

## Possible People's Republic of China Foreign Interference-Related Mis or Disinformation

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*The Commission has been provided with all relevant intelligence and assessments, which indicates information on reliability and corroboration of the information contained therein.*

## SUMMARY

Over the course of the 44<sup>th</sup> General Election of Canada (GE44) in 2021, there were two distinct social and traditional media incidents that experts assessed involved misinformation (erroneous information), and may have involved disinformation.<sup>1</sup> within Canada's Chinese language media ecosystem, and notably over WeChat<sup>2</sup>.

Four Chinese language media entities that have close links to either the PRC government or PRC state-media outlets (*York BBS*, *105.9 Yes My Radio*, *Global Chinese Convergence Media*, and *Today's Commercial News*), were involved in the initial stages. The content of various articles was extensively discussed over *WeChat* and other platforms within Chinese diaspora communities in Canada. While the incidents overlapped, they were distinct in terms of their subject matter, content and target audience.

## ERIN O'TOOLE AND THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

1. One incident centered on the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), its then leader Erin O'Toole, and the CPC's electoral platform with respect to the PRC. This incident occurred over a roughly two-week period starting in late August.
2. Following the publication of an article in the *Hill Times* (an Ottawa-based political newspaper), *York BBS* posted an article about Erin O'Toole, which focused on the CPC's electoral platform and contained erroneous information, including that Mr. O'Toole would ban *WeChat* if elected. Other media entities spread the same inaccurate claims within Canada's Chinese language media ecosystem, with attribution to *York BBS*.
3. PRC state media (*Global Times*), then published an article entitled "Canadian Tories' 'hostile China blueprint' caters to toxic atmosphere against Beijing amid sour ties".
4. *Today's Commercial News* also published an article that contained inaccurate information, which was shared widely by other media entities within Canada's Chinese language media ecosystem.
5. Claims from the *Global Times* article were shared widely by media entities within Canada's Chinese language media ecosystem, but without attribution to PRC state media.
6. No PRC state direction of the incident was detected or reported.

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<sup>1</sup> Disinformation: For the purpose of this summary, disinformation is when false or modified information (including the use of truths and half-truths) is knowingly shared to deceive, cause harm or achieve a broader aim.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this summary WeChat should be understood as kind of "super app" that combines the essential features of FaceBook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Amazon and banking applications. It is one of the most important news sources for Mandarin speakers around the world.

**KENNY CHIU**

1. The other incident centered on CPC MP and candidate for the riding of Steveston-Richmond East in British Columbia, Kenny Chiu, as well as Chiu's Private Member's Bill C-282 (An Act to establish the Foreign Influence Registry), which was introduced prior to the writ period. This incident occurred over a roughly two-week period starting in early September.
2. *105.9 Yes My Radio* posted an anonymous article assessed to contain erroneous information on CPC MP, Kenny Chiu, and Mr. Chiu's "foreign power registration act" (Private Member's Bill C-282), within Canada's Chinese language media ecosystem.
3. At roughly the same time two Vancouver area English language media entities published articles in which Kenny Chiu indicated there was a "concerted effort to spread misinformation about him" and that he had "not anticipated the smears and level of falsehood."
4. After *105.9 Yes My Radio's* article, *Global Chinese Convergence Media* posted similar claims about Mr. Chiu and his "foreign power registration act" within Canada's Chinese language media ecosystem, adding a section exploring Mr. Chiu's past "anti-PRC" activities.
5. After *Global Chinese Convergence Media's* article, *Today's Commercial News* posted similar claims about Mr. Chiu, his "foreign power registration act", his past "anti-PRC" activities, and encouraged people to further share the article with others within Canada's Chinese language media ecosystem.
6. Experts did not observe direct PRC state media participation in spreading the narratives about Mr. Chiu.

For both incidents, the extent to which inaccurate information was simply being circulated and commented upon, or whether some of the above represents disinformation (deliberate attempts to knowingly deceive, cause harm or achieve a broader aim) remains unclear. Indicators of potential coordination between the various Canada-based news outlets were observed.