

RE: RE: Follow up on WeChat stories**From:** [redacted] international.gc.ca>**To:** "Dobner, Gallit -IOL" [redacted]

[redacted] international.gc.ca>

Cc: [redacted]**Date:** Mon, 04 Oct 2021 00:53:29 +0000

Just hope it helps! But yes, not any closer, but at the very least, more pieces we hadn't seen before. This is the first time we've seen any screen grabs of the private messages on WeChat. These are really helpful to understand what kind of narratives were floating around group messages. Is there any way for us to reach out to the person who captured these screen grabs? There's a couple things we could still learn from these wechat group messages:

- I wasn't able to find a time and date from the metadata of the wechat message screengrabs. If the messages began circulating around Sep 8 or 9, the date when the first op-eds about Chiu and C-282 appeared, it might give us some more clues on what level of coordination this campaign had.
- Did the person who took the screengrabs receive these messages in a group message chat? I'm assuming that this is case, based on the appearance of the interface in the screengrab, but it would be good to confirm that this is the case. If possible, it would be great if we could learn more about what kind of group chat this is (a group chat started by a WeChat news account, or a personal one for family/friends, etc)

From: Dobner, Gallit -IOL [redacted]**Sent:** October 3, 2021 1:40 PM**To:** [redacted] international.gc.ca>; [redacted]

[redacted] international.gc.ca>

Cc: [redacted]**Subject:** RE: RE: Follow up on WeChat stories

Hi [redacted]

Hope your move went well!

Belated thanks for this incredibly helpful read-out on Friday. It looks like we aren't really any closer. Hopefully [redacted] will have more helpful info for us. I will shared your read-out with SITE members and suggest a SITE discussion. My hunch is they will want to speak on a classified line but I'll make the argument for an unclass chat if possible so that you might join.

Speak Monday,

Gallit

From: [redacted] international.gc.ca>**Sent:** October 1, 2021 8:17 PM**To:** Dobner, Gallit -IOL [redacted]

[redacted] international.gc.ca>

Cc: [redacted]

Subject: RE: Follow up on WeChat stories

Hi Gallit, here's what I've been able to find from the various sources in the email. Some of the stories attached are ones RRM Canada has documented in the past, others are totally new. I'll address each one, instead of as a group, because they appear to have different circumstances in each case:

Item 1: (IMG_1111) Political ad at a Foody Mart



- There's a reflection on the screen, so I couldn't make out some of the Chinese characters, but here's a quick translation, partly using DeepL to speed things along:
 - o "O'Tooles's Conservatives Want to Put Dangerous Weapons Back on the Streets. O'Toole's Conservatives is in cahoots with gun interests while putting your children and seniors at risk of **** school violence. Not only did O'Toole do nothing in the face of anti-Asian hatred and racism, but he voted in the House of Commons to encourage then-Conservative MP Derek Sloan to actually say it. Do you think the Conservative Party cares about us?"
- The ad appeared on a digital ad board at Foody Mart, a supermarket chain in the GTA that stocks food items from East and Southeast Asia. They have a location in Scarborough and one in Unionville.
- Based on key words and the text of the ad, I was not able to find a similar ad online through a search engine.
- I don't have any idea at all who published the ad. Based on this one photo, there's nothing in the content of the ad that indicates who is the original publisher. If it was a political party, they would of course be subject to some requirements from EC, including a [disclaimer that it was authorized by the official agent](#). Since this is a digital (but perhaps not online) platform, there are also requirements for the company that is hosting the ad, such as [establishing a registry of all the ads](#) it hosts on its platforms.
- Some of the text of the ad resembles LPC sponcon in Canadian Chinese language press on Sept. 07; see examples of said ad here: ([51.ca](#), [CC Info](#), [CFC News](#))

- **Thoughts:** I would need more info before making a definite conclusion, but my hunch is this an LPC political ad, not FI.

Item 2: WeChat Article 1-6 (WeChat private message screengrabs of Zhang Bo article)



- Based on the interface, this is very likely a private chat message or group chat message in WeChat. It appears the WeChat user has copied a Sept. 8 editorial by a writer named “Zhang Bo (张波)” from a publication called *Canadian Chinese Media News* (加拿大中文融媒体新闻) on September 8th; I haven’t been able to find any information about who this Zhang Bo person is.
- the editorial content is somewhat similar in tone to a Sept. 9th editorial from the Chinese-language Today Commercial News warning voters not to vote for CPC candidate Kenny Chiu. I’ve translated some of the excerpts of the message into English below:
 - o Title: Talk about the crisis in the Chinese community. A Call to Action to Save Ourselves: Stop the Extremist Conservatives!
 - o “Conservatives are several times tougher than the Liberals in their attitude towards China, and this is a crisis for us Chinese... In the history of China-Canada relations, we have never experienced politicians pushing for a general deterioration of China-Canada relations, the consequences of which are unpredictable for the Chinese in Canada.”
 - o If Trump is elected to power in Canada, what happens to the Chinese in the U.S. is a preview of our future.

- o As a Chinese person, no matter what your usual political views are, and no matter how much you like or dislike the parties and their leaders, you should not vote for the Conservative Party, which is promoting an all-out anti-Chinese agenda, at a time when the survival and fate of the Chinese people will change dramatically.
- o Multiculturalism has always been the foundation of our survival in Canada. Chinese people are in danger, so save yourself. Please take action and mobilize your friends and family to vote for the Liberals in the September 20 election to prevent the extreme anti-Chinese Conservative Party from coming to power."
- So, the contents of this article was also copied and pasted onto the web version of the York BBS messaging board on Sept 9th. My hunch is the WeChat message above is also from this time period.
- It's unusual that the publication of the editorial (Sept 8th) comes so close to the publication of the one in Today Commercial News on Sept. 9th. I've since found another editorial also on Sep 9th by a sister publication of the 51.ca Wechat account that published a headline "Why the Chinese should oppose the CPC MP Kenny Chiu";
- Final thoughts: there is some unusual coordination between seemingly disparate Chinese-language news outlets publishing "don't vote CPC" or "don't vote for Kenny Chiu" all around the same date, Sept 8th and 9th.
- The Zhang Bo editorial in question originated from a website (*Canadian Chinese Media News*) that does not appear to have any presence on Weibo or Wechat. The content of the WeChat message is identical to the Zhang Bo editorial, but the WeChat message bears no indication that it was copied from the *Canadian Chinese Media News* web page (such as left over html, formatting errors, etc.)
 - o Since news is so siloed between the normal web and Chinese social media apps like WeChat, it's unusual that an article from the normal web makes it into wechat, much less into a private message; it's not impossible, it's just a pain to do it.
 - o Also, the WeChat message has very clean formatting and punctuation; normally if you copy and paste all the text from a web page into a wechat message (or whatsapp) it would really messy. You'd see awkward spacing, lines that don't match up perfectly, and some left over html coding; there's none of that in this wechat message. It's almost as if it was cleaned up specifically to be copied into a wechat private message.
 - o There's also no attempt to drive traffic to the *Canadian Chinese Media News* site (no url to the original article); it appears the message is being shared only to sway the reader
- **Thoughts:** It's unusual that there are so many Chinese language op-eds all published around the same date (sep 8-9) in seemingly disparate publications, and that the contents of one of these op-eds (that does not appear to have much engagement if any on wechat) would suddenly appear in a cleaned-up wechat message. Aside from the Zhang Bo editorial content, however, there is nothing that indicates who the original sender is, and I would hesitate to attribute any FI, based on the screenshots available. Perhaps there is some coordination between the *Canadian Chinese Media News* and the sender of the WeChat message.

Item 3: Wechat Article2 1-3 (WeChat group message: Author is "an 82 year old ethnic Chinese")



- Based on the interface, this is very likely a private chat message or group chat message in WeChat.
- Here's a short rundown of the content:
 - o The sender is sending a message with a title at the top that reads: (Author: An 82 year old ethnic Chinese) and then address the readers with "my dear countrymen living overseas, there are still more than 2 weeks to go, the federal election that happens every few years is upon us." The author then says "all three parties have their problems" but "we need to select one that is good for the economy and good for ethnic Chinese interests"
 - o "We ethnic Chinese have to stick together, and don't let the fiercely anti-Chinese Conservatives take power. All Chinese should vote for Liberal candidates in their riding, and defeat the Conservatives. Thank you everyone!"
- I could not locate a corresponding web article for this wechat message, and it appears to be a totally original creation made to be shared in wechat group messages.
- **Thoughts:** Like the above message, there is nothing that indicates who the original sender is, and I would hesitate to attribute any FI, based on the screenshots available. However, the timing of the message is unusual. Based on the sender's own message ("more than two weeks to go for the federal election"), the wechat message would have appeared around the same time as the above op-eds that paint a poor picture of the Conservative's China policies and Kenny Chiu's C-282 bill.

Item 4: Canadian version of Trump? The leader of the Conservatives wants to ban WeChat.

- This piece is from York BBS; it's one we documented when it first appeared on the York BBS WeChat news account in late August/early Sept.
- York BBS appears to be the first account to push this line that 'O'Toole would "ban WeChat"
- **Thoughts:** After York BBS published the first claim that O'Toole would ban WeChat, accounts like VanPeople shared it as well. However, Chinese state-media did not appear to follow suit; RRM Canada did not detect any outlets like the Global Times, People's Daily, or Xinhua

picking up the story during the writ period. However, York BBS frequently shared pro-Chinese Communist Party narratives and stories throughout the election, and made its position clear that it favoured the Liberals over the Conservatives.

Item 5: Kenny Chiu WeChat message (mainland immigrant = CCP'er?)

- Sadly I wasn't able to find anything about this story.

Data Analyst
Centre for International Digital Policy | Centre pour la Politique Numérique Internationale
Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion | Bureau des droits de la personne, des libertés et de l'inclusion