

Harper government under fire for spying on environmental groups

Green leaders and members of Parliament react to FOIs obtained by the Vancouver Observer that revealed the National Energy Board was coordinating spying efforts on environmental groups.



Krystle Alarcon



Matthew Millar | Nov 21st, 2013



Photo of Elizabeth May by Patrick Doyle (CP)

Politicians, environmentalists and First Nations alike are infuriated that the federal government worked hand-in-hand with the oil industry to spy on groups that opposed pipeline projects.

Documents obtained by the Vancouver Observer under the Access to Information Privacy Act revealed that the National Energy Board, an independent regulatory agency, coordinated with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the police, and oil companies.

"It's the death of democracy if you've got non-violent, law-abiding First Nations, environmentalists and Canadian groups of all kinds being subjected to surveillance then handed over to industry groups. Frankly, it's scary," said **Elizabeth May**, the MP and Green Party leader. "What Stephen Harper has essentially done is to take the spy agencies of the federal government of Canada and put them at the service of private companies like Enbridge."

The board coordinated the gathering of intelligence on opponents to the oil sands before the Joint Review Panel hearings on the proposed Enbridge pipeline, which will carry up to 525,000 barrels of oil everyday from Alberta to Kitimat in northern BC.

Emails between the board and CSIS looked at groups that work for environmental protections and democratic rights, including Idle No More, ForestEthics, Sierra Club, EcoSociety, LeadNow, Dogwood Initiative, Council of Canadians and the People's Summit.

May, who was in Poland for the United Nations conference on climate change, was alarmed by the private-public sector partnership.

Even the innuendos within the exchanges of emails between the board and CSIS alarmed her.

"The assumption in the briefing documents (of the NEB) is that somehow we pose a threat to the state because we are potentially a security threat," which could lead into using the new anti-terrorism law against opponents, May said.

In a letter called, "Can you keep a secret?" last month, May already raised red flags about CSIS working too closely with industry, as it spied on Brazil's mining industry and gave their findings to Canadian energy companies.

The Green Party, NDP and Liberal Party criticized the Conservative government after finding out about the board's involvement with intelligence agents.

"I wonder if I'm under investigation, I raised questions about the Enbridge pipeline,"

said **Nathan Cullen**, the MP and NDP House Leader.

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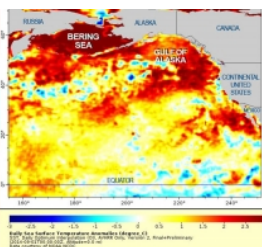

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