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EFC-led research helps answer Canadian church questions

“Can you help my organization deal with certain problems we’re having?” That is a question EFC staff hear often, as the leadership team speaks at churches or conferences and meets with affiliate churches and organizations. Often the question reaches the desk of Rick Hiemstra, the EFC’s director of research and media relations, because research is often part of the answer when navigating big-picture issues for Christian organizations in Canada.

Because the EFC is an association that serves a wide range of affiliated groups – including denominations, ministry organizations, higher educational institutions and congregations – part of our response is to determine whether other groups are having similar concerns and would benefit from the same

research project. The EFC prioritizes research that can be done in partnership with our affiliates, which also helps create buy-in for both the research and the distribution of the research results.

Canadian research matters, and your support and belief in its importance helps to make it possible.

The Young Adult Transition Research project (2015 to May 2019) and the Small Church Consultation (May 2019) are two examples of recent research partnerships bearing fruit for Canadian churches.

The Young Adult Transition project involved Canadian Youth Workers Conference, Truth Matters, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Power to Change–Students and Youth for Christ.

It began when one of these groups asked about accessing data from the earlier *Hemorrhaging Faith* research



study (completed in 2012 by James Penner, Rick Hiemstra and others). Could the data could help understand how to build better connections with young people who were about to enter university?

Realizing that other groups would be interested in understanding the transition in faith formation that young people undergo when leaving high school, the EFC proposed that a partnership be developed like the partnerships formed for the Canadian Biblical Engagement Study (2014) and Canadian Evangelical Missions Engagement Study (2017).

Aileen van Ginkel, the EFC’s vice-president of ministry services, helped put together the Young Adult Transition partnership and three consultations

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How you can be involved:

- Please continue to pray for the work of the EFC.
- As an organization, we want to listen to you and your church. Are there questions you are asking that could be answered by research? Let us know.
- Please tell others about the research done by the EFC and its partners. You can find reports of previous projects at www.TheEFC.ca/Research

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with staff from several denominations, organizations and congregations that helped shape the study. Such consultations broadened the impact of the research and contributed to the understanding of what its implications could be.

Recently, a question about small churches in Canada sparked an initial consultation with a broader group of ministry leaders to understand more clearly the needs of pastors of small Canadian churches, and how small-church ministry could be better supported.

A small steering committee was formed to plan the event, including Ron Johnston of Small Church Connections and Marilyn Draper, a professor of practical theology at Tyndale Seminary, as well as the EFC's Rick and Aileen.

The Small Church Consultation involved around 30 people, many from outside Ontario. Participants met May 21–22 to consider questions like:

- What value do small churches have in God's eyes?
- What do small churches need in order to thrive?
- Are there things that we can do together to support small churches?
- What next steps might we take and with whom?

Interactive discussion facilitated by Ron, Marilyn and Aileen helped all participants to dialogue and listen well to one another and prayerfully consider how God might be leading the conversations and emerging insights.

The EFC's initial steps into the conversation around small churches in Canada is just the first step into determining how best to serve the Canadian evangelical Church, along with our partners. These kinds of consultations that sometimes result in further work and research are excellent examples of work we can do better together, and how that collaboration can benefit the Canadian Church.



Christian Medical and Dental Society v. College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario

Decision in Ontario physician conscience case

On May 15 the Ontario Court of Appeal released its decision in *Christian Medical and Dental Society v. College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario*, a case in which the EFC was a co-intervener along with the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario and the Christian Legal Fellowship.

To the EFC's disappointment, the court unanimously upheld a policy requiring doctors who conscientiously object to ethically controversial procedures (such as euthanasia/assisted suicide and abortion) to take "positive action" to facilitate them, such as by providing an "effective referral" to a willing and available physician.

"A doctor's conscience is grounded in beliefs that are deeply held and central to their whole approach both to life and to medicine," said David Guretzki, the EFC's Executive VP and Resident Theologian.

The "disturbing...decision to participate in ending a patient's life by making an effective referral is not based in preference or opinion, but in deeply held

beliefs about life and death. It is troubling that the Court of Appeal has upheld CPSO policies that violate the religious freedom of physicians and require them to act against their religious convictions. In a religiously diverse and secular society, the state has an obligation to promote respect and tolerance of all, including religious minorities."

The EFC interviewed Larry Worthen of the Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada for the EFC Podcast. "If it's the doctors today, tomorrow it will be the churches," Worthen said.

You can listen to the full interview – and we recommend that you do – at www.TheEFC.ca/Podcasts.

"If it's the doctors today, tomorrow it will be the churches"



Note From the Executive Vice-President David Guretzki

Thank you for joining with the EFC to unite Evangelicals to bless Canada in the name of Jesus. As we know from our own lives, blessings can take many forms. Recently, I was so blessed as I watched our latest webinar on What Churches

Can and Cannot Do During an Election. Questions streamed in from church leaders and members wanting to be involved in the upcoming election campaign but seeking clarity about the boundaries of political involvement when charitable status is involved. I'm grateful both for our own staff and guest for their efforts, and most importantly, for all those who participated online. This is just one way we at the EFC are seeking to bless Canada: by equipping the Church to be active, to know the issues, and to speak with compassion and mercy in the public square. Thank you for how your support makes all this good work possible.

EFC Engagement Kit coming your way

The EFC occasionally suggests that Canadian Christians contact their MPs or other representatives to interact with them on particular issues of concern. Now our team is taking things one step further, and providing you with a practical Engagement Kit to help you interact with politicians with even more confidence. Available this fall, the EFC Engagement Kit will include items like:



- a biblical rationale for Christian engagement in the public square
- tips for constructive dialogue with your MP
- a brief refresher on processes like how a bill becomes a law
- an exploration of our tone and choice of words for discussing divisive topics.

Before we engage with politicians, spending a moment thinking about the tone of our interaction can help. Here is a look at how and when the EFC strives to interact:

The EFC seeks to work thoughtfully, respectfully and collaboratively. We often cooperate with others who share similar goals although they may not share the same motivations or beliefs. We seek constructive change, often incrementally. We seek to relate biblical teaching and principles to all areas of life, in our families, in our churches, in public policy and in the courts, working out our faith personally and communally. The EFC addresses issues of national importance and usually focuses on policy at a federal level.

Refugee and good neighbour resource needs your stories

The EFC, along with its partners in the Refugees Resettlement Initiative, are hard at work on a practical resource to help private sponsors welcome and settle individuals and families into a new life in Canada. The team welcomes your tips, stories and insights to help ensure the resource is as practical and helpful as possible. Please contact Anita Levesque at ottawa@TheEFC.ca to share your story.



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ The Ontario Court of Appeal has released its decision on policies that require doctors to give an effective referral to patients who ask for euthanasia or assisted suicide, even if it goes against the doctors' deeply held beliefs. The court decision found that the requirement by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario interferes with physicians' religious freedom, but that this is justified to ensure patients' access to services. The EFC was a co-intervener at both the Court of Appeal and the lower court with the Christian Legal Fellowship and the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario. www.TheEFC.ca/CPSO

■ The Alberta Court of Appeal has denied the request of faith-based schools in Alberta to be temporarily exempted from Bill 24 (until a court challenge on its constitutionality is decided). Bill 24 requires principals to allow the creation of Gay-Straight Alliance clubs and events immediately upon request and prohibits school staff from informing parents of their child's participation, even for the youngest students. Now the lower court will

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proceed to hear a challenge of the constitutionality of Bill 24 itself. The EFC was an intervener at the Court of Appeal to argue for religious freedom and parental rights, and has asked to intervene in the lower court's review of the legislation. www.TheEFC.ca/PT

■ EFC director of public policy Julia Beazley appeared before a Senate committee to request changes to criminal justice Bill C-75. The EFC asked for criminal offences relating to human trafficking, sexual exploitation and assault of clergy to remain serious indictable offences, rather than becoming hybrid offences, as Bill C-75 proposes. The EFC sent a follow up letter to all Senators in June. www.TheEFC.ca/C75

■ The EFC has added to its package of election resources a new webinar on what churches can and cannot do during an election. The webinar was broadcast live June 15 with Julia Beazley, EFC director of public policy, and Deina Warren, legal counsel for the Canadian Council of Christian Charities. Watch the recording at www.TheEFC.ca/Webinars.

UPDATES ON THE ISSUES that the EFC is currently involved with are always available on our website www.TheEFC.ca

EFC Election Kit is available online

Because of your ongoing support, the EFC is able to create resources that help equip and inform Canadian churches. Thank you. The EFC Election Kit is being accessed by Canadians from coast to coast who want to engage with the upcoming federal election in a practical and empowered way.

The kit is available online for free at www.TheEFC.ca/Election2019, and we encourage you to reproduce and distribute copies in your group or church. **The kit, available in English and French, includes:**

- the brochure "Federal Election 2019: Faith, voting and political engagement"
- Election 2019 call to prayer
- Questions for candidates on key issues of concern
- What churches can and cannot do
- Guide to holding an all-candidates meeting



There are also some additional materials available only in English:

- A link to the recording of our June 19 webinar. What Churches Can and Cannot Do During a Federal Election features expert guests Deina Warren of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities and the EFC's Julia Beazley.
- Canadian electoral system refresher

Faith Today helps to shed light on the political life

The Jul/Aug issue of *Faith Today*, Canada's Christian magazine, features a cover story about the unique relationship between one pastor and one politician, and offers inspiration to come alongside politicians in an encouraging, constructive way.

You can also read an interview with retired Member of Parliament Joy Smith, known for her activism on the issue of human trafficking. She shares her thoughts on the unique challenges of being an MP.

"Parliamentarians are elected to go to Parliament to vote, to represent the people, the constituents who elected them. They should stay true to that. The people at home sometimes don't check up on what they are doing. They should keep them honest," says Smith.


You can also check out our interview with Rob Parker, co-director of the National House of Prayer, on how we can pray for and support politicians at www.TheEFC.ca/Podcasts.

If you have any trouble accessing these resources, please email senioreditor@faithtoday.ca and we will make sure you receive what you need.

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Box 5885 West Beaver Creek Post Office,
Richmond Hill, ON L4B 0B8 Canada
Tel: 905.479.5885 • Toll Free: 1.866.302.3362 • Fax: 905.479.4742
Email: EFC@TheEFC.ca • www.TheEFC.ca



The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (*Alliance évangélique du Canada*) is the national association "uniting Evangelicals to bless Canada in the name of Jesus." Since 1964 the EFC has provided a national forum for Evangelicals, fostered ministry partnerships, conducted research on religious and social trends and provided a constructive voice for biblical principles in life and society.

