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Euthanasia should never be normal

“Don't stop talking about Canada,” the EFC's public policy director recently urged an international colleague. Canada's rapid expansion of euthanasia is seen as a cautionary tale in other countries of how badly things can go.

Sharing the negative impacts of Canada's medical assistance in dying (MAiD) laws can make other countries think carefully and decide against passing similar laws. They can learn from Canada's mistakes.

Drawing international attention is also a way to advocate for change in Canadian law. An EFC brief to a UN committee points

out the devastating impact of the euthanasia law on people with disabilities. It gives examples of people with disabilities who are ending their lives using MAiD because they don't have the resources or support to live.

As we continue to do here at home, in the UN brief the EFC recommended Canada repeal MAiD for mental illness and Track 2 MAiD (for those who are not dying) and not expand MAiD to youth.

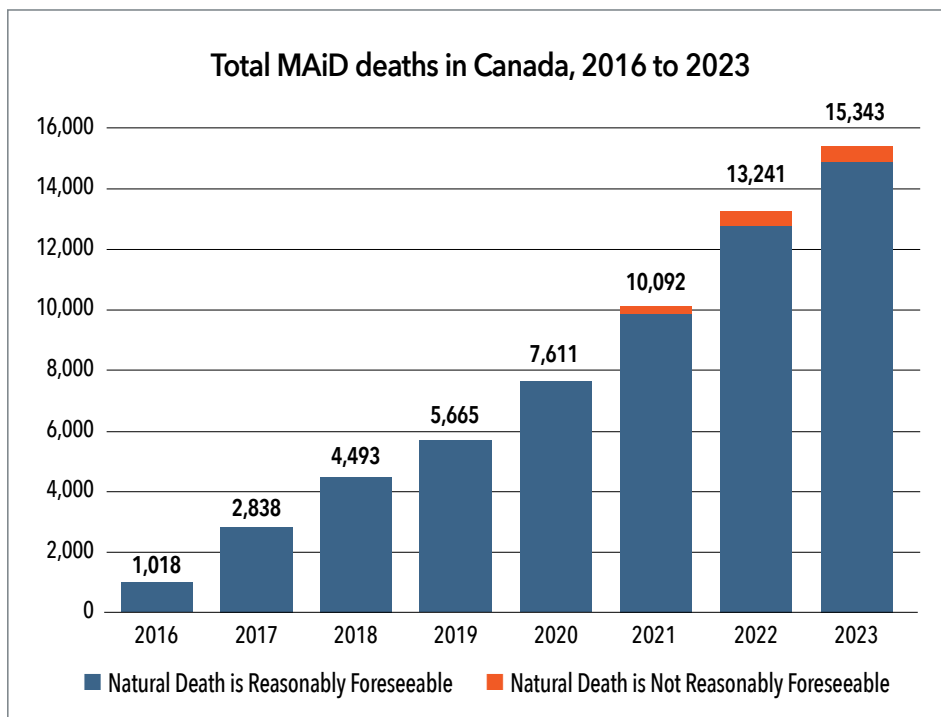
Euthanasia is becoming increasingly widespread and normalized in Canada. The numbers continue to increase. Health Canada reports 15,343 people ended their lives by MAiD in 2023, just under 5% of all deaths that year – that's 1 in 20. Since 2016, when the first euthanasia law was passed, until 2023 a total of 60,301 people have died by MAiD.

The federal government has been holding consultations this winter on whether to allow advance requests for MAiD. This would remove the critical safeguard that a person must be able to consent at the time their life is ended. The EFC expressed strong opposition to advance requests.

We lament that so many of our neighbours, family and friends are ending their lives by MAiD. We also lament the ongoing pressure to expand the law even more.

However, we feel hopeful when we see Christians and ministries in Canada reaching out to their neighbours, offering comfort and tangible help. This is a time when our faith can play a significant role. The suffering that leads people to end their lives by euthanasia is often spiritual, social or existential.

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The latest statistics help explain the suffering cited by those who ended their life by MAiD in 2023. Almost everyone identified the inability to engage in meaningful activities as a factor behind their request. Almost half indicated feeling like a burden, and two-thirds felt a loss of dignity. Loneliness or isolation was a factor for one in five people in Track 1 MAiD (whose death was reasonably foreseeable), rising to almost half of people in Track 2 MAiD (who were not otherwise near death).

"The church has so much to offer people who are feeling a lack of meaning, loneliness, loss of dignity, or who feel they are a burden," says Julia Beazley, EFC director of public policy in Ottawa. "Scripture teaches that each person's life has value, meaning and purpose. We are created by God, in His image, and loved by Him. Life is a gift He gives for all our days. It is not dependent on our productivity, social circumstances or age, health or ability."

We can make a difference in the lives of our neighbours. It's important to reach out to our neighbours in tangible ways, and to affirm the value and purpose of their lives. Together we can ask for a law to stop MAiD for mental illness taking effect in 2027. We can let MPs and federal candidates know we don't want MAiD to be expanded further.

We saw a glimmer of hope recently when we participated in Alberta consultations on how to improve MAiD oversight and safeguards. We were encouraged by the good questions being asked and the meaningful changes proposed.

Above all, our hope is in God who is able to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

See back page: How to promote life and limit euthanasia



EFC research prompted restructuring

Significant Church is a research report on Canadian churches of less than 150 people. One of its findings was how small churches often struggle to meaningfully connect with their denominational support staff.

One group that made positive changes as a result is the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec (CBOQ).

Significant Church research showed that congregation-denomination connections are far better if a local leader knows someone in the denominational office. Such a relationship gives congregations "a much better experience and perspective of the actual denominational body and the office as well," says Ken Foo, CBOQ director of church life and leadership.

That insight, published in spring 2023, led the CBOQ to move away from a centralized model that wasn't working well.

"If a church needed assistance, they didn't always know who [to reach out to], but they would just try to find it through the website or the directory," says Foo.

His office didn't know what was happening in many congregations, and vice versa, leading to what Foo calls gap narratives. "Where people didn't hear from the CBOQ, they filled in the gaps with their own narratives which were not always true."

So the CBOQ set out to reorganize. "We sectioned off our map as best we could," Foo explains. "Rather than having a centralized office, we had people who currently live in different parts of Ontario and Quebec, and so we let those churches know, 'This is a regional person. Reach out to them for anything.' And [the regional people] have been reaching out proactively as well."

What are the results? Foo says, "Communication, it's increased. It's probably also increased the positive perspective on the CBOQ." He estimates his now decentralized department staff "can identify exactly what's going on in [about 80%] of churches."

Foo says, "I'm not in the world of research, but I love taking research, data-driven information and then practically applying it to the context I find myself in."

Research from *Significant Church* is available to all EFC affiliates. Like every EFC research project, it was made possible thanks to EFC donors and was produced by a partnership – in this case of 11 organizations. See TheEFC.ca/SignificantChurch.



A note from EFC President David Guretzki

The EFC's statement of faith is the doctrinal basis on which affiliates join with us. I've been reviewing it with our staff over recent months. Although Evangelicals may differ on many things, we all hold to the authority of God's Word for faith and practice. We all see the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus as the only basis for forgiveness

from sin and reconciliation to God. We all affirm the Holy Spirit is giving new birth to people and empowering the Church toward faithful, holy witness as we await Christ's return. The EFC board, staff and affiliates reaffirm the doctrinal statement annually. Yes, the word "evangelical" has increasingly been questioned and even attacked, but we remain committed to keeping the gospel of Jesus central to all that we do. Thank you for your unity with us in this!

Connecting in the Maritimes

EFC leaders are involved in a variety of events around Moncton and Halifax this spring.

Everyone in the region is invited to a Faith Matters Workshop on May 3 in Moncton. This event features EFC President David Guretzki presenting on issues related to euthanasia (MAiD). EFC researcher Lindsay Callaway will present on *Parenting and Grandparenting Faith*, based on a recent partnership research project.

If you're near Halifax, you may have just returned from an Ignite Prayer event featuring EFC prayer ambassador Roger Helland on March 21. Ignite events are held by a partnership that aims to deepen a culture of prayer in each local church (IgnitePrayer.ca). See TheEFC.ca/Calendar for Ignite Toronto on April 4 and more.

Guretzki is also speaking in worship services at Tidal Church in Moncton on March 30 and attending a retreat with EFC denominational leaders in Sussex, N.B., in days afterward.

Area church leaders are also invited to a ministerial luncheon at Hillside Baptist Moncton on April 2, where Guretzki will share insights on the EFC's mission and vision.

Regional connections are crucial to the EFC as a national association, and our staff are always thrilled to be able to offer thanks and build relationships in person. **Reach the EFC's regional director for Atlantic Canada at TheEFC.ca/SheldonMacLeod.**



Learn more about inviting an EFC speaker to your event at TheEFC.ca/Speakers



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **MAiD-free spaces:** The EFC has applied for intervener status in a case about the ability of a Christian health-care facility in B.C. to offer care that is consistent with its religious beliefs. The EFC's arguments in this case would focus on institutional religious freedom and the ability of Christian institutions to provide services to the public without being compelled to compromise their beliefs. The decision in this case will answer the question whether the state can compel MAiD in all medical facilities and care homes, regardless of the institution's religious beliefs. The EFC supports the freedom of faith-based facilities to be MAiD-free spaces.

■ **Image-based abuse:** The EFC and the World Evangelical Alliance identified concerns about image-based sexual abuse and recommended responses in a joint submission to a UN Special Rapporteur in January. The brief specifically addressed online pornography, posting of intimate images without consent, distribution of child sexual abuse images, sextortion and AI generated images.

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■ **Human trafficking:** The EFC participated in a government consultation on human trafficking, emphasizing the importance of Canada's prostitution laws and the need for a permanent national anti-trafficking strategy. The EFC also recommended analyzing reports on forced labour in the supply chain to see if new measures are needed.

■ **Advance requests for euthanasia:** The federal government has been holding consultations on whether to allow advance requests for MAiD. Currently a person must be able to consent at the time their life is ended via MAiD. Allowing advance requests would remove a critical safeguard. The EFC outlines reasons to oppose advance requests at TheEFC.ca/AdvanceRequestsTenReasons.

■ **Rights of persons with disabilities:** The EFC is drawing international attention to the negative impacts of Canada's euthanasia laws. It focused on the devastating impacts on people with disabilities in a recent submission to the UN committee on the rights of persons with disabilities. The EFC's brief made many recommendations, including that Canada repeal MAiD for mental illness, Track 2 MAiD (for those who are not dying) and not expand MAiD to youth. This raises awareness and can bring international pressure to change Canadian laws on MAiD.

The EFC revives *Church & Faith Trends*

There's a new issue of *Church & Faith Trends* journal after a hiatus of almost a decade. And there will be more research articles to come.

This EFC periodical was founded in 2007 to publish long-form, high-quality ministry research for EFC affiliate leaders on topics outside our major research projects. The journal also features book reviews, historical analysis of the evangelical movement and articles more focused on the nuts and bolts of contemporary ministry – always with an eye to helping the evangelical movement better understand itself and our times.

Resource constraints have kept the journal dormant since 2012. Now the EFC Centre for Research on Church and Faith is making it an *occasional* journal with two issues likely per year. As in the past, we welcome external proposals for articles on the Canadian evangelical movement and its ministry context. We're looking for primary research and insightful analysis that will strengthen evangelical ministry in Canada.

The new February 2025 issue features an analysis by EFC President David Guretzki of the ethical arguments on medical assistance in dying presented in mainstream media opinion columns and editorials. There's also an analysis by EFC researchers Rick Hiemstra and Lindsay Callaway on how evangelical Christians are identified in public opinion polling in North America – the effectiveness of current tools has waned as Canadian culture has changed, and the duo makes recommendations for improvement.

Read, and find links scholars can use to propose articles, at TheEFC.ca/CFTJ.


How to promote life and limit euthanasia

- Reach out to your neighbours, friends and family to let them know they are loved and that their lives have purpose and value.
- Please join us in asking MPs and candidates to stop the expansion of MAiD. Find your MP's contact information at OurCommons.ca. See EFC resources at TheEFC.ca/HaltMAiD.
- Please continue to pray for those who are vulnerable to MAiD in our country.

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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.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



SANCTITY OF LIFE



CHURCH & MISSION



FAMILY & COMMUNITY



CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE