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• (1505)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 23 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, June 1, the committee is meeting to study the Investment Canada Act.

Today's proceedings are taking place by video conference and will be made available via the House of Commons website.

I'd like to remind members and witnesses to please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. When you are ready to speak, please unmute your microphone, making sure you have selected the language that you will be speaking. Then when you are finished speaking, make sure you remute your mike. When you are speaking, please speak slowly and clearly, so that the translators can do their work.

As is my normal practice, I will wave a yellow card when there are 30 seconds remaining in the time period, and I will raise the red card when your time is up. Please respect the signs so that everyone can get a turn.

I'd now like to welcome our witnesses. We have two panels today.

Our first panel consists of Mr. Tim Hahlweg, assistant director, requirements, Canadian Security Intelligence Service; Mr. Mitch Davies, senior assistant deputy minister, industry sector, Department of Industry; and Dominic Rochon, senior assistant deputy minister, national security and cybersecurity branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

In our second panel, which we will reintroduce after the first panel, we have Omar Wakil, partner, Torys LLP; and Michelle Travis, research director, Unite Here Canada.

Each witness group will have five minutes to present, followed by our regular question periods.

With that, we will start with Mr. Hahlweg. You have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Tim Hahlweg (Assistant Director, Requirements, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Madam Chair, members of the committee, good afternoon.

As indicated, my name is Tim Hahlweg. I'm the assistant director of requirements at the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

Among other things, my directorate is responsible for the analysis of intelligence that CSIS collects on threats to the security of Canada. Our intelligence assessments and advice are provided to government to inform decision-making.

I want to thank you very much for the invitation to participate in the committee's study of the Investment Canada Act.

I want to begin by briefly outlining CSIS's mandate, which is to investigate activities suspected of constituting a threat to the security of Canada, to advise the Government of Canada on such threats and to take measures to reduce these threats. Threats to the security of Canada are defined in section 2 of the CSIS Act as espionage or sabotage, an influenced activity, terrorism and subversion of government through violence.

As discussed in our recent public report, state-sponsored economic—

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): A point of order, Madam Chair.

Interpretation isn't working.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): That's what I was going to say.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

[English]

Mr. Hahlweg, wait one moment. I'm going to pause your time.

[Translation]

Can someone find out what the problem is with interpretation?

I'm on the French channel, and I'm getting English translation.

[English]

I'm going to do a quick test.

Sébastien, can you confirm whether you are hearing me in French or in English?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I can hear you in French.

The Chair: Perfect.

[English]

We will start again. It looks as though we're back.

Mr. Hahlweg, go ahead.

Mr. Tim Hahlweg: Thank you.

As discussed in our recent public report, state-sponsored economic espionage activities in Canada continue to increase in breadth, depth and potential economic impact. In order to fulfill their national, economic, intelligence and military interests, some foreign states engage in espionage activities.

Foreign espionage has significant economic ramifications for Canada—

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Excuse me, Madam Chair, but did you hear what the French interpreter said? She said the witness is too far away from his microphone, which makes interpretation difficult. If the situation doesn't improve, she's going to stop interpreting.

The Chair: Give me a moment, please.

[English]

Mr. Hahlweg, is it possible for you to slow down so that the translators can keep up with you?

Mr. Tim Hahlweg: Absolutely.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll try again.

Mr. Tim Hahlweg: Foreign espionage has significant economic ramifications for Canada, including job loss, intellectual property, corporate and tax revenues, and competitive advantages.

With our economic prosperity and our open academic research communities, Canada offers attractive prospects to foreign investors. Although foreign investment is a key driver of Canada's economic prosperity, it also has the potential in certain cases to adversely affect our national security interests. The acquisition of sensitive intellectual property, technology and vast amounts of Canadian citizens' private data for foreign use or with foreign-state control can threaten national security. While the vast majority of foreign investment in Canada is carried out in an open and transparent manner, some state-owned enterprises and private firms with suspected or known ties to their governments and/or intelligence services can pursue corporate acquisition bids in Canada or other economic activities on a non-commercial basis for their own strategic interests.

Foreign states have engaged in espionage and foreign interference, targeting Canada for years.

• (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, I have to raise another point of order. The interpreter is saying that the sound quality isn't good enough to provide accurate interpretation. That's a problem for our witness.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: However, the sound quality just improved a few seconds ago. Does that make interpretation possible now?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Hahlweg, please wait one moment. I'm just going to verify with the translators whether they actually have a copy of your remarks to make sure that, if there's a problem with the sound, they're able to continue to translate.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: That's an excellent idea.

[English]

Ms. Kathleen Ratel (Interpreter, Translation Bureau, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Hello, Madam Chair. This is Kathleen here in Ottawa. I'm the interpreter coordinator.

I can check with my team to see if they have the speaking remarks. However, having the text is one thing. Interpreters still have to check against delivery. For that to be possible, they need clear sound.

The Chair: Okay. Is it the sound that is difficult, or is it in terms of the speed?

Ms. Kathleen Ratel: It is both, actually. There was improvement with the sound when the witness placed the microphone higher up, but it seems that the device itself does not allow for clear sound. The last option we can try, perhaps, is for the witness to put the microphone further away and up to see if that works, but really, it's a matter of quality. It's not just a question of having the text.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Hahlweg, could you move the microphone a little further away and try to speak a little more slowly? We're going to test that.

Mr. Tim Hahlweg: Absolutely.

Foreign states have engaged in espionage and foreign interference targeting Canada for years. This is not—

Ms. Kathleen Ratel: Sorry to interrupt, but could the witness take the earbud out of his left ear so as to place the microphone directly in front of his mouth?

Let's give this a try.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Chair, to avoid wasting time and our turns, I suggest we move on to another witness while Mr. Hahlweg's sound issues are being fixed.

The Chair: Yes, we can do that, but I want to make sure everyone can hear the testimony. We'll stop after the second witness to fix the problem. We're going to see if it's working. If not, we'll go to the next witness.

Can interpretation tell us if it worked properly? If not, we'll go to the next witness.

• (1515)

Ms. Kathleen Ratel: It seemed better. If we can get one or two more sentences, we'll be able to give you an answer.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hahlweg, can you just say a few more words? We're going to test it. Then, if it's not right, we'll go to the next witness while we try to help you with your technology.

[*English*]

Mr. Tim Hahlweg: Understood.

Foreign states have engaged in espionage and foreign interference, targeting Canada for years. This is not new activity. CSIS Director Vigneault has spoken publicly about the impact of these threats to Canada's economy and national interest, including—

The Chair: Unfortunately, the interpreter is telling us that the sound is not good enough.

What we're going to do, Mr. Hahlweg, is go to the next speaker while we try to fix your microphone, because we have a very short time in the first panel. We'll have IT get in touch with you while we are going with the next speaker.

Mr. Tim Hahlweg: Understood.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Davies, if you wouldn't mind, we will give you five minutes.

Mr. Mitch Davies (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Industry Sector, Department of Industry): Thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to discuss the Investment Canada Act related to the committee's study.

I am the senior assistant deputy minister of the industry sector for Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, and deputy director of investments, responsible for supporting the director of investments in advising the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry on the Investment Canada Act.

In my brief opening remarks, I would like to provide background to the committee on how we administer the act, including in the current context shaped by COVID-19.

As has been widely recognized, foreign direct investment plays an important role—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, I'm sorry to interrupt the witness, but the interpreter says she'll have to stop because of the poor sound quality. We don't have interpretation for this witness either.

The Chair: Okay.

[*English*]

We're going to suspend for one moment while we see what we can do.

• (1515)

(Pause)

• (1525)

The Chair: I'm going to reconvene this meeting.

We are unfortunately having difficulty with interpretation, so while we might be able to hear testimony verbatim, this is not ideal for testimony, nor is it ideal for questioning and answering.

Unfortunately, it looks like we will have to adjourn this meeting and reschedule it for another time so that we can make sure to have proper interpretation.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Would it not be possible for us to take 10 minutes to read the testimony we have in both official languages and then come back to ask questions?

The Chair: The difficulty is that we can't ask questions because interpretation will not work for the questions and answers. This unfortunately means we can't proceed.

I'm sorry about this, but obviously we cannot have a meeting without official translation. Unfortunately I have to adjourn this meeting.

My apologies to our witnesses. We will be in touch with you to reschedule, and I will be in touch with committee members to reschedule this meeting.

With that, I call this meeting adjourned.

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