

# Did Trump's Tweet Disparaging Trudeau Impact Canada-US Border Crossings?

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## ABSTRACT

The authors examine the impact of President Donald Trump's June 9, 2018 tweet disparaging Group of 7 (G7) summit host Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Canada – United States border crossings over the Peace Bridge. The Peace Bridge is one of the busiest international border crossings in North America that connects Fort Erie, Ontario and Buffalo, New York. A regression analysis of daily automobile crossings between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2019 (using seasonality dummy variables and controlled for year fixed effects) revealed a statistically discernible reduction in the number of crossings (both east into the United States and, to a lesser extent, west into Canada) seven, fourteen, and even thirty days after the tweet. Words have consequences.

*“When you're President of the United States,  
words matter.”*

— Michelle Obama,  
*Becoming [1]*

Of the more than 14,200 tweets sent by President Donald J. Trump between January 20, 2017 (his first day in office) and January 20, 2020, few were more demeaning to America's northern neighbor, Canada, than the one he sent on June 9, 2018 [2]. He accused Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who hosted the Group of 7 summit held June 8-9, 2018 in La Malbaie, Quebec, Canada, of dishonesty and weakness. In particular, Trump tweeted:

*PM Justin Trudeau of Canada acted so meek and mild  
during our @G7 meetings only to give a news conference  
after I left saying that “US Tariffs were kind of insulting”  
and he “will not be pushed around.” Very dishonest &  
weak. Our Tariffs are in response to his of 270% on dairy! [3]*

President Trump's tweet outraged Canadians [4]. If “words matter,” we were curious to know whether the animosity among Canadians following Trump's tweet manifested into fewer crossings over the Peace Bridge connecting Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada and Buffalo, New York, United States (see Figure 1). This international bridge between Canada and the United States is one of four vehicular toll crossings in the region over the Niagara River. Tolls are paid one-way only into Canada. The Peace Bridge is one of the busiest international border crossings in North America, second only to the Ambassador Bridge that connects Detroit, Michigan, United States with Windsor, Ontario, Canada [5].

## The Data

Daily automobile volumes (both east to the United States and west to Canada) were collected for three years, January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2019 (1095 days) [6]. Seasonal dummy variables were defined as follows: Winter (December, January, February); Spring (March, April, May); Summer (June, July, August); and Fall (September, October, November). To assess the impact of the Trump tweet on June 9, 2018, we defined three different Trump binary variables: Trump\_7days which is equal to “1” seven days after the Trump tweet and “0” otherwise; Trump\_14days which is equal to “1” fourteen days after the Trump tweet and “0” otherwise; and Trump\_30days which was similarly defined.

## Methodology

To test the impact of Trump’s June 9, 2018 tweet, we regressed auto crossings (either east to the United States or west to Canada) on three of the four seasonal dummies and each of the three Trump binary variables. There are six regressions, three for east crossings — one for each of the three Trump binary variables — from Canada to the United States plus three more for west crossings from the United States to Canada. One cannot regress on both the intercept and all four seasonal dummies, as all four seasonal regressors would be collinear. Therefore, we dropped the Winter seasonal dummy from all six regressions. As a result, the intercept is the seasonality effect of winter on auto crossings. Finally, all six regressions were controlled for year fixed effects.

## The Results

The results of the three regressions, where the dependent variable is the daily number of auto crossings from Canada east into the United States, are reported in Table 1. All three seasonal dummies are significant at better than the .01 level. Not surprisingly, auto crossings are highest in the summer months and lowest in winter months. The difference between seasonal means (for examples, spring and fall or fall and winter) are all significant at better than the .01 level. All three Trump variables are statistically different from zero: Trump\_7days ( $p = .012$ ), Trump\_14days ( $p = .001$ ), and Trump\_30days ( $p = .096$ ). In all three cases, the impact of the insulting Trump tweet significantly reduced the number of auto crossings from Canada into the United States, with the size of the coefficient on the Trump binary variable falling over time.

Table 2 reports the results of seasonal effects and the Trump binary variable on auto crossings from the United States west into Canada over the three-year period. The regression results mirror those in Table 1. Notably, seasonal effects are strong and crossings into Canada were negatively affected by Trump’s tweet, with a diminishing effect over time. Curiously, the size of the estimated coefficients on the 7- and 14-day Trump binary variables were smaller in Table 2 (traffic into Canada) than they were in Table 1 (traffic into the United States).

### Concluding Remarks

Words have consequences. President Trump’s unflattering remarks about Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the Group of 7 summit meeting in June 2018 had consequences. After controlling for seasonal differences in auto crossings over the Peace Bridge, the authors find that traffic in *both* directions — east to the United States and west to Canada — fell significantly, seven, fourteen, and thirty days following Trump’s June 9, 2018 tweet.

Interested readers might want to examine both the impact of Trump’s tweet disparaging Trudeau and the impact of the other swipes Trump has made at Canada since June 2018 on Ambassador Bridge crossings.

**Table 1.** Regression Results: Automobile Crossings Over the Peace Bridge East from Canada to the United States, 2017 – 2019

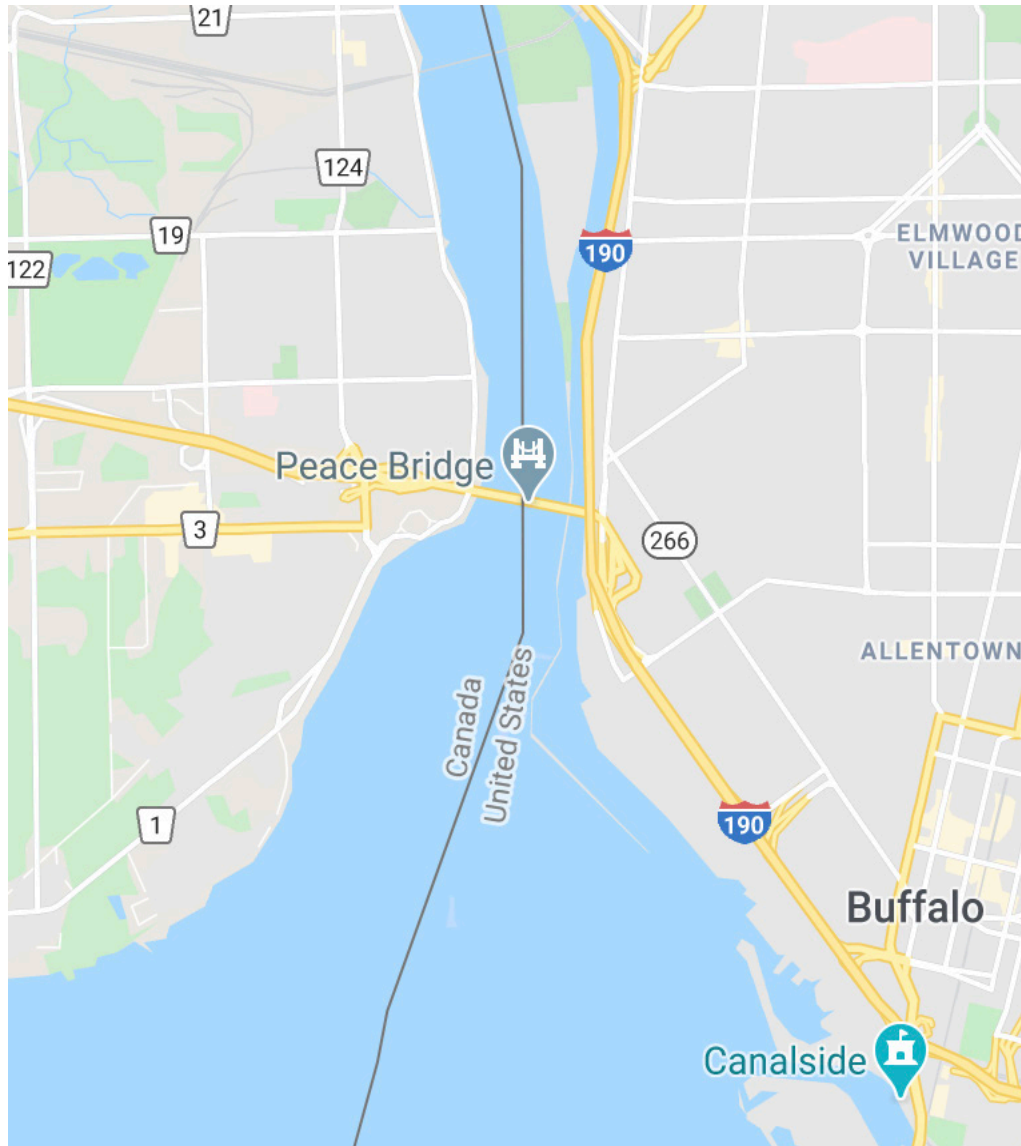
Dependent variable: Daily automobile crossings, east from Canada to the United States			
	7 days following Trump tweet	14 days following Trump tweet	30 days following Trump tweet
Constant	4565.24*** (80.32)	4565.24*** (80.15)	4565.24*** (80.45)
Spring	486.50*** (112.97)	486.50*** (112.73)	486.50*** (113.15)
Summer	2840.36*** (113.70)	2869.17*** (114.26)	2855.87*** (116.73)
Fall	1005.79*** (113.28)	1005.79*** (113.04)	1005.79*** (113.46)
Trump_7days	-1274.12** (508.62)	—	—
Trump_14days	—	-1205.03*** (366.24)	—
Trump_30days	—	—	-439.94* (263.87)
<i>n</i>	1095	1095	1095
R <sup>2</sup>	0.394	0.396	0.392

\* $p < .10$     \*\* $p < .05$     \*\*\* $p < .01$   
Standard errors are in parentheses.

**Table 2.** Regression Results: Automobile Crossings Over the Peace Bridge West from the United States to Canada, 2017 – 2019

Dependent variable: Daily automobile crossings, west from the United States to Canada			
	7 days following Trump tweet	14 days following Trump tweet	30 days following Trump tweet
Constant	4319.44*** (82.65)	4319.44*** (82.52)	4319.44*** (82.72)
Spring	893.45*** (116.25)	893.45*** (116.06)	893.45*** (116.35)
Summer	3132.30*** (117.01)	3158.72*** (117.63)	3154.30*** (120.03)
Fall	1074.01*** (116.57)	1074.01*** (116.38)	1074.01*** (116.67)
Trump_7days	-1150.35** (523.41)	—	—
Trump_14days	—	-1096.17*** (377.05)	—
Trump_30days	—	—	-470.82* (271.34)
<i>n</i>	1095	1095	1095
R <sup>2</sup>	0.414	0.416	0.413

\* $p < .10$     \*\* $p < .05$     \*\*\* $p < .01$   
Standard errors are in parentheses.



**Figure 1.** The Peace Bridge Between Canada and the United States

Source: “Buffalo, NY, USA to Fort Erie, Ontario, in Canada.” Map, *Google Maps*. <https://goo.gl/maps/Aa-vqS89cu5gRVMCd8>

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