

Statement by Alexandra Swann, volunteer with Dogwood Initiative who participated in activities and then learned that those activities may have been spied upon:

Participating in environmental groups is an ethical act for me, something I have done my whole adult life. I do it like some people go to church - I have an obligation to my conscience, I am subject to higher powers than myself, and I want to connect with a community of like-minded individuals. This is real political participation for me. Many other very average Canadians feel the same compulsion to come out on early mornings or late evenings to do good work for a cause they believe in or a community they cherish. They sacrifice time out of work and family life for something bigger than themselves.

I was incredibly shocked and disturbed to find out about the surveillance on Dogwood and other environmental groups. It struck me first of all as a fruitless waste of intelligence resources. I've never been charged with a crime nor had an encounter with the police. The meetings that were being monitored were a place where Dogwood taught us skills like how to make a compelling public narrative or how to canvass efficiently - not exactly subjects of concern to law enforcement. Whatever reasons they had for doing it had little to do with enforcing public order. Finding out had a chilling effect for me. Suddenly, I was very concerned how far it extended. Was I personally named somewhere? Had they investigated my online activities? Read my emails? I realized the right to privacy was a myth in this country, and that being a decent person was no barrier to illegal scrutiny by people far more powerful than me.