



MICHAEL SCHMIDT: CHARGED WITH THEFT FOR REMOVING UNLAWFUL COVERT SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS FROM HIS LAND

By Michael Schmidt | Dec 2016

How it began: Roadside Surveillance in Gray County

All seems good in the country. People enjoy driving on country roads, especially Concession 2 in West Grey, where apple trees, fields and green pastures are part of a landscape of rural innocence. Kids bike to a little country school, people strolling, walking and jogging in the fresh country air, dogs barking, coyotes howling at night and roosters announce the beginning of a new day.

That changed on July 25th, when we discovered a strange little box mounted on a little apple tree a half mile south of Glencolton Farms. It was a rather creepy discovery and it got even more creepy when, two days later, we discovered yet another box a few hundred yards north of the farm. As we looked into the boxes we discovered cameras and in the camera a memory card. A total of 79,994 pictures of cars, licence plates, farmers on tractors, people on bikes, kids on cell phones, joggers, walkers and branches swaying in the wind. Pictures taken during the day and night. After all, these cameras are described as “high performance surveillance



tools” coming from the United States, no dealer apparently carries them in Canada.

As concerned neighbours got together to figure out what needs to happen next, more stories about strange occurrences on Concession 2 emerged. About six weeks prior to the discovery of these cameras one neighbour down the road described how a white Government vehicle parked every evening across the road. Sometimes also police. When they finally went over to see what was going on the unidentified driver responded that “he was checking his cell phone”. Another neighbour saw a red car sitting for hours during the early afternoon with a young man inside doing “nothing” right across where the second camera was found.

Another strange occurrence was the discovery of a device, which looked like a sunflower, right across the road of one of the cameras, but this sunflower never followed the sun as “real sunflowers” do. Around the time the cameras were discovered the strange sunflower disappeared and he could not investigate what this was all about.

Strange cars were seen driving several times past the farm, such as an older model silver blue Toyota Corolla with the license number BSDW 290 and then speeding off with 120 km an hour racing through a stop sign and disappearing quickly.

It feels like life has changed in the country. Every bush in the ditch is now suspicious, every car driving down the road is watched with eagle eyes. When the dog barks in the middle of the night it’s not anymore because of a skunk or a raccoon it must be because somebody is changing memory cards or installing cameras.

A sense of due diligence emerged. We need to call police to ask for advice and help. What if a pedophile tracks our kids? What if somebody wants to track when different people are at home or not, in order to break into premises? What if somebody is stalking some of the beautiful women living on Concession 2?

I called chief of police Rene Berger and asked him for advice explaining the discovery of these cameras and what to do. I specifically asked him if West Grey Police installed surveillance monitoring people growing marijuana in neighbouring fields. Chief Berger responded that he was not aware of any surveillance. He would know if West Grey was involved, but he would look into it.

Relieved, I let everyone know that West Grey Police would help us to solve the mystery.

Like many times before, I WAS WRONG The dynamic changed suddenly. A phone call from West Grey police detective Ken, who arrived at the farm with the message that he found the owner. I was not home and he left a message requesting I phone him. He then was gone for a week until finally we connected on the phone.

“Hi Michael, Ken here, from West Grey Police, can I pick up the cameras?”

I responded that I was not in possession of them, and they had been handed over to a lawyer for safekeeping until we have a clear answer about the circumstances why Concession 2 citizens have been under surveillance.

“Oh” says Ken, “these are just trail cameras.”

"Pardon me?" I said. "These are not trail cameras or at least not set up as trail cameras, these cameras are capturing traffic on the road". Well the tone suddenly changed and Ken turned into a policeman trying to scare me. "You might be charged with theft if you are not returning the cameras and the lawyer who keeps the cameras will be in trouble too."

Wow... suddenly we have become the offenders.

Considering that this might just be Ken, the detective, having a bad day I called the chief trying to complain about Ken's rather hostile response. I guess I hit a hornet's nest, the chief repeated the same line of possible charges of theft. I argued with him that they would have a hard time charging me since I never confessed to taking the cameras, though I did find them, but there had been several people involved recovering the surveillance equipment.

"NO", he said, you did say you took them. I responded by telling him that I have been often enough in court to know what is required as evidence to charge and convict somebody.

That was the end of our conversation.

I never had issues with West Grey Police. They have been helpful before, even when there have been raids on our farm and they took part to secure the premise. They always acted highly professionally, friendly but firm and respectful. The aftertaste of my conversation with Police Chief Berger was not good.

I was actually sad to realize that their "COMMUNITY PARTNERS" quote written on every cruiser is as meaningless as a teat on a bull.

Considering the impact for the community at large, this breach of trust has created a real sense of betrayal. The found cameras are only a small portion of the growing mistrust, at is the dubious behaviour of West Grey Police which creates this sense of betrayal.

Yes, they are protecting the privacy of the stalker, predator or pedophile under the Privacy Act and throw the right of everyone else's privacy into the ditch.

Watch out parents when your kids bike to the school! Watch out walkers you are on candid camera! Watch out joggers you are watched day and night! Watch out bikers you tracked pedal by pedal! Watch out farmers somebody is wanting to know if you bale hay before you cut it! Things are not good anymore in this part of the country.

What happened next: Excerpted from Raw Milk Farmer Charged for Removing Hidden Government Cameras Spying on his Property

By Rajie Kabli of collectiveevolution.com | 2015

Deciding what we want is sometimes difficult. There are usually so many options — do I go with Ford, Toyota, or Hyundai? Wheat-free, gluten free, or grain free? Yoga, running, or Pilates? We have the ability to choose what brand, style, or taste we want in nearly every area of our lives, but when it comes to dairy in Canada, pasteurized milk is the only legal option. Why is this the case?

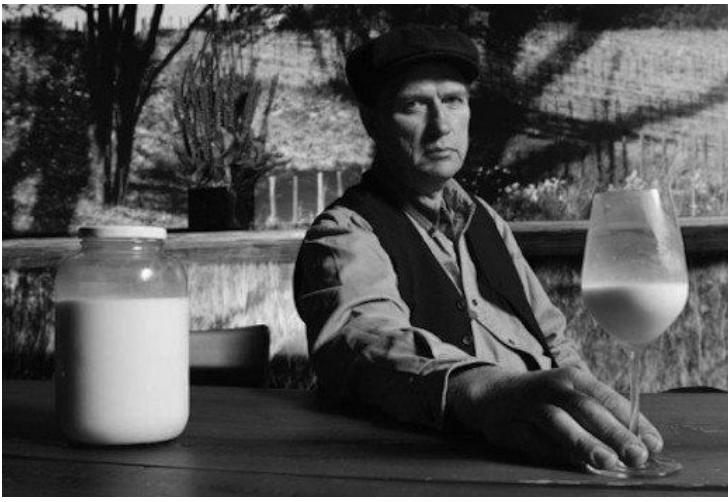
Michael Schmidt has been asking this for over 20 years. He's a raw milk farmer that manages Glencolton Farms in Ontario, Canada. His farm is a collective with about 50 share holders. His raw milk operation attracts many eager customers who swear by his product and just want to be left alone to make their own choices. I mean, even the Queen of England loves drinking raw milk, so much so that she had some sent directly to her grandchildren at school for lunch. Supporters of Schmidt say they and Schmidt are being harassed by the government and have tried to initiate dialogue with the Premier of Ontario for support many times without making any headway.

Earlier this month Schmidt's farm was raided, again, days after York Region public health 'received' a complaint. He's basically in a standoff with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance, and the police. But will he give in to their demands? Never. He is a huge advocate of justice, transparency, and privacy, and says he will not back down in the face of fear or bullying by the government. It's true, Michael Schmidt's life story is colourfully laced with run-ins with the law. This is not his first time in the circus.

Schmidt is currently under investigation for a charge that simply doesn't fit the 'crime.' The Ministry of Natural Resources had set up surveillance cameras on public property without labelling the cameras or obtaining the residents' permission to place them there. These cameras were found in the ditches around their homes, and Schmidt and others believe the surveillance is linked to his milk production. Neighbours of Schmidt took it upon themselves to take down the cameras and work to discover who placed them there (and why). They found over 80,000 images and video on SD cards of citizens jogging, walking dogs, and moving through day-to-day life. They called the police to find out whose cameras they were but were unsatisfied when police refused to disclose their ownership and instead demanded the cameras be handed over.

Schmidt refused and cited an infraction to privacy, transparency, and justice as his main reason for not giving them up. Now he is being charged with theft under \$5k for not sitting by while the government invades the privacy of his community. Schmidt is a social activist like we (the CE team) haven't seen in a long time. His ongoing struggle with the government has been a 21 year battle and his raw milk farm has been raided over 5 times. Schmidt has been detained and thrown into jail, and has also been placed into solitary confinement where he went on a hunger strike. He was not in jail of his own free will, and, arguing that the state does not have rights over his body, refused to eat.





Schmidt facing theft, mischief charges

By Rob Gowan, Owen Sound Sun Times | Oct 2015

Durham-area raw milk farmer Michael Schmidt is facing theft and mischief charges in connection with cameras that were found along the road near his farm.

Schmidt, 61, has been charged with theft under \$5,000 and mischief in relation to two cameras belonging to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry that had been placed along Conc. 2 near his farm.

He is scheduled to appear in court in Walkerton on Oct. 26.*

Schmidt said he was notified by West Grey Police on Thursday afternoon that he had been charged and he plans to fight the charges.

"You cannot just sit there and be convicted of something," said Schmidt. "They have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that I stole them, but I think the whole thing is another harassment thing to wear me down."

West Grey police issued a brief news release on Thursday afternoon stating that the MNRF had reported two cameras missing in West Grey in early August. The release announced the charges Schmidt was facing and his court date. Further details were not available.

The cameras were found July 25 and 27 along Conc. 2 near Schmidt's Glencolton Farm. Schmidt has said while he found the first camera, the second was found by someone else, and several people were involved in taking them down. The cameras were on public property, he said, and there was nothing on them to indicate who owned them. Schmidt said he notified police that the cameras had been removed and handed over to a lawyer.

When they were found, Schmidt said he and his neighbours were concerned about the motive of whoever installed the cameras, which he said contained SD cards with about 80,000 images on them, including pictures of children and others who were walking or jogging along the road.

Schmidt learned who had placed the cameras, when MNRF investigator Glenn Jarvie confirmed during a raid of the farm on Oct. 3 that it was his ministry. The raid of the farm was conducted after a complaint by York Region Public Health in relation to the distribution of raw milk. Jarvie said during the raid, that there was an investigation into operating a plant without a licence. Some computers and dairy products were removed from the farm, but other items were left behind after ministry officials were confronted by about 50 supporters, many who identified themselves as shareholders in the farm.

Schmidt said on Thursday that he found it interesting that the summons he received was filled out just days before the raid at the farm and immediately after York Region health officials took samples of raw milk from a cube van delivering products from the farming collective. Schmidt thinks the raids and police charges are all connected.

"It is sickening that we live in a state where these things are happening," said Schmidt. "The way the police and ministries conduct themselves to say the least is despicable. People have a right to know what is going on and in my opinion it is just plain dirty."

Schmidt said some questions remain unanswered, such as why the cameras were installed and what became of any photos taken from them.

"The cameras will be returned when the public knows how long they have been up," said Schmidt. "We know now it was the MNR, but some questions have not been answered. I guess we will learn now through the court proceedings."

Schmidt said he has no knowledge of where the cameras are now.

2016 Update

This case against Michael is set for a two-day trial on June 28 and 29 in Walkerton, Ontario. If you are able to come and show support, look for further details at thebovine.wordpress.com

