

# CanadaWatch

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## Behind the scenes with the EFC

If we are quiet sometimes about our work, there is a reason. In this Q and A, Julia Beazley, director of public policy for the EFC, pulls back the curtain on the EFC's work in Ottawa.

### How does the EFC select the issues we work on?

We engage on policy issues that are touched on by core biblical principles: care for the vulnerable, the sanctity of life, religious freedom, family and community, and church and mission.

The EFC supports and works toward policies that agree with or advance these biblical principles. Our goal is to promote care for those who are vulnerable, protecting and upholding the dignity of all people and respect for the sanctity of every human life.

We select issues and policy positions that we believe would be supported

by our affiliates. If there is a new issue that requires our engagement, we first consult with a representative group from our affiliates to test messaging and positioning, and then communicate these back to the wider community,

### How do you choose the partners we work with?

We regularly work in collaboration with other Christian organizations or other faith groups on issues of common concern. We may work in a broad coalition with other organizations toward a specific policy goal – even though we may differ with them on other policy matters.

Strategic, coordinated messaging or a statement by a broad coalition has more impact and is more likely to be heard by elected officials.

Not only is it more effective to work in



a coalition, it also gives each group the opportunity to learn and benefit from another's experience and expertise. We focus on what brings us together, recognizing that there are differences between us.

Working with partners can be hard work. It can involve the delicate work of negotiating, collaborating, finding common ground and avoiding pitfalls. It involves trust. Relationships are an essential foundation to working together and they are built over time.

### Much of the EFC's work is behind the scenes. Can you tell us about that?

There is trust when someone in a political office knows your conversations will be both helpful and kept in

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## How you can help

- Let us know your questions. If you are ever wondering about the work the EFC does, or how we carry it out, please let us know. Our donors are our most important partners, and communication is key.
- We rely on your prayers. Please include the work of the EFC in your household and church prayers. We appreciate this and also pray for you in our weekly devotion times.
- Check in with us regularly. Our website [www.TheEFC.ca](http://www.TheEFC.ca) always has updates.

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confidence. Establishing and keeping this trust allows us to have conversations with MPs and Senators about initiatives or concerns with a proposed bill, or to recommend stakeholders and experts who can speak to a parliamentary committee, for example. A relationship of trust allows us to meet with staff in Ministers' offices to discuss the wording of sensitive policies, to work toward the best possible outcome.

At all times, we are looking to raise awareness and help bring about the best possible outcome, even if our participation remains quiet.

We bring constructive, accurate information to policy discussions, and it definitely takes time to research and develop that kind of response. And relationships of trust are built over time and by reputation. We're happy we have that role in Ottawa.

**What is the most important thing you want donors to know about the EFC's public policy work?**

Your support makes it possible for us to develop trusted relationships and partnerships, and to do the background work necessary to promote biblical principles in public life.

We may not be able to tell you about all the behind-the-scenes ways we're working to advance biblical principles in a range of policy issues. Sometimes respecting trust means we are not even able to openly share successes the way we would like, but please know that we are there, working faithfully on your behalf. Know also that your support allows us to be involved in important discussions that make a difference, often behind the scenes.



# The EFC makes submission in Supreme Court case



## **B**ecause of your support, the EFC has made a written submission to the Supreme Court of Canada supporting the challenge of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Canada to an Ontario Court of Appeal decision.

The EFC is pleased the Supreme Court of Canada has since agreed to hear this case – known as the *Aga* case – which is about whether ecclesiastical decisions about membership and discipline are outside of the scope of judicial review. The case also touches on the relationship between a church member and their church, exploring how the tithes they may donate might be understood as a kind of legal relationship.

Of course, the EFC's position is that courts have no place in the inner

disciplinary life of a church and that church membership is voluntary and so is the giving of tithes and offerings. The EFC was involved successfully in a previous case, the *Wall* decision, that explored these same principles. We will seek intervener status in the upcoming Supreme Court proceedings.

We will continue to update you on this case, its implications for religious freedom in Canada, and the EFC's role as events develop.

## Could you mail a postcard to help stop euthanasia expansion?

The EFC is inviting you to offer input again to the government on the expansion of medical assisted dying in Canada, known as Bill C-7.

A recently announced extension means that last fall's lower court decision on euthanasia will not take effect until Dec. 18.

Bill C-7 will open euthanasia and assisted suicide to Canadians who are not dying. People with disabilities already fight to receive adequate support and care to live. They are very concerned that they will be eligible for euthanasia because of their disability.

A few minutes of your time to contact your MP can make a difference! The EFC has a sample letter and postcards you can send your MP. See [www.TheEFC.ca/C-7](http://www.TheEFC.ca/C-7) for resources or email us at [EFC@TheEFC.ca](mailto:EFC@TheEFC.ca) to request postcards.





## Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

Hearing the stories of churches responding to COVID-19 during our most recent EFC webinar on re-opening churches reaffirmed how resilient the Church is, and also just how resilient and flexible it will need to be in the weeks and months ahead. I have such admiration for the thousands of

hard-working pastors and church leaders across the country caring for their congregations and their communities as best they can, with God's grace. The EFC also stands shoulder to shoulder with the hundreds of Christian charities working in very new ways because of the challenges of COVID-19. "Together we are stronger" is the conviction at the heart of the EFC, and I believe it now more than ever. Let's continue to pray for one another and the good work the Church is doing to be a blessing, in the name of Jesus, in our churches, communities and our country in the days ahead.

## EFC statement on racism

**O**n June 2, the EFC released this statement on racism.

The EFC condemns racism and its underlying denial that all people are loved by God, are created in His image, and have equal dignity and value.

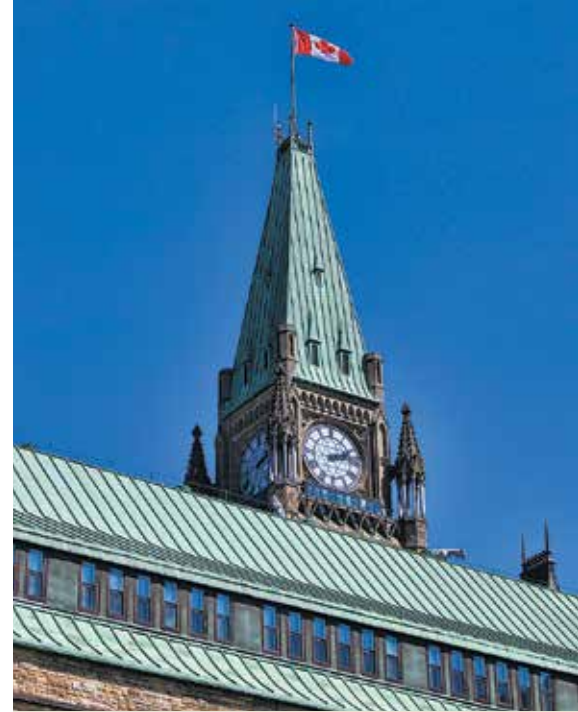
Racism is a form of discrimination that values and privileges some groups of people above others and denies the personhood of some based on skin colour, descent, national or ethnic origin.

We call upon churches to combat racism and its related attitudes and injustices. We join in the collective grief and lament of so many that this problem, with its horrible implications and impact on the lives of so many, continues on.

This is not only an American and Canadian problem, but is universal. Racism has impacted Canada and continues to plague us, as we are reminded by current demonstrations in Can and the legacy of racism told in the pages of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the lived experience of our sisters and brothers of colour.

Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to be peacemakers and ambassadors of reconciliation, and to break down the walls that divide, including racism. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice and peace, and we invite you to join us.

**We ask you to join us in repudiating every hint of racism in the Church and working in our communities and our country in the essential Kingdom work of anti-racism.**



## Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Religious freedom case:** The Supreme Court of Canada will hear a case about the role of the state in disputes between members of a church and its bishop on theological and membership decisions. As the court considered whether to hear the case, the EFC made an application that outlined reasons in favour of hearing the case. The EFC will apply to be an intervener in support of religious freedom when the court hears the so-called *Aga* case this fall (see page 2).

■ **Sex-selective abortion:** The EFC supports private member's Bill C-233 to ban sex-selective abortion, introduced by MP Cathay Wagantall. The bill would make it an offence for a doctor to perform an abortion knowing that it was being carried out solely due to the sex of the child. Private members' bills are a key method to raise awareness and demonstrate support for a policy, although they tend to move more slowly through Parliament and are less likely to pass. See our letter of support and a sample letter to send your MP at [TheEFC.ca/C-233](http://TheEFC.ca/C-233).

■ **Human trafficking:** A private member's bill introduced in the Senate would require large corporations to report on

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For updates on issues the EFC is currently involved in  
visit [www.TheEFC.ca](http://www.TheEFC.ca)



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what they are doing to make sure their supply chains are free of slavery, forced labour or child labour. The EFC wrote to Senator Miville-Dechéne, sponsor of Bill S-211, to support this initiative to reduce forced and child labour and to raise awareness about human trafficking. Join the EFC by writing a letter of support to your MP and Senator. A sample letter is online at [TheEFC.ca/S-211](http://TheEFC.ca/S-211).

■ **Sexual exploitation:** The EFC supports a bill to increase the penalty for sexually exploiting a person with a disability or a young person in a relationship of dependency. Bill C-219 is a private member's bill introduced by MP John Nater. Letting your MP know you support bills like this one communicates the issue is important and should be acted on. See the EFC's letter of support and a sample MP letter at [TheEFC.ca/C-219](http://TheEFC.ca/C-219).

## Heart and hands

*Karen Stiller is a senior editor of Faith Today magazine, along with fellow editor Bill Fledderus. She also hosts the EFC's podcast and webinars. Stiller serves also as the EFC's communications strategist, which means she helps crafts various communications around the work of the EFC.*



I am extremely grateful to the Canadian Christians who donate to the EFC and enable us to do a really important work in Canada, which for me has so much to do with the EFC's role as a gatherer and teller of stories.

The Christian journalism we do in the pages of *Faith Today*, for example, and the work we do in our podcasts and webinars, is unique and important in today's Canada. The stories of Christians matter. Our voices matter, and we help to bring those stories and voices to a wider audience and connect us all together in our vast country. Thank you for how you make this work possible."

## EFC research goes on in challenging times

COVID-19 has not slowed down our research team, other than temporary shifts into home offices. Our team, comprised of director of research Rick Hiemstra and researcher Lindsay Callaway, are working on projects around faith and family, as well as small churches in Canada.

The Canadian Evangelical Family Faith Formation Study ([www.TheEFC.ca/CEFFFS](http://www.TheEFC.ca/CEFFFS)) is investigating how Canadian evangelical parents and guardians understand their roles as disciplinarians of their children. What helps or hinders churches parents or guardians in these roles, and how can and ministries best support them?

The Canadian Evangelical Small Church Study ([www.TheEFC.ca/CESCS](http://www.TheEFC.ca/CESCS)) is investigating the ministry and mission opportunities in which small churches engage, as well as the challenges that hinder vitality in congregational life and ministry.

Early stages of research involve interviews, literature reviews, and setting up the collaborative partnerships that undergird EFC research projects.

*Faith Today* and the EFC Podcast both won awards recently from the Canadian Christian Communicators Association and The Word Guild ([www.FaithToday.ca/Awards2019](http://www.FaithToday.ca/Awards2019)). We are proud of our writers and the feature articles, interviews and podcasts they helped us produce that contribute to the body of faith-based journalism in Canada. **Remember *Faith Today* is now free for Canadian subscribers.** Episodes of the EFC Podcast are also ready for you to download. Sample and sign up at [www.FaithToday.ca](http://www.FaithToday.ca).

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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.

