

Ethical Oil Believes Our Call For A Ban Of Bee-Killing Pesticides Violates Charity Law

Dec 5 2013

Sierra Club Canada <membership@sierraclub.ca>



ALERT: THIS IS NOT A CALL TO ACTION. DO NOT CALL FOR CHANGE OR CONTACT YOUR GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE...

Blog by John Bennett

I was on CBC's *The Current* with Anna Maria Tremonti last week [talking about](#) the chilling revelations the Canadian government was spying on us and other environmental groups. I find it a great irony that police forces resort to spying on groups like us because we make a point of being very public about our plans.

It was my third appearance on the show this year. Back in the spring, the topic was the new rules the (supposedly independent) National Energy Board is employing to prevent the public from participating in hearings on pipelines – a power given to the NEB via the undemocratic [Omnibus Bill-38](#). Sierra's application to participate in the "Line 9" pipeline hearings was denied, though we still got our message out quite effectively.

It is quite clear there is a [coordinated campaign](#) to drastically reduce our ability to raise questions, share information, and engage the public and (ultimately) impact decisions. So it was not surprising that just as the annual fall fund raising season began we [received a fax](#) from a Calgary law firm with ties to the Conservative Party on behalf of Ethical Oil.

Ethical Oil--with its own [close connections](#) to the Prime Minister's Office--has filed yet another complaint with the Canada Revenue Agency, just as the [annual fall fundraising](#) season began.

This is a critical time of year for Sierra and other organizations. Our success during the fall window



dictates what we can take on in 2014 and whether we can stay flexible and ready for emerging issues (like pipeline/rail safety and the survival of bees).

Just receiving a fax these days is something, but this one was ominous. Another year in the multi-year campaign to restrict Canadians' input into how our environment is managed, it came at a critical time of year for Sierra and other charities and non-profits who fight to preserve Canadian values and depend on the financial support of our people to continue to raise issues and questions overlooked (or sidelined) by the private sector's sole focus on profit. So it is not surprising Ethical Oil filed its complaint to the Canadian Revenue Agency in the giving season.

On the other hand, on reading through their submission, I found it an enlightening review of the important work we are doing. It was truly a validation of everything we did in 2013. The Ethical Oil complaint tells the story of an organization determined to speak truth (often inconvenient) to power. The more I read it, the prouder I became.

Here are some of the highlights of the complaint:

- We discussed civil disobedience because it has been a tool of change in democracy. We didn't advocate it – a complete misrepresentation of the facts. You may remember Sierra Club Canada asked you what you thought, and an overwhelming number of you responded to our [survey](#). Ethical Oil thinks that's wrong.
- Next they suggest it is improper for Sierra Club Canada to have [drawn attention](#) to a plan by Atomic Energy Canada Ltd. (AECL) to ship highly enriched uranium (dissolved in acid) 1000 km to the United States without any environmental assessment and using unproven container technology. More than 1000 of you asked the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission to rethink the plan (Note: our intervention is ongoing and we are closely working with US groups to head off this scheme).
- They then turned their attention to our comments on the Draft Great Lakes Regional Adaptive Management Plan. The International Joint Commission issued a "draft" plan for public comment. Our crime? Sierra's Great Lakes Section had sponsored scientific study of the impact of low water levels in the Upper Great Lakes, noting lower water levels destroy shoreline, wetlands and fish spawning areas.

- Ethical Oil believes our call for a ban of bee-killing pesticides violates charity law. They say we are asking for a law to be changed. Well that's just wrong - we aren't asking for a law to be changed at all. On the contrary, we are asking for a law to be enforced. Subsequent to our raising the issue, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency asked the public to comment on its neonicotinoid pesticides plan. We conveyed that to you and more than 5000 have so far responded to the PMRA's invitation. (If you haven't sent yours, [it's not too late](#). The deadline is Dec. 12, 2013.)
- This may surprise you, but apparently my tweets are bad too -- especially one from April 29, 2013 noting our petition calling for a health study of the Tar Sands.
- Ontario didn't go unnoticed. Our efforts to preserve the province's Endangered Species Act were deemed too political too. Even asking for a law to be enforced is out-of-bounds, apparently.
- My "it's not easy being green" blog with its [call for a reset](#) of climate policy drew enemy fire as well. It's worth noting that Canada won a lifetime achievement Fossil award in Warsaw last week for its dedication to preventing a global climate change agreement.
- In an article on the Experimental Lakes Area research station, my comments about Sierra Club Canada's advocacy role even garnered a complaint.
- You don't even have to be a paid staff member to earn the ire of Ethical Oil. They didn't like what Derek Leahey, a volunteer blogger, [had to say](#) about the Line 9 reversal (to ship Tar Sands bitumen to Montreal and beyond) and how the NEB had given the public only two weeks to apply to participate in environmental hearings.

The complaint just took us up to the end of the summer. I'm looking for the next one to see how the rest of the year turned out in their dystopian view.

I hope this snapshot of the work we did in 2013 justifies your [continued support](#) in the coming year. If you think we're doing a REALLY good job, you can even become a monthly donor (this form of support helps us the most in planning our activities).

THANK YOU!

Finally, I want to wish you and your loved ones a great holiday season, and—more importantly--thank you for your [donations](#) and ongoing support. Your encouraging emails and positive, constructive comments really make our day and keep us on the right track.

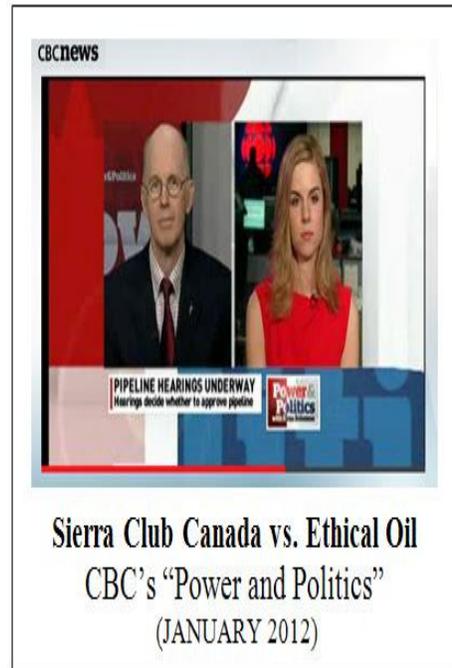
Sincerely,

John Bennett, National Campaign Director
Sierra Club Canada Foundation
412-1 Nicholas Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B7
Executive.Director@sierraclub.ca
[John on Twitter](#) / [Bennett Blog](#)



RELATED: [Sierra Club Canada vs. Ethical Oil on CBC News](#), January 2012

Sierra Club Canada National Office



Sierra Club Canada vs. Ethical Oil
CBC's "Power and Politics"
(JANUARY 2012)

412-1 Nicholas St
Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7
Canada