, in general, was a vulnerability and could be a threat. It can be and is a vulnerability.

Mr. Mark Holland: Let's take the issue broadly, then, because you said it had been outstanding for some period of time. What conversations did you have with the Prime Minister's Office or with any ministers about foreign influence being exerted by other countries on Canada?

If you said this was a matter that had been going on for some time, what conversations had you had and what advice had you provided?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chairman, there are four specific threats that are identified in the CSIS Act, and I repeat that foreign interference is one of them.

In the course of our business dealing with national security, we would be apprised of threats with respect to each one of the vulnerabilities that are identified with respect to the national security of Canada on an ongoing basis.

• (1555)

Mr. Mark Holland: I'm looking here at Mr. Fadden's testimony. He said:

In essence, I told her that CSIS was dealing with some cases of foreign interference, that I thought provincial politicians might be involved and that we were about to wrap up matters.

He went on to say:

I asked her to think about the issue and to let me know what the procedure would be if, after closing our files, the government decided to go forward with the matter.

Are you saying that the decision to not go forward with the matter was yours? Given the fact that there's this huge cloud of suspicion hanging over the communities, did you recommend that this issue at least be expunged or that there be some statement out there so that these communities wouldn't have suspicion hanging over their heads?

If the decision was made to not proceed with it, and it was yours and yours alone, what about advice or any conversations you would have had about expunging this rumour that was hanging like a cloud of suspicion over so many Canadian communities?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: First of all, Mr. Chairman, I don't quite understand the point about proceeding or not proceeding, but let me address the point about the communities—

Mr. Mark Holland: Let me clarify, then.

Mr. Fadden, in his testimony, said that he had a conversation. He felt these matters should be pursued. He felt there were politicians who were under the influence of foreign governments. That's a pretty explosive allegation. He said that he asked for direction from you about how it should be proceeded with. Are you telling me that you took that nowhere, that it ended with you, that you had no conversations with any ministers? Did you have no conversations with the Prime Minister or anyone in the Prime Minister's Office?

The Chair: Let me just make mention of procedure here, because we are dealing with our national security and with the national security advisor to the Prime Minister.

I will quote from our procedure book. It says:

The obligation of a witness to answer all questions put by the committee must be balanced against the role that public servants play in providing confidential advice to their Ministers.

It goes on and talks about the importance of maintaining both.

I would just—

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Chair, on that point specifically—and please pause my time—

The Chair: We are asking for that.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Chair, on that point specifically, the response was not that it was privileged; the response was that there was no conversation, and obviously Madame Morin is free to say whatever she likes.

The Chair: I will give you extra time there, Mr. Holland.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chair, I would like to address the point about the communities, because this is....

Mr. Mark Holland: Can we go to that first point first, please? Again, it's an explosive allegation that there are politicians who are under the influence of foreign governments. He took it to you. His comment to this committee was that he was seeking direction as to what he should do, or what should happen with the file. Are you saying that you, and you alone, made the decision to not proceed any further with the matter?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chair, when Mr. Fadden approached me in the manner of a “heads-up” early in the year, he was seeking direction, as I recall, on process. He wanted to know how we proceed when we have those kinds of cases, and I believe that when time passed, we did talk about process. That's all I will say about it.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Morin.

We'll now go to Madame Mourani. *Vous disposez de sept minutes.*
[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now you're speaking French. That's nice.

Good afternoon, Ms. Morin. Thank you for being here today. I have a number of quick questions for you. First, when CSIS employees speak to the media, are you the one who authorizes the interviews and talking points?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: The Minister of Public Safety is accountable for CSIS, and authorization for media appearances goes more through him. That being said, the director or agency heads very often send us a copy of the speech, sometimes in advance, but strictly out of courtesy.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: At the end of the day, it's the Minister of Public Safety's office that authorizes media appearances, that reviews the talking points with CSIS employees, and that also informs you about it.

• (1600)

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I would say that's how it works, generally speaking.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: As far as you know, can CSIS employees take the liberty of speaking to the media but without agreeing to do

an interview, and roll out media lines that haven't been validated by the Minister of Public Safety's office? Can they do that?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: In this case, my understanding is that Mr. Fadden's interview was part of a documentary that looked at CSIS through its 25-year history. So I would assume that the authorities gave their consent.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: If I understand it correctly, Mr. Fadden could not have taken part in the CBC interview without the consent of his superior, which is ultimately the minister's office.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I wouldn't want to say something so absolute. However, I would say that that should be the general practice.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Also, because the interview was authorized, the talking points would have been established in collaboration with the minister's office.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: When we grant an interview, we probably won't know in advance what questions will be asked.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Well, you have some idea.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Not necessarily. It really depends on what's going on, what has happened and on the interviewer's objectives, obviously. You know, there's a difference between an authorization that I would call “general” and an authorization that is extremely specific.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you.

I have another question. Was it when Mr. Fadden's interview was broadcast—and I'm not talking about when it was taped, but when it was shown on television—that you, like everyone else, found out that two ministers in two provinces and elected officials from British Columbia had apparently been agents of influence to foreign countries like China, according to Mr. Fadden's allegations? Or did you know about that beforehand?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I will say it again, Mr. Chair: it is clear that the phenomenon of foreign interference or influence is in no way something new. It has even been documented in CSIS's past annual reports. Really, it has been documented since the mid-1980s.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: As for these very specific cases, did the Prime Minister's Office know about it or did you learn about it sort of like everyone else? I'm not talking about the phenomenon of foreign influence, but rather of these two famous provincial ministers and these elected municipal officials. Mr. Fadden knows who they are. Did he fill you in?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chair, I would prefer to not talk about particular cases, if possible, and to stick simply to saying that we are well aware of the phenomenon of foreign influence.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: You aren't answering my question. I didn't ask you to give me names; I simply asked you if you were already aware of what we learned about on television or if you learned about it when you saw it on TV.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I'll repeat that I was fully aware of the phenomenon, and I would prefer not to comment on the specific cases.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Fadden told us that he gave the minister and, therefore the Privy Council Office as well, his report containing precisely those famous specific cases. Did he, in fact, submit a report?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Fadden told the committee when he appeared, I think it was on July 5, that he was going to submit a report, which he did.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: In your practice, did you find it a little unusual that a head of CSIS took the liberty of speaking to CBC about those topics, about those ministers, to throw around allegations like that without giving names? Did you find that normal? As a security advisor, did you not find it a little strange that a head of CSIS would allow himself to tell the media that there were apparently two ministers and some elected municipal officials under foreign influence?

• (1605)

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chair, I think the director explained himself to the committee. He shared with committee members the circumstances that resulted in his comments being reported in the media. I don't really have much more to add to what he said.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: As an advisor—you no longer are—but as someone who has been in that position, do you think that Canada would be well served by a head of CSIS who dallies with the media and discredits politicians?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Mourani. Your time is up, but if there is any further answer to that, I will take the answer.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: First, I think Mr. Fadden did not cast a shadow on politicians, if that's your question.

Also, once again, I think that he explained himself fully to the committee. Moreover, if I remember correctly, he had said that he regretted the lack of clarity in his comments.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Morin.

We'll now move to Mr. Davies, please. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Madame Morin, for appearing before us. We have asked the Minister of Public Safety to appear before this committee to answer questions on this subject, and he refused to come, so I appreciate your being here to subject yourself to questions.

I want to start with a quick item. Mr. Fadden, when he was at this committee on July 5, said he would give his report to the Minister of Public Safety within 30 days.

Did he in fact do that within 30 days?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Honestly, Mr. Chairman, I would not have a—

Mr. Don Davies: When did you get the report?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: —recollection. I don't have a recollection of exactly when I would have been briefed.

Mr. Don Davies: I want to go back to what Mr. Fadden said. On public television, he said: There are several municipal politicians in British

Columbia and in at least two provinces there are ministers of the crown who we think are under at least the general influence of a foreign government.

He said: In the case of these individuals, it's developed over the years. They haven't really hidden their association, but what surprised us is that it's been so extensive over the years, and we're now seeing, in a couple of cases, indications that they are, in fact, shifting their public policies as a reflection of that involvement with that particular country.

I think this gives a flavour of the explosiveness of these comments. He basically accused elected officials in this country of doing the bidding of foreign governments. It's a form of treason, in a sense.

My first question to you is this: when did you become aware that the head of CSIS, Mr. Fadden, had formed a belief that politicians in Canada were under the influence of foreign governments?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: First of all, Mr. Chairman, I take exception to the use of the word "treason". I do not believe at all that it applies to the concept of foreign interference.

I want to go back to what I said earlier. The phenomenon is not new. There is a reason that the idea that CSIS should be mindful of this vulnerability was provided for in the act in 1984. It is also not unique to Canada. I would like—

Mr. Don Davies: Madame Morin, I'm sorry, but I asked when you became aware.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I will not discuss specific cases, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Don Davies: I'm not asking you to discuss. I'm asking you when you became aware of Mr. Fadden's actions. You were the national security advisor, were you not?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I was a national security advisor until November 1 of this year, indeed.

Mr. Don Davies: When did you become aware that the head of CSIS was of the belief that certain politicians in this country were under the influence of foreign governments? It's a simple question: when?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chairman—

The Chair: Madame Morin, let me also read from our committee book, just to enlarge on this matter. I will give you extra time so that my clerk can take a look at that.

The O'Brien book says:...committees ordinarily accept the reasons that a public servant gives for declining to answer a specific question or series of questions which involve the giving of a legal opinion, which may be perceived as a conflict with the witness' responsibility to the Minister, which are outside of their own area of responsibility, or which might affect business transactions.

Those are the ones listed. I'm not certain if any of those would apply to you, Mr. Davies, but let me say to you and to our witness that we will leave it up to you as to the questions you choose to answer and not answer, based on that.

Go ahead, Madame Mourani.

•(1610)

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Chair, thank you for addressing this matter. I quite openly admit that the questions we're asking... We aren't asking for names; we're talking about public matters. I asked the question and didn't even get a response. We are asking when Mr. Fadden submitted this report. He said himself that he was going to submit it. We aren't making things up; it's all public.

Was she already aware that Mr. Fadden was going to reveal this information to the media?

[English]

The Chair: Okay, I'll take that—

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: We aren't talking about national security things; we aren't asking where our missiles are located or, I don't know, where our satellites are. I find this unacceptable! We're here, we want answers, but we're pretty responsible about not asking questions that are going to compromise national security. Don't tell me that knowing when Mr. Fadden submitted his report is a national security issue. This is a matter of transparency, Mr. Chair, and it's not the same thing. Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Mourani. Mr. Holland, is this on the same point of order?

Continue, Mr. Davies, and we'll add another...

Please continue.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be sensitive to those strictures, but with reference to the question of when you were informed of this, and in light of what I'm going to say, I think you'll see that Mr. Fadden himself talked about this. I'm asking when he informed you that he had these concerns. That's the only question I'm asking you.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: The specific concerns are...?

Mr. Don Davies: The concerns that two cabinet ministers and a municipal politician in British Columbia were under the influence of foreign governments.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I will go back to Mr. Fadden's testimony. Mr. Fadden gave me a heads-up early in 2010 that he was following some cases. After that he proceeded with his work, and that was it.

Mr. Don Davies: Okay. I'm going to quote again from Mr. Fadden's CBC interview with Mr. Mansbridge.

Mr. Mansbridge said:

Well, you know, I understand the problem, but the director of CSIS suggesting that there are politicians in this country and now public servants as well, you're suggesting, without naming them will raise a few eyebrows. In fact, you know, if I was a provincial cabinet minister, I would say, "Hey, who are you talking about? Because you're swiping us all with this."

Then Mr. Fadden said:

Mm-hmm. I think that's fair, and we just don't keep the information to ourselves. In the case of the couple of cabinet ministers, we're in the process of discussing with the centre how we're going to inform those provinces.

Then Mr. Mansbridge said:

The centre being?

Then Mr. Fadden said:

Sorry, the Privy Council Office, the Prime Minister's department, try and get a sense of how we would best let them know that there may be a problem.

I took Mr. Fadden's comments to mean that he was in the process of discussing his concerns with the Privy Council Office. At the time Mr. Fadden made these comments, was that in fact the case?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Fadden gave me the heads-up in January, and I will repeat that it was very much in the context of how we were going to eventually deal with the cases. We have to have procedures in place, and that was the essence of the conversation I had with him—

Mr. Don Davies: Okay. That was in January. On June 23, 2010, within a day or two of the CBC interview being aired, Mr. Fadden released the following statement. He said: "I have not apprised the Privy Council Office of the cases I mentioned in the interview on CBC". Is that the case? From January to June, he, the head of CSIS, didn't apprise you of any of the cases?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: From January to June the director did not apprise us of specific cases.

Mr. Don Davies: Okay.

Mr. Fadden repeatedly singled out China in his comments. This is a quote from him:

They're funding Confucius institutes in most of the campuses across Canada. They fund them. They're sort of managed by people who are operating out of the embassy or consulates. Nobody knows that the Chinese authorities are involved. They organize demonstrations against... they have organized demonstrations against the Canadian government in respect to some of our policies concerning China. They've organized demonstrations to deal with what are called the five poisons: Taiwan, Falun Gong, and others.

These comments were aired the day before President Hu arrived in Canada. The effect of these comments specifying China was to smear every single Chinese Canadian by questioning their loyalty to Canada. This is what they're telling me in Vancouver.

I'm asking you whether you acknowledge that there was pain felt by the Chinese Canadian community in this country and whether you agree that an apology to those people for questioning their loyalty is in order.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chairman, I would take exception to the concept that we are questioning the loyalty of any group of Canadians when we talk about foreign interference. In fact, to the extent that these activities are conducted, I would argue that the communities are a victim and in fact should not feel targeted.

•(1615)

Mr. Don Davies: Fair enough.

This is my final question. You worked as national security advisor to the Prime Minister. Did you inform him of Mr. Fadden's concerns, and if so, can you give us any general position on what the Prime Minister's reaction was to Mr. Fadden's allegations?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chair, I don't think it's appropriate for me to discuss advice I might or—

The Chair: All right.

Thank you very much, then, Ms. Morin.

Now we'll move to Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Morin, for being here today. We appreciate your taking time out of your schedule. I'm sure it's quite busy.

I had an opportunity to look at your biography before you came here today, and I'd like to congratulate you for what you've done for Canada. I'd just like to go through a little of it, so that people understand your background.

You're currently with the World Bank, and we certainly congratulate you on that appointment. That's a real coup for Canada and for you as an individual. In your recent appointment, you represent not only Canada, but also Antigua, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis—a number of countries. It's fair to say that it's a broad base there.

You were appointed as national security advisor to the Prime Minister and associate secretary to the cabinet on November 17, 2008. From April 2006 to November 2008, you served as deputy minister for international trade, and from December 2003 to April 2006 as associate deputy minister of foreign affairs. Prior to that, you held the post of assistant deputy minister, international business and trade, chief trade commissioner. You held the position of director general, international business development, policy and planning, from September 2001 to September 2003.

I see here that you've also had extensive experience outside the country, having been in San Francisco from 1981 to 1984; in Jakarta, 1984 to 1986; in London, 1986 to 1990; and in Moscow, in 1994 and 1997. In 1997 you were appointed as Canada's ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway, with concurrent accreditation to the Republic of Iceland—

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Holland, on a point of order, please.

Mr. Mark Holland: We're all moved by the intervention of Mr. MacKenzie, and we obviously commend Madame Morin on an excellent resumé, but I'm wondering what pertinence this has to the matter at hand.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I'd just like to enlighten and inform the members opposite that this witness is well skilled and has had a wealth of information in dealing with foreign countries. That's what you people wanted her here for. She's here to tell you that she has, or we're here to certainly offer that she has a wealth of experience dealing with foreign countries.

Mr. Mark Holland: Get to the point of asking her a question.

The Chair: Continue, Mr.—

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Most people have been reluctant to let her answer. That's the problem.

The Chair: Continue, Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Don Davies: I have a point of order too. This committee has never questioned the extensive knowledge, experience, or—

The Chair: That's not a point of order—

Mr. Don Davies: Well, it is relevant, though, if Mr. MacKenzie is proceeding with an examination of 1982 to 1984 Jakarta, when we're here to talk about the Fadden inquiry—

The Chair: Continue, Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I'm sorry if you don't want to know about the wealth of experience that this witness has, but I think we should all be proud of her experience.

I will ask the question. Your service to the country has, for the most part, been spent working on matters related to foreign affairs and security. Is that correct?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Indeed, yes, and I have worked on economic issues as well.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: In your opinion, how do the people of CSIS stack up against other intelligence agencies?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: My answer to that, Mr. Chairman, would be that they stack up excellently.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: You've had a chance around the world to deal with foreign governments, and in some cases to deal with the security of foreign governments around the world.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Indeed.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Have you dealt with some other agencies?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. In particular, over the last two years when I was national security advisor, I had the opportunity to interact with my counterparts in not only the United States but also Europe and many other countries—in Asia, Belize, and so on.

I would say that our security and intelligence community is absolutely the best of class, including, of course, CSIS.

• (1620)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: During that period of time, you've worked for not only the current government but also the previous government, and you were appointed by both governments. Would that be correct?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: That is correct.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: The relationship that you've been able to enjoy has been one of... You tell us. In dealing with officials of both the previous government and the current government...

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I believe I have maintained a high degree of integrity. I have considered it to be a real privilege to serve Canada, particularly over the last seven years, before I left my current position in the ranks of deputy ministers. Not only do I believe that CSIS is an excellent institution, but I would also add that I believe the Canadian public service stands as a model when compared globally.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: In dealing with this issue, my colleagues across the room have frequently talked about political interference. Having worked for both governments, can you tell me if you have experienced any political interference either from the current government or in the past from the previous government?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Not that I recall at all.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: You were allowed to do your job as it was defined.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Absolutely.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: One of the things that we've talked about frequently in Canada is the oversight bodies that deal with CSIS. I know my time is running out here, but I would like to explore that a little bit later.

When you've been in other countries, do you know the kinds of oversight that agencies in those countries have and how their oversight compares to Canada's?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I would say that the oversight structure that we have over our agencies, and in particular CSIS, are as rigorous as—and I would even say more rigorous than—those in many other countries, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: In this regard, it seems—and I have certainly heard it from Canadians—that the whole issue has been one of politicization. I wouldn't expect you to answer that.

In other countries, in your view—and maybe this is an unfair question—how would they deal with what this is perceived to be as an issue here?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I mentioned previously that the specific issue of foreign interference is one that is well known in a great number of countries. I don't think it would come as a surprise if it were discussed. In fact, it is discussed quite openly in other countries.

I have had the chance to discuss it myself in my bilateral consultations. It certainly is not something that is unknown. It is a vulnerability that a great number of countries are experiencing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKenzie and Ms. Morin.

Mr. Kania is next.

Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.): I'd like to go back and establish some facts. In early 2010—in January, according to your answer—Mr. Fadden contacted you and raised concerns about some politicians being under foreign influence. That's accurate.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Fadden gave me a heads-up about a generic concern with foreign interference. He said basically that he would get back to me at some point on this issue.

As I mentioned, the point of the heads-up was to talk about process.

Mr. Andrew Kania: When did he get back to you on that point after January 2010?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Do you mean about the process?

Mr. Andrew Kania: When did he next contact you to discuss this issue again?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Allow me to repeat this: the general issue of foreign interference is not new. It is part of the basket of vulnerabilities that we deal with in the realm of national security. With respect to the cases in hand, I think that Mr. Fadden told the committee that he had not briefed me as of the time he gave the interview.

• (1625)

Mr. Andrew Kania: It's a specific question. I'd like you to focus on this question.

He contacted you in January 2010 with respect to this issue. When did he next contact you on this issue?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Honestly, I do not recall, but I was not briefed on the specific cases by the time he gave the interview.

Mr. Andrew Kania: He says in his letter of August 31, 2010: "The speech I proposed to deliver at the RCMI was reviewed by staff in the Minister's office as well as the national Security Advisor's (NSA) Office".

He says that you reviewed his speech before he delivered it. Is that accurate?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I probably did not review it myself, but my office would have. I am aware that there were two or three lines in there about foreign interference.

Mr. Andrew Kania: In reference to that, he also says that prior to his retraction, which took place on June 23, it was once again reviewed by your office. Did you also review his comments before he made a retraction?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I would not call it a retraction; I would call it a clarification. I believe that Mr. Fadden provided a letter. In fact, I think he was asked by the committee in July whether he had actually talked to me at the time of the clarification. I recall Mr. Fadden's phoning me and saying "I gave this interview and I think there is a need for me to issue a clarification on a point or two."

Mr. Andrew Kania: In January 2010, he brings this to your attention. Based on what you're saying, he did not raise it again with you until around the time he was going to give his speech, so for that block of a number of months, there was no further contact from him to you.

During that block of time, I'd like to know whether you contacted the minister, the minister's office, the Prime Minister, or the Prime Minister's Office to bring to their attention what Mr. Fadden had advised you of.

Mr. Fadden said, "There are several municipal politicians in British Columbia and in at least two provinces there are ministers of the crown who we think are under at least the general influence of a foreign government."

Then he said, "We just don't keep the information to ourselves. In the case of the couple of cabinet ministers, we're in process of discussing with the centre how we're going to inform those provinces."

What I'd like to know from you, as a second part to my question, is whether or not he ever advised you, your office, the Prime Minister's Office, or the minister's office of the names of the individuals that he made those allegations against. If so, I'd like to know whether you agree with those allegations and whether there are any municipal or provincial politicians that are under foreign influence. In essence, were his comments accurate or not?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: First of all, I don't want to leave committee members with the overall sense that between January and June Mr. Fadden and I had no contact whatsoever. I would like to say that in the nature of my work and in the course of doing business, of course I would have had multiple meetings with representatives from the security and intelligence community. I just want to put that on the record.

With respect to names and so on, I simply don't think it's appropriate for me to discuss cases, so I will leave it at that.

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

Now we'll go back to Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Thank you, Chair.

I had indicated that I wanted to talk with you briefly about the oversight body. I think it's important that the committee, and the people at home who may watch this, know that CSIS has an oversight body called SIRC. The Honourable Gary Filmon, a former premier, is chair of that Security Intelligence Review Committee, which we frequently call SIRC.

This is a quote of Mr. Filmon:

Let me say first that having served on SIRC for nearly nine years, during which time I have been in regular contact with many organizations with similar mandates, I'm confident that Canada's model is, and is recognized to be, one of the strongest review functions in the world. This is not to say that changes and improvements are not possible, but simply that we have in SIRC an effective tool for helping to ensure the accountability of Canada's security intelligence agency, CSIS.

As I'm sure you are aware, SIRC came into being at the same time that Canada created CSIS, its civilian security intelligence service. With the passage of the CSIS Act in 1984, Canada became one of the first democratic governments in the world to establish a detailed legal framework for the operation of its security service. It is equally significant that the CSIS Act created a framework to make CSIS accountable in exercising its powers, a framework that by and large has stood the test of time.

Specifically, the CSIS Act defines the mandate and limits of state power to conduct security intelligence. It also spells out how the service's work is to be monitored through a rigorous system of political and judicial controls, including two review bodies, each with a distinct mandate, to watch over the new agency.

That is a quote from Mr. Filmon.

I would draw your attention to this, because it's important to appreciate the context in which CSIS operates. I think we all accept that the people of CSIS are dedicated to the protection of Canada's national security interests and to the safety of all Canadians. It's also clear that what CSIS does is done in accordance with applicable laws and respects human rights.

My recollection from the testimony given on May 11 is that CSIS is, in fact, one of the most monitored intelligence agencies in the world.

Can you provide any insight to us on how being subject to this oversight helps CSIS accomplish its mandate?

• (1630)

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: First of all, let me say, Mr. Chairman, that I would concur with the comments made by Mr. Filmon. I would say that we are, in fact, very fortunate to have high-quality Canadians who are willing to dedicate their time to serve on SIRC, which is in itself a unique body and takes its work extremely seriously. It reviews the activities of CSIS to make sure that they are carried out absolutely appropriately.

I am absolutely confident, Mr. Chairman, from the two years in which I had the great privilege of serving as national security advisor, that we have in SIRC an excellent oversight body for the service.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: The extension is that because of the oversight agencies we have, if there is something my colleagues feel is detrimental, SIRC has the authority to review the agency. As it was originally constructed back in 1984, and as you have viewed it over the last couple of years, there are those bodies to deal with those issues.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Those bodies exist, indeed.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: When you talked to certain members, your position was that you would be in regular contact with a number of agencies and individuals during that period of time to deal with a variety of different things.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Absolutely. Part of the duties of a national security advisor, Mr. Chairman, if this is what the honourable member is referring to, would be to chair a number of committees. All the departments and agencies that form the group dealing with national security issues would be represented within these committees.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now move back to the Bloc.

Monsieur Gaudet.... Go ahead, Madam Mourani.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Ms. Morin, we received a letter from Mr. Fadden in response to the committee's questions. He seems to say that he consulted the minister's office, his staff and your office to clarify his remarks about his interview with CBC. Is that right?

• (1635)

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Yes, the director contacted me to say that he had been thinking about issuing a clarification of his comments. He wanted to set the record straight, because he had said that he had already briefed me on the specific cases, which he hadn't.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: If I understand it correctly, when he gave an interview to CBC, he spoke about specific cases without giving names, and you weren't aware of those specific cases.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I said that Mr. Fadden had told me that he had already held a briefing on those specific cases, and I think that it is clear that he had to issue a clarification saying that...

Mrs. Maria Mourani: That wasn't the case.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: ... at that point, the file was incomplete.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: These specific cases are currently in a report. You received it, as you said. Does the Prime Minister's Office support the report?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chair, I don't think it's appropriate for me to share advice or reactions from ministers or the Prime Minister about any information file at all.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I'll admit, Ms. Morin, that this situation is very serious. The head of CSIS said that he submitted a report both to his Minister of Public Safety and to the Prime Minister through you and that the report discusses elected provincial officials, ministers from provinces and elected municipal officials who are also agents of influence of foreign countries. If he says something like that in a report, I, as a member of the public, am hugely concerned and, as a member of Parliament, am even more concerned thinking that these people are still there, that they are still in power.

What is the Prime Minister's Office doing? What actions are you going to take? If there really are agents of influence in departmental offices, the RCMP needs to investigate. These people need to be brought before the courts. However, if these allegations aren't founded, the Prime Minister's Office must act to restore the reputation of all those ministers and of all those elected officials in British Columbia who were slandered by broad, vast and vague allegations. What are you going to do?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Mr. Chair, we aren't talking about broad, vast allegations. I repeat, no shadow has been cast on all politicians. We are talking about specific cases. The service carried out its obligations, and the cases are closed.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I understand. My question is very specific: Will the RCMP conduct an investigation? Has there been a request for that?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I have no information establishing that the RCMP would conduct an investigation.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: The fact that you have no information doesn't mean that the RCMP isn't conducting an investigation. You're not aware of one?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: No, absolutely not.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I have one more question. Based on what you've told me, I understand that you and the Prime Minister's Office were not aware of the allegations that Mr. Fadden made when he granted an interview to CBC. Am I mistaken?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I will repeat that the issue of foreign influence is not new. I will repeat that this is one of the issues we deal with regularly in our discussions. Was I aware that this threat and vulnerability to Canada was present? Yes, I was aware of it.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: But that wasn't my question.

• (1640)

[English]

The Chair: Madam Mourani, your time is up. Were you finished with your answer?

All right. We'll come back now to the government.

Go ahead, Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Thank you, Chair.

Some of the questions seem to be a bit different, but it would be fair to say that when we host people here we expect they will try to influence us in some regard, as we would if we were in another country. It would not be in a subversive manner or in espionage or any of those things, but I think it's fair to say that even when we visit other countries on vacation on our personal time, we're either influenced or trying to influence.

Some of the things we've gone into here seem to be what most Canadians expect to happen on a day-to-day basis, not only in Canada but around the world.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I have worked in the realm of international relations for literally decades. In the conduct of international relations, it is absolutely normal that we seek to explain our point of view and at times make sure our interlocutors come to share our point of view about issues. All this is done in an overt manner in the normal course of bilateral relations.

I expect to be *démarched* in this regard by foreign interlocutors. I have *démarched* foreign interlocutors, hoping they would come around to my point of view. Those are not the kinds of activities we are talking about, very clearly.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I think Mr. Fadden provided the committee with a letter dated August 31 to clarify some of the questions that had come up at the July 5 meeting. Have you had a chance to see that letter?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I have a copy of it here.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: He says in the second paragraph...I can confirm that I had general discussions with the Minister about these two events prior to them taking place, and had received his approval to proceed. The speech I proposed to deliver at the RCMI was reviewed by staff in the Minister's office as well as the National Security Advisor's (NSA) Office. To be clear, the review did not include—obviously—any part of what was said during the question and answer period.

Is that an accurate statement from the perspective of your office?

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Indeed.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay.

Because Mr. Fadden was asked at our committee about CSIS appearing on television previously, he made it very clear that he did not give any off-the-record or background briefings to the CBC, but he also made it clear that his predecessor had hosted a CBC correspondent, Brian Stewart, in March 2009, so when Mr. Fadden appeared on the CBC, he was not the first to be there in the position he held.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: That's correct.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I suppose it's reasonable to say we expect, from time to time, that some of the heads of our agencies will appear in public.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: I believe it is important and healthy that we have public conversations about matters of national security. It is important that Canadians are made aware of the global security environment. I would like to start there, because it is very much my view that the threats to Canadian national security are completely connected to the global security environment. It is important for officials—and, obviously, elected officials—to talk about those vulnerabilities and risks.

This is done in many other countries. Members of the committee might be aware that just about two months ago, before I left my position, the head of the U.K. intelligence service gave a public speech outlining all the vulnerabilities and threats to the U.K.'s national security. This is done quite frequently in other countries—not to speak, of course, of the United States right next door to us, where Congress gets to hear fairly regularly about threats to national security.

•(1645)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madam Morin, I want to thank you for coming today. Thank you for being available on three separate occasions, one of which, unfortunately, was not a regular meeting day.

On behalf of all our committee, I want to wish you all the best at the World Bank. I think it speaks very well for you, but also very

well for our country, that we have someone with your experience moving to a position like that. Thank you for being here.

Ms. Marie-Lucie Morin: Thank you very much. *Merci beaucoup.*

The Chair: We'll suspend the meeting.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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