

CanadaWatch

CENTRE FOR FAITH & PUBLIC LIFE

The EFC in the courts and on Parliament Hill.

SPOTLIGHT Will you join us in prayer for religious freedom in Canada and Trinity Western University?

EFC RESOURCES

Faith Today's most popular subscription deal is back!

Help the EFC protect religious freedom for everyone

Religious freedom provides the space within which we can express and share our faith with others. This seems like a straightforward and compelling issue that all Canadian Evangelicals can agree on, and it is a significant portion of the work the EFC does in Canada, with the help of our friends and supporters.

Sometimes we are stretched in our understanding of what religious freedom means in a country full of people of different faiths. It is not just freedom for us, but for all. Restrictions on the religious freedom of some will necessarily impact us all.

Globally, religious freedom is under strain. Canada is not exempt from challenges to religious freedom. Trinity Western University's (TWU) quest to

have their own law school is an example. A Christian university should be able to determine standards for its own students and have the freedom to establish an accredited professional school of its choosing.

The EFC has been involved with the TWU case since the beginning, and we will be back in court this fall to participate in a Supreme Court of Canada appeal.

The case of *Wall v. Judicial Committee of the Highwood Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses* may be less familiar. It is another Supreme Court of Canada case, scheduled to be heard November 2, in which the EFC is intervening. Randy Wall was a Jehovah's Witness who was dis-fellowshipped by his local fellowship hall. Because of



discipline, he lost clients. Many of his clients were fellow Jehovah's Witnesses who would no longer use his services. Wall appealed to the courts to have the Jehovah's Witnesses reverse their ruling against him. The court decided *they do have* jurisdiction over these matters.

Historically, Canadian courts have determined, correctly in the EFC's opinion, that they do not have jurisdiction in the internal decisions of churches and other private associations. For churches, decisions about membership and church discipline are matters of doctrine and the interpretation of Scripture. As the EFC intervenes in this case it will argue that, no matter our compassion toward Mr. Wall, it is essential for religious communities to be able to define their

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WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Your support makes the EFC's work to defend religious freedom in Canada possible. Thank you. Please continue to pray and give.
- Talk to your church, friends and neighbours about religious freedom issues in Canada, and the particular cases the EFC is working on this year.
- Browse through and share the various articles on religious freedom on the EFC website.
- Commit to joining in on the day of prayer coming up for religious freedom in Canada and the TWU case. More details inside!

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membership and to protect their religious character, identity and integrity.

This fall, the EFC will also be making a submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage on Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination. We will urge the committee to avoid the use of the divisive term "Islamophobia," and to focus instead on the anti-religious discrimination that all faiths face in our country.

The EFC is also at work responding to Bill C-51 which removes specific protection for clergy and churches against disruption of worship services. We are asking the government to protect the integrity and security of religious worship for all Canadians and to ensure the language of the amendment is inclusive of all faiths and clearly maintains protection for all religious communities.

Evangelicals are a significant segment of the Christian population in Canada. Almost half of the 24,000 Christian congregations in Canada are evangelical. We have a voice. And sometimes we use it to speak up for others, because it is our responsibility to do so, but it is also in our interest to do so.

No matter what religion Canadians choose, they must have the freedom to choose it and to practise it with freedom. We currently enjoy the freedom in Canada to talk to others about our faith. As Evangelicals we always hope our friends and neighbours will choose Christ, and we continue to be a winsome and powerful witness to His presence in our country. But let's not forget that when we defend the religious freedom of others, we also defend our own.

"...when we defend the religious freedom of others, we also defend our own."



**JOIN US SUNDAY,
NOVEMBER 26**

PRAYER

Will you join us in prayer for religious freedom in Canada?

Sunday, November 26 is a day set apart to pray for the successful resolution of the Trinity Western University (TWU) case, which will be heard in the Supreme Court of Canada on November 30 and December 1. *Because of the broad potential implications of this case, it is also a day to pray for the future of religious freedom in Canada.*

The facts:

- TWU was denied accreditation of its law school because the school requires students to sign a community covenant which includes a commitment to reserve sexual intimacy to the marriage of one man and one woman.
- This battle for accreditation has been played out across Canada with the Federation of the Law Societies of Canada affirming the accreditation, while three of its members dissented and said they would not accredit it.
- Legal challenges have ensued in three provinces. The courts ruled in favour of TWU in two of the three cases. Two decisions were appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, one for and one against TWU. Those two cases will be heard on November 30 and December 1 in Ottawa.

Why pray?

- Regardless of outcomes, Christians are enjoined by Scripture to pray for authorities and that the Church may live in peace and godliness (1 Timothy 2).
- At the heart of the issue is the place of religion in Canadian public life. Can government bodies refuse to accredit or recognize Christian or other religious institutions that meet all the required standards?
- A decision against TWU could mean that a religious institution can no longer maintain community expectations, and thereby erode their religious distinctiveness. A negative decision may not only potentially trigger a tightening of restrictions on other Canadian Christian institutions of higher learning, but also restrict other religious organizations that ask its members to live counter-culturally.



Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

Please join us in praying for religious freedom in Canada, and specifically the TWU case, on November 26, and indeed all the days leading up to the Nov. 30 - Dec. 1 court hearings. It feels right to me that the EFC is encouraging this day of prayer along with the Canadian Council of Christian Charities. As we pray for the lawyers presenting the arguments and the judges as they prepare, hear and deliberate, it is also important that we express gratitude for the freedoms we enjoy in Canada. May we be good stewards of our freedoms and use them as we bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ both in word and deed. Thank you for standing with us.

Let's unite as individuals, small groups, congregations and denominations on Sunday, November 26 to pray with one heart and mind.

- Let's pray together for our leaders, as Scripture exhorts us. Let's pray for wisdom and insight for the judges, the lawyers and the interveners on both sides in the TWU case.
- Let's earnestly pray for the provincial and federal governments of Canada, that they would know God's wisdom and govern with insight and compassion for all the citizens of Canada.
- Let's pray for the churches of Canada, that we would be compassionate and godly citizens representing Jesus Christ well, even as our country changes around us.
- Finally, let's pray the Supreme Court of Canada will rule that there is no valid reason why TWU

law schools should not be accredited and the precedent that is set will be one for religious freedom in Canada.

A reminder of what could be at stake:

- The accreditation and recognition of religious institutions in Canada.
- The freedom of religious institutions (churches, schools, camps, missions, etc.) to maintain their religious character and purposes.
- The future of professional training programs run by Christian institutions.

If you are going to join in prayer email us at EFC@TheEFC.ca to let us know, or post your participation at www.Facebook.com/TheEFC.



This day of prayer is an initiative of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the Canadian Council of Christian Charities.



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Euthanasia:** An independent government-funded organization is assessing whether Canada should expand access to euthanasia and assisted suicide for mature minors, those with mental illness as the sole medical condition and via advance requests. The EFC made a written submission this fall that outlines the major risks such expansions would pose to vulnerable Canadians. The Council of Canadian Academies must submit a report of its findings to Parliament by December 2018. www.TheEFC.ca/Euthanasia

■ **Human rights review:** The EFC, along with the World Evangelical Alliance, is participating in the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review of Canada's human rights record. The EFC's written submission will evaluate Canada's actions to address sexual exploitation, such as prostitution and human trafficking, and our concerns related to religious freedom. www.TheEFC.ca/ReligiousFreedomCanada

■ **Religious freedom:** EFC staff celebrated, with all Canadians, the safe return of Rev. Hyeon Soo Lim of Light Korean Presbyterian Church in

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Mississauga, Ont., after two years imprisonment in North Korea. The EFC had written several letters to the federal government on his behalf.

■ **Religious discrimination:** The Canadian Heritage committee is holding hearings this fall on systemic racism and religious discrimination. The EFC will describe the anti-religious bias developing in Canadian society and the need for religious pluralism, and ask the government to avoid the problematic term "islamophobia." www.TheEFC.ca/M103

■ **Bill C-51:** The EFC is preparing a response to Bill C-51, a federal bill to clean up outdated or redundant criminal laws. Among the laws to be removed is section 176 of the *Criminal Code*, which provides specific protection for clergy and religious worship. The House of Commons justice committee is expected to review Bill C-51 this fall.

■ **Conscience protection:** The Manitoba government has introduced a bill to protect the conscience of health care workers who object to participating in euthanasia or assisted suicide. The Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience, of which the EFC is a member, has information and resources on Bill 34 at www.CanadiansForConscience.ca/Manitoba.

Learn online with EFC webinars

If you missed it live, you can still watch our September EFC webinar

online. The very informative round-up discussion of some of the top issues the EFC is working on this fall will help orient you to what's happening with issues like Bill C-51, euthanasia and assisted suicide and more.

>> **View it at www.TheEFC.ca/Webinars**

Join our next webinar on Wed., Oct 18, at noon EDT on how to help people with pornography addiction and occasional users to break free. We will be joined by Toni Dolfo-Smith, executive director of Journey Canada, and Dianne Kuglin, an addictions counsellor.

>> **Find out more and register online at www.TheEFC.ca/Webinars**



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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.

