Ex-CSIS officer says Canada should use $6 billion to spy on allies

Melanie Bennet - Juno News - 2026-11-10

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Ex-CSIS officer says Canada should use $6 billion to spy on allies

Phil Gorski argues Ottawa needs its own spies abroad to check American intelligence reports when the two countries' interests diverge.

Melanie Bennet

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Former Canadian intelligence officer Phil Gurski says Ottawa should use part of its proposed $6-billion boost to Canada's spy agency to build a foreign intelligence service capable of spying on allies, including the United States.

"That's a chunk of cash that could be used to create this foreign intelligence wing within CSIS," Gurski told Canadaland.

Budget 2026 proposes $6 billion over 10 years starting in 2027-28 to expand the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Ottawa says the funding would help Canada rely less on foreign partners. The budget sets no amount aside for a foreign intelligence wing.

BUDGET: More intelligence funding and European defence commitments

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CSIS can already investigate threats to Canada's security overseas. That authority to collect intelligence on the capabilities and intentions of foreign governments is exercised from within the country.

Under Gurski's proposal, Canadian officers could recruit human intelligence sources abroad to find out what other governments are planning, including when their decisions could affect Canadian trade or foreign policy.

"You're not going to go to the local government and say, 'Hey, by the way, can we spy on your foreign ministry?'" he said.

His contacts at CSIS and the RCMP told him intelligence sharing with the U.S. had continued under President Donald Trump. Gurski dismissed reports of FBI Director Kash Patel saying the bureau wasn't cooperating with Canada. "I think it's full of shit," he said.

The Five Eyes partners still share sensitive intelligence, he said, but he argued that political pressure from the Trump White House had made CIA analysis less reliable. Canadian sources abroad would give Ottawa a way to check very allied intelligence.

Asked whether Canada should be willing to tap an allied leader's phone, as the U.S. reportedly did to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Gurski said it could be justified if it met Canada's intelligence needs. He said an operation like that would need "an incredibly high level of approval." Getting caught could damage relations with a trusted ally.

"No one's going to give a shit if ISIS is angry that we've tapped their phones," he said. "But with friends, it's a very careful calculus."

Gurski questioned whether Ottawa would act on the intelligence it collected. He called the handling of intelligence under former prime minister Justin Trudeau "a complete clusterfuck."

Trudeau told the foreign interference inquiry that he often didn't read intelligence reports, relying primarily on oral briefings from his national security adviser.

Would a foreign intelligence service finally give Canada its own spy on the big screen?

"No, we're not going to get our James Bond," Gurski said. "It'll be a Canadian middle-of-the-road thing."

He still sees an advantage in how Canadians are perceived abroad.

"We're not the Americans. We're not the Brits. We don't have a colonial domination past. We're seen better by most people."

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