

CanadaWatch

CENTRE FOR FAITH & PUBLIC LIFE

The EFC in the courts and on Parliament Hill.

SPOTLIGHT

The EFC invites Governor General to greater understanding.

EFC RESOURCES

Helpful conversation tips for addressing religious freedom.

Clergy Protection in Canada Maintained in Bill C-51

We asked you to contact your Members of Parliament about Bill C-51, and you did! MP after MP reported a deluge of phone calls, mail and email asking them to keep the specific protection for religious leaders and worship services that was built into Bill C-51, the bill that was under review, proposed to be removed from the Criminal Code.

They heard from Canadians and they also heard from a cohort of concerned religious groups, facilitated in part by your EFC team. We came together in a united voice to express the need for continued legal protection against disruption for religious leaders and worship services in Canada. This is the kind of influence the EFC has talked about and convened for years.

In this case, the EFC worked most closely with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Association for Reformed

Political Action to draft an interfaith letter on Bill C-51, which EFC affiliates and interfaith partners were invited to sign. In the end, it was signed by 66 religious leaders, sent to the Minister of Justice, and tabled with the Justice Committee (www.TheEFC.ca/C51).

EFC President Bruce Clemenger and Public Policy Director Julia Beazley were invited to appear before the committee on October 30. They told the committee in part:

To remove this specific protection for religious officials and gatherings from the Criminal Code sends a confusing and contradictory message to faith communities in Canada, many of whom feel particularly and increasingly vulnerable... The specific protection offered by section 176 recognizes that here is something different, distinct and valuable about religious practice. It



recognizes that there is a good that is worthy of specific and explicit protection. To remove this protection would erode that recognition, and undermine the value and place of religious belief and practice in Canada.

The Justice Committee heard the concerns of religious Canadians, and responded positively. Both Liberal and Conservative members of the committee introduced amendments to keep the relevant section and to expand the Christian-specific wording so that it clearly includes all religious groups. As EFC staff told the committee, "We believe it should be made clear that this protection is extended to all faith communities."

... continued on page 2

What you can do:

- Pray for the Justice Committee's favourable recommendation to be adopted by the House of Commons in its final vote on Bill C-51 and a favourable response in the Senate. (Keep up to date at www.TheEFC.ca/C51.)
- Pray that Canadian Christians will continue to stand together, in what is often an increasingly anti-religious climate in Canada.
- Please continue to give financially to the work of the EFC. When you give, you empower our presence on some of the most critical issues in Canada today.

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In the end the Committee voted to retain this specific, explicit protection for religious officials and gatherings, and we are deeply grateful to have seen the impact of our work, and the impact of you and your churches reaching out to MPs with such a strong voice. The amendment still needs to be adopted by the House at the bill's third reading, so supporters need to continue to ask their MP to vote to keep section 176 in the *Criminal Code*.

As we move forward together, there are simple things you can do in your own community to continue to protect religious freedom. Our Ottawa team encourages Canadians to contact their MPs just to say thank you and build relationship.

You can tell them you are praying for them in their high-stress environment. That blesses them (part of our mission!) and helps create a cordial and warm relationship for when we do ask them to work on our behalf.

Getting involved in our communities as helpful citizens – as so many Evangelicals already do – also helps to demystify religion for our neighbours and build bridges. It's a good thing to do for religious freedom in Canada.

The response of the Justice Committee is an example of parliamentarians listening to the concerns and perspective of religious communities. This kind of response demonstrates a respect and concern for Canadians with deeply held religious beliefs.

It is the prayerful and financial support of the friends and partners of the EFC that makes all our work possible.

Ultimately, it wasn't the EFC and the other religious groups who saved this legal protection for worship services and religious leaders in Canada, it was you.

The ways you are living out your agreement with the mission of the EFC – to bless Canada in the name of Jesus – is so important. Thank you.



The EFC invites Governor General to greater understanding

Canadian Christians were rightly dismayed at the comments made by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Canada's new Governor General, as she spoke to a gathering of scientists in Ottawa on November 1.

EFC President Bruce Clemenger wrote to the Governor General to express not only concern over her remarks, but to invite her into a deeper dialogue about matters of faith and extend a hand of friendship.

He also took the opportunity to introduce the Governor General to the EFC and the Canadian evangelical community:

The EFC is the national association of evangelical Christians in Canada. Established in 1964, the EFC facilitates collaboration across evangelical churches and institutions, researches church and faith trends, and brings biblical principles

to bear in public life. Evangelicals are a significant segment of the Christian population in Canada. It is estimated that about 10–12% of Canadians, or 4 million people, are evangelical.

Bruce Clemenger invited the Governor General to meet with scientists of religious faith who could share how their belief in a Creator informs their work.

We invite you to deepen your understanding of Canadians with deeply held religious beliefs, including the experience and engagement of scientists with deeply held religious beliefs. We would welcome the opportunity to call together scientists and

faculty members of diverse religious faiths to share with you their perspectives on how their belief in a Creator informs their work as researchers and scientists. It is our hope that this letter is received...as an invitation for deeper understanding.

(www.TheEFC.ca/Letters)



Watch what the EFC accomplished in 2017 with YOUR HELP!

The EFC's Presidents Day was held recently, and included a video annual report update from the EFC team. You can watch it online by going to this link: <https://vimeo.com/239838476>. You will hear about the highlights, accomplishments and challenges of 2017 and see some members of the EFC team explaining the heart of their part of the EFC's mission – to bless Canada in the name of Jesus.



Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

The EFC is busier than ever, appearing in multiple court cases this fall and winter. Bill C-51 was a victory for Canadian Christians and other faith groups as religious leaders and worship services remain legally protected from disruption in Canada. In the wake of the terrible and tragic church shootings in Texas on November 5, this is an especially poignant ruling on our behalf. It also demonstrates the influence and impact we have when we stand strong together. You are the backbone of this movement, and we thank you.

What is the EFC's core message about religious freedom?

As a friend to the EFC, you have been hearing a lot about religious freedom these days. It is at the core of much of our work in the courts and on Parliament. We know it is also a primary concern for you, a Canadian Christian who highly values your right to worship with freedom and live out your faith in all aspects of your life.

Recently, the EFC made a submission to the parliamentary committee on Canadian Heritage studying systemic racism and religious discrimination in Canada (www.TheEFC.ca/M103).

Here are some of the core messages the EFC presented to the government Heritage committee studying this issue.

- Canada has an increasingly anti-religious climate that we must work to correct.
- Evangelicals feel this anti-religious trend mostly when our beliefs are disrespected, and it is only reinforced when we see disrespect for the visible and outward symbols of Christian or other religious faith.



- Government and parliamentarians can address this religious discrimination by taking religious differences seriously, engaging religious groups directly, and consistently collecting accurate data about religion in Canada.

- Government must be clear and cautious with the language used. For example, the EFC recommended the term anti-Muslim discrimination be used, not the term Islamophobia.

In our submission, we also wrote:

Our faith, and every other faith, expresses a specific vision of how life should be lived. Religion is the system of belief, worship and practice that is of ultimate importance to a person. For some, it is the ultimate commitment to a divine being or force that provides personal and communal direction to life. Religion shapes our beliefs about the purpose of our life and the world around us as well as how we are to live our lives in light of those purposes.



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ Bill C-51 and the specific protection of religious gatherings:

A victory so far, thanks to your support! Please see our main story for more details.

■ **Religious discrimination:** The EFC staff appeared before the parliamentary Canadian Heritage committee and sent a written brief on religious discrimination, in response to the study mandated by motion M-103. The EFC discussed evangelical experience of Canada's increasingly anti-religious climate and asked the committee to protect religious freedom, to engage with religious groups directly and to protect freedom of speech. The EFC also asked the committee not to use the term "Islamophobia."

■ **Religious freedom:** The Supreme Court of Canada released its decision in the *Ktunaxa* case. The Ktunaxa Nation opposed the development of a ski resort on sacred land. The EFC co-intervened in this case with the Christian Legal Fellowship to argue that administrative bodies need to consider

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As you dialogue with others we hope these talking points might be of good use to you. Thank you for standing with us!

...continued on page 3

religious freedom issues when they are raised. The Court affirmed this point, and clarified its interpretation of the *Charter's* protection for freedom of religion, but ultimately ruled against the Ktunaxa Nation's claim (www.TheEFC.ca/Ktunaxa).

■ **Wall case heard:** The Supreme Court of Canada heard the *Wall* case in November, on whether the courts have the ability to intervene in the internal membership decisions of religious organizations. The EFC co-intervened with the Catholic Civil Rights League to argue that it is important for religious communities to be able to define their membership and protect their religious character, identity and integrity.

■ **TWU case at the Supreme Court:** The Supreme Court heard the case regarding Trinity Western University's law school on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1. The Christian university's proposed law school was opposed by three provincial law societies because the university's community covenant limited sexual intimacy to heterosexual marriage. The EFC co-intervened with Christian Higher Education Canada to argue that the state should not be the arbiter of religious beliefs, but should allow religious organizations and individuals to participate in the public sphere (www.TheEFC.ca/TWUlaw).

Love Is Moving at Canadian Youth Workers Conferences

CYWC is a conference tour to Canadian cities designed for youth leaders and youth pastors to receive additional training from qualified speakers on topics that relate to current youth issues. Canadian youth ministries can be more effective and access resources they might not otherwise be able to. The conferences also offer times of prayer, worship and pastoral care to hardworking youth workers.



We are excited to announce that Joel Gordon and Ben Porter, founders of the EFC's youth initiative Love Is Moving, will attend the CYWC events as a national sponsor in 2017/2018. Ben Porter will be at events in Moncton, Vancouver, and Calgary, while

Joel Gordon will be in Montreal and Saskatoon. Ben and Joel will be networking and promoting Love Is Moving on the CYWC tour.



For more information check out www.LovelsMoving.ca and www.CYWC.ca.

The EFC is happy to help support this great initiative for our youth.

Warm words from donors

We love to hear from you! And we pray for our donors and friends regularly at our staff devotions. Some of our donors have been with us a long time, and we are so grateful for your faithfulness over the long haul.

"Just a note to say, we are more than conquerors through Christ. Keep the banner of the cross HIGH if we faint not. Thanks for your last newsletter. We like to be updated. I am 92 still going but slower. Bless you all who labour so faithfully. Keep in the Word – it is powerful!"

FT The Faith Today blog posts exclusive new material several times per week, following up on important issues raised in Canada's Christian magazine. Blog.FaithToday.ca

f Join the conversation and like us on Facebook. www.Facebook.com/TheEFC



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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.

