

CanadaWatch

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The EFC leads campaign to stop MAiD for mental illness

A law has already passed to allow medical assistance in dying (MAiD) when mental illness is a person's only medical condition. If nothing changes, this law will take effect on March 17, 2024. This must not happen.

In light of this pending law, the EFC has launched Before It's Too Late, an awareness and action campaign to stop the expansion of euthanasia to those suffering from mental illness alone.

The EFC has consistently opposed euthanasia and assisted suicide. These must not be seen as solutions to suffering and despair. At the same time, the EFC has consistently pushed for the strongest possible safeguards and limitations on MAiD to protect people in moments of vulnerability.

"As we near the March 2024 date when medical assistance in dying will become

available to our fellow Canadians suffering from mental health issues alone, we are inviting Christians and churches to become educated on this issue, and then act," explains EFC President David Guretzki.

"All through the journey of MAiD becoming legal in Canada, the EFC has consistently stood up for the value of human life and for the strongest possible safeguards to protect Canadians in moments of vulnerability. We've asked for things like more accessible palliative care and better medical and other supports for people living with disability or terminal illness, and we've worked to help churches consider how they can play a part in that," says Guretzki.

"Now we are approaching an even more dangerous path, one that would



make us the most permissive society in the world when it comes to death for our own citizens. For someone suffering from a mental illness to have euthanasia readily available is unacceptable. It's time for the Church to speak again."

The EFC is inviting churches across Canada to pray together on Sunday, October 22, for a stop to euthanasia for mental illness. Will you pray in your church, your small group, and your devotional time during the entire month of October? The EFC has resources available to help inform and guide your church in this prayer initiative at TheEFC.ca/MAiDPrayer.

Our team has assembled a Church Action Kit which has resources to inform and equip churches to pray and engage

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What you can do

- Urge your church to join other Canadian churches for a Day of Prayer on Sunday, October 22. TheEFC.ca/MAIDPrayer
- Send postcards and email and call your Member of Parliament. Visit TheEFC.ca/TakeActionOnMAID for easy talking points.
- Pray earnestly with us for Canadians struggling with their mental health.

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on this issue. This kit (TheEFC.ca/TakeActionOnMAiD) has been carefully written to be easily understood and digested, allowing readers to quickly be brought up to date and move into action, including contacting MPs and other ways of speaking out against the further expansion of MAiD.

"There are no additional legislative safeguards around MAiD for mental illness. This is deeply concerning given the immense complexity of mental health," says Julia Beazley, director of the EFC's Centre for Faith and Public Life in Ottawa. "It's especially troubling to imagine a severely depressed 18-year-old being eligible for euthanasia. That could be the reality in Canada this coming March if nothing changes."

The EFC is concerned this law will put the lives of Canadians with mental illness at very real risk. We can all think of someone in our circles who lives with mental health issues. We may have ourselves experienced mental health issues at some point or another, or we might later. We're very troubled by what this change in law communicates about the lives of those of us living with these challenges.

Along with you, the EFC believes every person's life matters. Everyone is loved by God. Every life is infinitely precious to God.

Over the last few years, we've already been hearing about people who are asking for MAiD because they don't have the support to live. The law is already failing to protect people in times of vulnerability. The lack of any additional legislated safeguards for MAiD for mental illness will only make this situation worse.

The EFC believes we must act together to ask for a change in the law before it is too late. To join in please visit TheEFC.ca/TakeActionOnMAiD.

Join the Day of Prayer to STOP MAiD FOR MENTAL ILLNESS on Sunday, Oct. 22



**NEW RESEARCH STUDY:
*Parenting Faith***



**Centre for Research on
Church and Faith**

Donors make new Canadian research possible

This spring, The EFC's Centre for Research on Church and Faith (CRCF) and its 16 affiliate partners released our latest study, *Parenting Faith*, that looks at how evangelical parents are disciplining their children in the home. Our national survey heard from more than 1,200 parents, and the report's findings help us to understand the national, aggregate picture.

Sometimes, however, ministry leaders need something a little more tailored to their contexts. Knowing this, the CRCF team crafted custom reports for EFC-affiliate denominations and our partner ministry organizations which were delivered at the beginning of September.

The CRCF is committed to the confidentiality of the people who generously give us their time and insights for our research. This commitment is reflected in how we prepare custom reports. If, for example, a table reporting participants' age ranges and provinces would make it possible to identify individuals, we will change the table combining age ranges and provinces until the data is broad enough to hide individual identities while still being as specific and helpful as we can be to denominational leaders. Sometimes, however, this isn't possible, and we just have to withhold a table.

Denominations are part of larger families or traditions within evangelicalism. For example, the Salvation Army and Free Methodists are part of the Holiness tradition. In addition to providing denomination-specific data, we also provided affiliate leaders with tradition-specific data. This way, even if we have to withhold denomination-specific data to protect confidentiality, leaders have another point of comparison to the wider research.

Offering custom reports for major research projects is part of the CRCF's commitment to our affiliates going forward, and they are a demonstration of another way we all benefit when we do ministry research together. You can learn more about the *Parenting Faith* research at ParentingFaith.ca and more about your denomination-specific data from your denominational leadership.



A note from EFC President David Guretzki

Since I began my role as president of the EFC, the spectre of MAiD expanding to those with no underlying condition except mental health issues has come ever closer. Left unchallenged, it will be permitted in our country next March. I believe this is one of the those culturally defining moments which the Church is going to have to respond to with urgency, clarity and grace. We will not stand by silently as people struggling with mental illness are presented with death as a sanctioned option. The EFC is at work, with your help, bringing awareness and calling for a stop to this change. We believe that the gospel requires us all to do better as we love our family members, church friends and neighbours who live with so many challenges. Thank you on our behalf, and their behalf, for your generous support that makes this essential work possible.



Christian women network moves ahead

Over the August long weekend a dedicated and enthused group of Canadian Christian mainly female leaders gathered on the campus of Tyndale University College & Seminary, as guests of the EFC. Among other discussions, the initial steps to a possible research project were explored.

The consultation weekend dug into whether a research project into the sometimes challenging realities faced by Christian women in leadership was a viable and valuable project. Would it benefit EFC affiliates and the broader Canadian evangelical Church? Representatives who came to Toronto from across the country participated in a variety of discussions. EFC staff and leaders presented initial questions and options but primarily listened deeply to the lived experiences and insights of those gathered.

Participants considered: Who is already doing something? Where are the gaps? How can we collaborate? What resources are already out there? What's the dream? Two other themes were how women can be encouraged in their leadership and how women and men can better work together in environments of mutual support.

EFC staff left the weekend humbled by the discernment and wisdom evident within the diversity of theological beliefs and denominations. "We saw such a high quality of leadership and amazing collaboration. We're grateful and excited about what can come from this endeavour," says Joel Gordon, director of the EFC's Centre for Ministry Partnership and Collaboration. The EFC is exploring and taking the first steps toward the possibility of creating a network for Christian women to be connected, encouraged and equipped as they serve in their areas of influence across the country.



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ Prostitution court case:

An Ontario court has upheld Canada's prostitution laws. The EFC applauds the decision, which finds the law to be "a carefully crafted legislative scheme that prohibits the most exploitive aspects of the sex trade." The EFC was an intervener in support of the law and argued that buying sex is inherently exploitive.

GOOD NEWS!

■ **Bill to reverse MAiD expansion:** A bill to cancel euthanasia for mental illness alone is up for debate and a vote in the House of Commons this fall. Bill C-314, a private member's bill introduced by MP Ed Fast, may be debated and voted on as early as the end of September. The EFC strongly supports this bill and encourages everyone to ask their MP to vote in favour of it. For more information and sample MP communications, see TheEFC.ca/C-314.

■ **Protecting children from online pornography:** This fall, a bill to protect children and youth from exposure to pornography online is moving through the House of Commons. The EFC

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supports Bill S-210. It is a private member's bill introduced by Senator Miville-Dechêne that has already passed in the Senate. Bill S-210 would make it a criminal offence to make sexually explicit material available to minors for a commercial purpose. More information at TheEFC.ca/S210.

■ **Human trafficking:** The EFC supports a bill that would update and expand Canada's National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking. Bill S-263 was introduced in the Senate by Senator Ataullahjan in May. The EFC's letter of support and sample letter are at TheEFC.ca/S263.

■ **Euthanasia resources:** The EFC has a postcard to send to a local MP to ask for a stop to MAiD for mental illness and a brochure that briefly explains changes in the law and what you can do, called *Euthanasia and Mental Illness*. Order print copies of both for yourself and your friends and neighbours at TheEFC.ca/TakeActionOnMAID.

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UPDATES ON ALL THE ISSUES are always available on our website www.TheEFC.ca

President's affiliate consultation underway

When David Guretzki stepped into the role of EFC president in January, one of his first decisions was to spend time visiting – in person – with the presidents of the 47 denominations that affiliate with the EFC. Though the visits with denominational leaders will take him longer than he originally planned, the results have already been more helpful than he imagined.

"As I've sat face-to-face with many of our denominational leaders, I've been so encouraged to hear stories of the good things God's Spirit is doing in our movement, while also having my vision more sharply focused on the sober challenges we face in this next decade," explains Guretzki.

So far, he has sat down with 17 leaders in five provinces. "The first order of business is normally to assure my host I'm there to listen and hopefully give support, and not to ask anything other than to share with me what's on their heart and mind – and often an idea of what is in their packed agendas," he says.

"I'm sensing some relief from them that the EFC really is there to serve them. I've seen some enthusiastic energy out there, but also some discouragement and weariness. I can assure our donors and friends that our leaders are working very hard in sometimes very challenging times. The EFC wants to walk alongside, even as we welcome our affiliates to join with us to bless Canada in the name of Jesus."

"I've been so encouraged to hear stories of the good things God's Spirit is doing in our movement, while also having my vision more sharply focused on the sober challenges we face in this next decade."



STOP MAiD FOR MENTAL ILLNESS



Download the Church Action Kit at TheEFC.ca/TakeActionOnMAID

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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.

