



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on February 15, 2022

Canadian Thought Police on Patrol

A video of an Ontario police officer admitting that government is monitoring social media to target Canadian trucker protest supporters is going viral. Last week, Nadine Ellis-Maffei recorded a conversation with Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) constable Erika Ingram, who paid a house call to distribute information, which told the farm owner and mother of three that OPP is tracking her Facebook posts in support of the ongoing Freedom Convoy 2022 protest in Ottawa.



YouTube

Ingram: "This is just some information about peaceful protests. That's all it is."

Ellis-Maffei: "Okay, so you saw something on my Facebook?"

Ingram: "No, on the Facebook group."

Ellis-Maffei: "Okay, and decided to come to my personal residence to give me information about peaceful protests?"

Ingram: "Yes."

Ellis-Maffei: "Are you guys now monitoring people's Facebook pages or Facebook groups to who comments as to what their status updates are or what they're doing within the groups?"

Ingram: "Because of the protests happening province-wide, yes, we have been monitoring the protests. So there's a protest coming up. I'm simply providing you with information about a peaceful protest. And now I am leaving."

Ellis-Maffei: "So the Ontario Provincial Police are watching what people are doing on Facebook in different groups whether they are commenting, participating, liking. And you guys are now doing service calls to give people information about peaceful protests."

Ingram: "It's just a proactive measure to make sure you understand your rights about peaceful protesting."

Ellis-Maffei: "Absolutely. I have a copy of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms so I'm well within that and very understanding of that.... I'm hoping that you guys aren't going to waste our tax dollars continuing to do this to everybody. But now it's nice to know that we're being watched."

"I was flabbergasted," Ellis-Maffei told Joe Warmington of the [Toronto Sun](#). "I still can't believe it." Days earlier she had posted that she might join the truckers on Parliament Hill during the coming weekend. She was not aware that police were monitoring her conversation. "I thought this was a free country," she said.

Warmington noted that, though the officer was not violating Ellis-Maffei's rights by knocking on her



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door to discuss public-safety concerns, a “line certainly seems crossed when you have police responding to a home based on information found on social media.... It’s creepy that police would veer away from criminal concerns and put resources into the political.”

However, the term “creepy” falls short. Ellis-Maffei’s main complaint is not against the officer’s house visit so much as against federal monitoring, which she considers a violation of her rights guaranteed by Canada’s [Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), part of the Canadian Constitution akin to the U.S. Bill of Rights. It secures freedoms such as conscience, thought, belief, opinion, expression, association and peaceful assembly. In a follow-up Warmington [penned](#) the next day, he wrote, “Ellis-Maffei said it felt like something that would happen in a police state while others said it reminded them of the KGB in the old Soviet Union.”

OPP defended its actions as proactive policing, but does targeting law-abiding citizens in this way fall in that classification? In the federal government’s online article on [Policing styles: Reactive versus proactive policing](#), discussion is limited to suppressing criminal activity and does not address political activism. If this is proactive policing, does that effectively define Ellis-Maffei as a criminal suspect for contemplating a visit to her nation’s capital to voice her support for medical freedom?

Or is this sort of targeting analogous to racial profiling, which is expressly prohibited by the Ontario government’s Human Rights Commission? Of interest is what the agency’s [Policy on Eliminating Racial Profiling in Law Enforcement](#) has to say about targeting individuals because of their personal beliefs: “Even when addressing national security threats, approaches to combat terrorism must respect human rights, including the right to be free from discrimination.... Police cannot target individuals as possible suspects ‘solely because they hold or express particular views.’”

OPP offers the flyer that Ingram gave Ellis-Maffei for download from its Provincial Liaison Team (PLT) [website](#). It provides a list of do’s and don’ts for demonstrators to avoid criminal consequences. Among other advice, it says protestors should “communicate with police” before attending, a condition that is missing from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Ironically, another item under the “YOU CAN’T” heading is “wear a mask,” but that is related to disguising yourself for unlawful purposes, not to protecting the planet from your COVID germs. The flyer warns that breaking the rules could result in legal consequences, and future limitations in travel, employment, housing, and insurance options.

“PLT members use proactive relationship-building and communication to facilitate safe and lawful environments for everyone wanting to exercise the rights to freedom of speech and peaceful assembly afforded by Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms,” OPP spokesman Bill Dickson told Warmington in defense of Ingram’s house call. Markedly absent from Dickson’s explanation was any defense of federal surveillance that prompted the visit.

“Never in my life would I have imagined that they would knock on my door because of something I posted, shared, liked, or because of a group I belong to aligning with my personal beliefs,” Ellis-Maffei told Warmington. “It’s an intimidation tactic and a complete overreach of power.”



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