

Details of CSIS Probe on Foreign Influence Still Being Withheld

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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Montreal – The Harper government is still withholding the details of Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) investigations that prompted CSIS Director Richard Fadden to comment on foreign influence on Canadian politicians. The media have been focusing on China as one source of inappropriate influence. However, Fadden indicated that at least five countries, including China and Middle East nations were involved. He did not specify which Middle Eastern countries. The government’s secrecy may indicate that Israel – to which the Harper government has given resolute uncritical support – is among the Middle Eastern countries that CSIS investigations reveal are unduly influencing Canada’s politicians.

In his comments, Fadden talked about foreign influence exercised through university and social clubs. He noted “You pay [for] their trips and ... when an event is occurring that is of particular interest to country ‘X,’ you call up and you ask the person to take a particular view,” Fadden said. Currently, Hillel Clubs operate on most Canadian campuses, and their mandates explicitly include “Israel advocacy” and promoting Jewish students’ identification with Israel. Opportunities for all-expenses-paid two-week trips to Israel are also made available to students. A similar process occurs with federal MPs and provincial legislators. The Canada-Israel Committee has been subsidizing trips to Israel for MPs and provincial legislators for decades.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East is concerned about the influence that Israel and the Canada-Israel Committee exercise on federal politicians through travel subsidies and possibly other means. “We urge the government to disclose now which countries CSIS found exercising undue influence, and the means by which they do so,” says CJPME President Thomas Woodley. As pointed out by veteran CBC journalist Brian Stewart, trips subsidized by foreign governments are “carefully planned, often by the host nation’s intelligence arm.” CJPME believes that Canadian policy should be moulded by respect for international law, and is concerned that Canadian Middle East policy could be skewed through the type of influence Fadden described.

According to the federal ethics commissioner, the Canada-Israel Committee paid over \$160,000 for various one-week trips by 14 MPs to Israel in 2009 alone. The Canada-Israel Committee subsidized a July 2010 trip by seven MPs: Conservative MPs John Duncan, Jeff Watson, Edward Fast and Brent Rathgeber, Liberal MPs Scott Simms and Anthony Rota and NDP MP Glenn Thibeault. No other Middle East nation has hosted so many MPs on such frequent and expensive trips.

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Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.

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