20 September 2018

BY EMAIL

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

Attention: Chloe Challender
Clerk to the Committee

Dear Ms. Challender:

Re: Testimony of AggregateIQ Data Services Limited Before the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (the “Committee”)

As you know, we are counsel to AggregateIQ Data Services Limited (“AggregateIQ”), as well as its two directors Jeff Silvester and Zack Massingham. We write in response to your email dated 18 September 2018. Please provide this letter to the Members of the Committee.


The Interim Report makes incorrect and misleading statements about AggregateIQ. The following is a brief summary, linked to the specific statements made in the Interim Report:

P26. “This chapter will focus on the events that highlighted the extent of the misuse of data, involving various organisations including Facebook, Global Science Research (GSR), Cambridge Analytica, and Aggregate IQ (AIQ), and the alleged sharing of data in the EU Referendum.”

Response: AggregateIQ has not misused data. While allegations have been made by certain individuals, there is no evidence that AggregateIQ has misused any data, nor did it ever have access to any of the Facebook data allegedly downloaded by GSR.
P32 - 33. “Christopher Wylie gave us a different version of Ripon. ‘A lot of the papers that eventually became the foundation of the methods that were used on the Ripon project came out of research that was being done at the University of Cambridge...’ Mr Wylie went on to explain that Ripon was the software that utilised the algorithms from the Facebook data.”

The description of Ripon above includes all of the work that SCL did with data analytics and microtargeting. AggregateIQ simply wrote the software to display the output to SCL’s clients. AggregateIQ did not have anything to do with SCL’s algorithms, data acquisition, or data analytics.

P33. “In its interim report published in July 2018, the ICO confirmed that AIQ had access to the personal data of UK voters, given by the Vote Leave campaign. The ICO is in the process of establishing from where AIQ accessed the personal data, and whether AIQ still holds that data. Furthermore, ‘we have however established, following a separate report, that [AIQ] hold UK data which they should not continue to hold’.159 In this regard, the ICO is working with the federal Office of the Privacy Commissioner and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, British Columbia.156

The separate report to the UK ICO about UK data held by AggregateIQ was a voluntary report to the ICO by AggregateIQ.

P33. “... we have also found evidence that AIQ used tools that could scrape user profile data from LinkedIn. The App acts similarly to online human behaviour, searching LinkedIn user profiles, scraping their contacts, and all accompanying information such as users’ place of work, location and job title.”

AggregateIQ developed a tool to search for users on LinkedIn and open their profile in such a way as to appear as though a candidate in their local election looked at their profile. This was not a scraping tool. This tool was never deployed.

P36 (and repeated on P69). “The allegations of data harvesting revealed the extent of data misuse, made possible by Cambridge University’s Dr Kogan and facilitated by Facebook, GSR, and manipulated into micro-targeting Cambridge Analytica and its associated companies, through AIQ”

AggregateIQ is not an associated company of Cambridge Analytica, SCL, or any other company for that matter. AggregateIQ is 100% Canadian owned and operated. AggregateIQ wrote software for SCL. AggregateIQ did not manipulate micro-targeting, nor facilitate its manipulation.
P40. "As we also highlighted in our Special Report, evidence to the Committee from Facebook showed that BeLeave used AggregateIQ datasets covering the 'exact same audiences'"

In the evening following Mr. Silvester's testimony at the DCMS committee on 16 May 2018, AggregateIQ sent the committee evidence that the three "exact same audiences" were never used. The Facebook letter confirmed this, pointing out that the audiences were not used by BeLeave. Indeed, as AggregateIQ's letter pointed out, this was simply an administrative error that was quickly corrected. We do not know how the Committee could make that statement given the evidence it had before it.

P40. "AIQ had a working relationship with SCL/Cambridge Analytica, focused on the use of data in campaigns. AIQ had links with Vote Leave and other Brexit campaigns, including Be Leave, Veterans for Britain and the DUP and all used the company in the short period immediately prior to the EU Referendum"

This passage is misleading. AggregateIQ does not share information between its clients and it did not communicate in anyway any details of the EU referendum to any other current or former clients. Facebook's CTO confirmed in his visit to your committee that AggregateIQ did not use any data from SCL or Cambridge Analytica in the services provided during the referendum.

P57. "Black Cube was engaged to hack the now President of Nigeria, Buhari, to get access to his medical records and private emails. AIQ worked on that project."

AggregateIQ placed online banner ads for SCL in Nigeria. AggregateIQ was not involved in any hacking of any kind.

In response to the further questions contained in your 18 September 2018 email, AggregateIQ responds as follows:

1) Q2773: did Mr. Massingham meet with Alexander Nix in 2013;

Yes.

2) Q2786/7: AIQ’s turnover, in terms of revenue;

In Q2789 the Chair clarifies, "I am not asking for secret commercial information, just the reported accounts."

Unlike in the UK, this information is not public in Canada. AggregateIQ does not make its revenue figures public.
3) Q2797/8: the exact date when Mr. Silvester or Mr. Massingham met or were in contact with any Vote Leave representative;

AggregateIQ was introduced to Vote Leave via email on 31 March 2016.

4) Q2847: for this and other questions, Mr. Silvester said that AIQ’s internal investigation would explore issues, such as how AIQ’s site and data were accessed. Do you know when the investigation findings will be available?

The investigation is complete and Mr. Silvester is writing a report. We will forward a copy when it is complete, which is expected to be done in the next few weeks.

5) Q2852: was the server location for the code repository in the USA or elsewhere else?

The git repository was located in the USA.

6) Q2853: could the Committee have a list of who accessed information, from AIQ’s logs?

Aside from AggregateIQ staff, the Git Repository was accessed by Chris Vickery and Dell Cameron from Gizmodo. There is more detail about this in the upcoming report being drafted by Mr. Silvester.

8) Q2999: who contacted AIQ from Veterans for Britain?

AggregateIQ’s contacts at Veterans for Britain were Will Carver and David Banks.

Our clients hope that this additional information will be useful as the Committee continues its deliberations and that they can continue to productively contribute to the Committee’s work.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Borden Ladner Gervais LLP

cc: Josephine Willows
Senior Committee Specialist