



August 5, 2014

James Rajotte, Chair
House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance
1280 La Promenade Building
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Mr. Rajotte,

I am sure you have seen the troubling reports of allegedly politically motivated audits of Canadian charities by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The singling out of a number of organizations who have been critical of government policies has the appearance of the CRA being misused for political purposes.

I am writing to recommend that you recall the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance for special meetings to look into this matter on an urgent basis.

Concerns were first raised when the Conservative government announced, in Budget 2012, \$8 million in special funding for the Canada Revenue Agency to conduct audits of political activities of charitable organizations. This funding came in the midst of the Government's extraordinary attacks branding environmentalists as dangerous radicals.

Evidence available to date appears to confirm the fears that these funds would serve to silence the Conservative government's critics. At least three audits of environmental charities appear to have been triggered by complaints submitted to CRA by Ethical Oil, an organization with very close ties to the Conservative government. Other audits have singled out respected organizations including the United Church of Canada, PEN International, and Amnesty International Canada.

The refusal of the CRA to disclose a complete list of the 52 groups currently undergoing audits does little to dispel the impression that these audits have disproportionately fallen on organizations that disagree with government policies.

The apparent singling out of charities that have taken positions that conflict with the interests of the Conservative government has sent a chill through the charitable sector leading many organizations afraid to speak out or engage in advocacy for fear of being targeted for audit. Canadian charitable

organizations have long engaged in non-partisan advocacy on issues such as the environment, human rights, and poverty. This sort of advocacy is an important part of our democracy and any effort to silence it should be taken very seriously.

Regrettably, the Conservative government has demonstrated a pattern of attempts to silence anyone who disagrees with them. Canadians have seen this in the cutting of funding community organizations, in the firing and muzzling of scientists, and in the extraordinary attacks leveled by the current Finance Minister during his previous role.

As you know, last month I wrote to the Minister requesting that she launch an independent external investigation into allegations of political interference in the audits of charities. I have not received any reply to that request. In this context, I believe that the Finance Committee could play an important role in shedding some light on this situation.

I ask that you call a special meeting of the Finance Committee on an urgent basis to look into the aggressive auditing of Canadian charities who disagree with government positions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Murray Rankin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Murray Rankin, MP
NDP Critic for National Revenue