



# SITE TF SITREP: 21 October 2019

## 2019 Federal Election – Threat Trend: STABLE



This situation report (SITREP) provides information on the operations of the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force. It is to be used by Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs) and Deputy Ministers (DMs) for information and decision-making purposes. Intended for named recipients only. Please share with members of: SITE TF ADMs; SITE TF DMs; Panel of 5

### Threat Updates

#### CSE

- **(U//OUO)** CCCS has increased surge posture in support of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Election. Analysts will be on site at both CSE COPCC and Elections Canada HQ during all polling hours.

#### GAC: Buffalo Chronicle

- **(U)** The online news provider Buffalo Chronicle targeted PM Trudeau again over the weekend with two more related stories. These stories generated over 15,000 engagements across social media platforms, similar to engagements expected from publication like the Ottawa Citizen.
- **(U)** At the same time, BuzzFeed News and Toronto Star published an investigative piece on the Chronicle itself. They claim the owner, American Mathew Ricciazzi, has accepted payment in the past to publish negative articles about clients' political opponents. RRM Canada cannot verify this claim, but our preliminary findings indicate that the Chronicle did not/not publish content about Canada for the purpose of generating ad revenue (i.e., clickbait). BuzzFeed News and Toronto Star also note that 8 out of the Chronicle's 10 most popular articles this year have been about Canada, generating approximately 200,000 engagements. Using in house tools and methodologies, RRM Canada also observed these findings.
- **(U)** On the evening of 20 October, Avaaz, an online platform aimed at mobilising international social action, posted a petition calling on the RCMP to investigate who may have paid Ricciazzi to promote fake news related to Canada's election. As of 08:30 on 21 October, the petition has garnered over 18, 000 signatures.
- **(U)** RRM Canada assesses that Buffalo Chronicle's stories about the election have been pervasive during the writ period and may have played a role in influencing online political discussions. Buffalo Chronicle's content has been cited by alternative and mainstream news publications and has prompted fact-checkers from Agence-France Press (Facebook fact-checking partner) and Snopes to debunk the story. RRM Canada cannot determine if the Buffalo Chronicle stories influenced voters' intentions. RRM Canada is working on a more fulsome assessment.

CERRID 65693709

1

© Government of Canada

This document is the property of the Government of Canada. It shall not be altered, distributed beyond its intended audience, produced, reproduced or published, in whole or in any substantial part thereof, without the express permission of CSE.



Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

TOP SECRET/[redacted]/CEO

**GAC: #TrudeauMustGo**

- (U) The Digital Democracy Project (located at the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University) reviewed online activity involving Twitter accounts posting on the #TrudeauMustGo hashtag. It found little evidence to conclusively identify a coordinated campaign. It assessed that this activity was likely undertaken by a population segment that is very interested in Canadian politics and identifies with American and British politics. As Canada and the US are major trading and cultural partners, and just as American politics are covered extensively in Canada, this engagement is not out of the ordinary. RRM Canada's own assessment reflects the Digital Democracy Project's findings.

**CSIS**

- (S//CEO) [redacted]
- (S//CEO) CSIS advised Elections Canada and CCE on October 18 & 19 respectively.

**Operational Responses and Updates**

- (U) No significant updates at this time.
- 

