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Why must Canada reverse MAiD for mental illness?

As a *Canada Watch* reader and friend of the EFC, you've been a crucial part of our work to interact respectfully, compassionately and effectively with what can feel like the relentless expansion of medical assistance in dying.

MAiD is certainly not the only major issue these days, but it is one of the most pressing. That's because in only a few short weeks, unless there's a change in the law, people with mental illness as their only medical condition will become eligible for euthanasia.

"Underlying our concerns about MAiD is our belief that human life is precious, a gift from God of inestimable value," says EFC director of public policy Julia Beazley. "To allow someone's life to be ended by MAiD is to say that person's

life isn't worth living. This message is especially detrimental to those who are struggling with hopelessness or despair."

A parliamentary committee has been studying whether Canada is ready for MAiD for mental illness. The EFC, which has consistently opposed euthanasia and assisted suicide, submitted an outline of reasons why MAiD for mental illness should not be introduced. Reviewing those reasons can help us all remember why we're engaged with this work.

1. There are no clear guidelines on how to distinguish between a desire for suicide and a request for MAiD. This will be a subjective assessment, carried out unevenly in a fractured and overburdened health care system.



2. The MAiD law limits eligibility to people with a serious and irremediable medical condition. However, experts say it's difficult, if not impossible, to predict the trajectory of an individual person's mental illness.

3. MAiD for mental illness must not become an option – and particularly not the most accessible option – when mental health care may not be accessible or affordable, when treatment and support are not available to far too many Canadians. Canada's health care systems are under strain and have been described as broken, given that:

- One in ten Canadians looking for counselling will wait more than four months for their first appointment (often longer for specialized care).

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How you can help

- We can't do this work without you. Please continue to give to and pray for the EFC's work on issues like MAiD and many others that impact vulnerable Canadians.
- Please contact your member of Parliament again or for the first time. It's not too late. The timing is right to reach out now.

As ever, we remain deeply grateful for the ways you support the work of the EFC as we speak into the pressing issues of the day.

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- Only half of Canadians experiencing a major depressive episode receive “potentially adequate care.”
- One-third of Canadians who reported needing mental health care say those needs were not fully met.

4. People are already applying for MAiD because of a lack of support, feeling like they don't have other options and because of socioeconomic concerns. Canadians with mental illness face additional stigma and discrimination that may add more push toward MAiD.

5. The existing safeguards are very subjective. What is a grievous or serious illness? What is an advanced state of irreversible decline? Who decides? Parliamentarians must look at *what the law allows* rather than relying on what they expect health professionals to do. Assessing case-by-case means there are no universal protections.

The EFC's submission says, “It is unconscionable that in Canada it may become easier for a person with mental illness to access MAiD than the care and supports they need to live.”

The EFC asked the MPs and senators on the committee to recommend at least a delay to MAiD for mental illness, if not a complete halt.

Many of you reached out to your MPs to ask them to stop MAiD for mental illness. Thank you. It has been important and effective to do this work together. It is still a crucial time for each of us to engage. A brief phone call to a local MP's office, even leaving a message with MP's staff, to ask for MAiD for mental illness to be stopped will be noted and have an impact.

Until the change takes effect on March 17, it's in the government's hands to introduce a delay or to stop the change altogether.

Our team has prepared resources that are short and digestible and help us all be more effective on this issue. Find them at TheEFC.ca/HaltMAiD.

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Centre for Research on
Church and Faith

EFC research helps core ministries of churches

The EFC's Centre for Research on Church and Faith is usually taking a fresh look at some core part of church ministry. Core ministries often get overlooked, leading to stale assumptions, ineffective ministry and reduced motivation among those most ready to serve.

Several years ago affiliate leaders approached the EFC asking for data about Christian women in evangelical congregations. Beyond anecdotes, there wasn't much available. In the anecdotes, however, was a consistent thread that women in local churches lacked recognition for how they served in the Church and for how they could be better supported.

As a result the Centre for Research has started a new project in partnership with 12 EFC affiliates to understand how Canadian evangelical women serve and why, how they understand their roles and how the church can help them thrive.

“The Roles of Women in the Canadian Evangelical Church” study will learn from ministry experts connected to affiliate churches, ministries and higher education institutions. Then we'll listen to evangelical women through interviews and surveys to hear their experiences and stories. We want to learn how faithful women find meaning and develop convictions related to their identity within the family of God – and identify opportunities and barriers for them to live out God's mission.

We're praying that out of what we learn both women and men will experience a deeper appreciation for how women live out their faith – and ultimately for women and men to flourish together as God's image bearers and co-heirs of Christ.

“We want to learn how faithful women find meaning and develop convictions related to their identity within the family of God.”

EFC donors and friends can learn more about this project and how to support and pray for it at research@TheEFC.ca. Our research team loves to hear from *Canada Watch* readers.



A note from EFC President David Guretzki

As you read this, the EFC is fully engaged in a new year's roster of work and ministry that ranges from producing podcasts and magazines to help us think through how we are Christian in today's Canada to working strategically and thoughtfully on issues like the expansion of MAiD and interacting with legislation on critical issues like images of

child abuse online. When I look at the work the EFC's three Centres of ministry undertake, I am in awe of the potential and the possibilities that exist when Evangelicals gather for the sake of blessing Canada in the name of Jesus. With your help, we are having an impact for the gospel in our country. We can't say thank you often enough, but we try! Please hear our thanks to you and our commitment to you to keep serving Canada and the Church in 2024.



Welcome new EFC team members

In 2023 the EFC welcomed new staff to help us do our work more efficiently and effectively. We're proud of our team and excited about the contributions they're already making. We hope you will be too!

Sammy Kyereme: Sammy is our new communications specialist. He's a writer, podcaster and social media expert who is behind the scenes – and in front of the cameras – with the work of the EFC across all its social media brands. He's also contributing as a writer and an editor to *Faith Today* magazine and has joined in on the Faith Today Podcast and Faith Today TV. When he's not writing, Sammy is a dedicated Toronto Raptors fan, lover of music, the Lord and people. He and his wife Atia are raising two boys and serving in their local church.



Christie Chan recently joined the EFC's Centre for Research on Church and Faith as a research assistant. She graduated from Tyndale University & Seminary in 2023 with a Master of Divinity majoring in Christian education and discipleship with a concentration in youth and family ministry. Christie has a passion for conducting ethnographic research in service of the Church and listening to people's unique God stories. She has eight years previous experience in children and youth ministries. She also holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the Schulich School of Business, York University.



Angie Li: Angie is the EFC's event coordinator, primarily working to help introduce the EFC to new friends, donors and prayer partners across Canada. Angie and her family moved to the Toronto area from Hong Kong. She has most recently worked with new immigrants, and she has a wide network of contacts in Canada and abroad. "I'm committed to creating opportunities that foster a collective voice advocating for the application of biblical principles in personal and societal contexts," says Angie. "I firmly believe that, together, we can strengthen our community through the guiding values of Jesus."



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Religious intolerance:** The EFC and the Canadian Centre for Christian Charities wrote to the Canadian Human Rights Commission on religious intolerance, saying, "Canada is widely known as a country with religious and cultural diversity, yet the climate is increasingly intolerant to religious adherents and beliefs." The joint letter points out areas of agreement with the CHRC's recent discussion paper, like the fundamental nature of religious freedom, and points of concern, such as its stereotyping of Christianity. The EFC and CCCC recommended a positive vision for tolerance and treating all religions fairly.

■ **Protecting children from online pornography:** A bill to protect children and youth from online pornography has passed the second of three votes in the House of Commons, by a vote of 189-133. Bill S-210 will now go to a committee of MPs to be studied. The EFC will make a written submission to support the bill. This is a good time to ask your MP to protect children. Learn more at TheEFC.ca/S-210.

■ **Online child abuse images:** The EFC is asking the justice minister

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to hold online platforms accountable for the distribution and hosting of child abuse images. As young women told a parliamentary committee studying the issue, there are intimate images and videos of them taken without their consent being distributed without their consent. In some cases, these are images of assault or would fall into the category of child pornography. This has devastating effects on the lives of victims. Rather than waiting for a broader online harms framework, the EFC is asking the government to immediately and specifically address child abuse images and intimate images distributed without consent.

■ **International consultation on prostitution:** As a recent Ontario court decision confirmed, violence and the threat of violence are present in the everyday lives of many sex workers. The UN special rapporteur on violence against women and girls is asking for input on prostitution. The input is to help clarify what countries can do to effectively protect women and girls from all forms of violence. The EFC is preparing a written submission on what is happening in Canada and the connections between prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation.

EFC studios available for affiliates in Toronto and Ottawa

Increasingly the work of Christian organizations must include a vital and vibrant online presence. The consumers of these message expect high-quality video and audio content. The EFC is creating two media studios – one in Ottawa and a smaller satellite studio in Toronto – that we are making available for affordable rental to EFC affiliate ministries.

The idea for the studio spaces emerged from the EFC's own increasing use of video and podcast material and the desire to keep producing excellent material, along with a recognition that not all Christian ministries or churches in Canada could easily access the equipment and space to produce their own material.

"We realized creating and sharing affordable and accessible studio space could really help our affiliates," says Karen Stiller, director of communications for the EFC. "We wish they could be more accessible to our affiliates across the country, but for now ministries in Toronto or Ottawa (or traveling through) can see what we're offering. Both studios will be complete by the spring and ready to share with affiliates who might want a hand with equipment and space to produce podcast and video content."

EFC weekly email refreshed

Now is a great time to sign up for the EFC Update. Our team has refreshed the look, streamlined the content, and worked to ensure the quick Tuesday read gives donors, affiliates and friends an overview of EFC activities, resources and affiliate activities. The community calendar is a popular mainstay.




Sign up for weekly emails at [TheEFC.ca/Update](https://www.TheEFC.ca/Update)

Updates on all the issues available at www.TheEFC.ca

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 **EFC** The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

10 Huntingdale Blvd, Scarborough, ON M1W 2S5
Tel: 905.479.5885 • Toll Free: 1.866.302.3362 • Fax: 905.479.4742
Email: EFC@TheEFC.ca • www.TheEFC.ca



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