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KIM LIPSKY, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

March 19, 2018

Nigel Oakes  
Chief Executive Officer and Director  
Strategic Communications Laboratories Group, Ltd.  
2511 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 620  
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Oakes:

We write regarding the suspension of Strategic Communications Laboratories (SCL) and its affiliated political data analysis firm, Cambridge Analytica, from Facebook. As the chairs of the Senate Commerce Committee and subcommittees with jurisdictional responsibility for communications technology and consumer protection, we take seriously the allegation that your company and its affiliate improperly obtained data of tens of millions of Facebook users.

According to media reports<sup>1</sup> and Facebook's own statement,<sup>2</sup> SCL and Cambridge Analytica worked with a Cambridge University psychology professor to develop a personality test app called "thisisyourdigitallife" (the "Personality Test App"). Despite only being downloaded by 270,000 Facebook users, those users were required to consent to the app gathering data about their Facebook friends as well as themselves. In this way, as many as 50 million Facebook users reportedly had their information harvested, and only a small fraction of them were provided an opportunity to consent.

The Commerce Committee has jurisdiction over the internet and communications technologies generally, as well as over consumer protection and data privacy issues. Consumers rely on app developers to be transparent and truthful in their terms of service so consumers can make informed decisions about whether to consent to the sharing and use of their data. Therefore, the allegation that SCL was not forthcoming with Facebook or transparent with consumers is troubling.

To assist the Committee in its oversight of this matter, please provide responses to the following:

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<sup>1</sup> See Carole Cadwalladr & Emma Graham-Harrison, *Revealed: 50 million Facebook profiles harvested for Cambridge Analytica in major data breach*, THE GUARDIAN, Mar. 17, 2018; Matthew Rosenberg et al., *How Trump Consultants Exploited the Facebook Data of Millions*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 17, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Press Release, Facebook, Suspending Cambridge Analytica and SCL Group from Facebook (Mar. 16, 2018).

- 1) Do you acknowledge the conduct described in Facebook's March 16 statement? In particular, do you acknowledge that Cambridge Analytica falsely certified that it had destroyed the information at Facebook's request?
- 2) Describe the types of data that SCL and Cambridge Analytica gained access to through the users of the Personality Test App and their Facebook friends. Would any of this data not have been visible on users' profiles?
- 3) Did SCL or Cambridge Analytica share the Facebook user data it obtained through the Personality Test App with any other entities?
- 4) Is SCL or Cambridge Analytica affiliated with any other app that collects Facebook user information?
- 5) Please provide a copy of the Personality Test App terms of service that were in effect at the time the conduct discussed above took place.

Please provide your written response as soon as possible, but by no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 29, 2018. In addition, please direct your staff to brief Committee staff on this matter. Please contact Jason Van Beek at (202) 224-1251 to make arrangements. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE  
Chairman



ROGER F. WICKER  
Senator



JERRY MORAN  
Senator

cc: The Honorable Bill Nelson, Ranking Member  
The Honorable Brian Schatz  
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal