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The work of the EFC and what success looks like

"A committed evangelical Christian, William Wilberforce was motivated by a deep conviction that the enslavement of another human being was a sin and an offence against God and mankind. As we know, deep moral convictions do not mean much in a parliament unless we can mobilize resources to push a bill to royal assent."

These words were spoken in the House of Commons by a MP this spring.

It is an increasingly rare thing to hear positive words spoken about a person with deeply held Christian beliefs in Parliament or the media. More often, it seems the views of people with religiously informed beliefs are dismissed or denigrated. It is a challenging time to bring biblical principles to bear on policy issues.

At times, we pause and evaluate our efforts, to assess what success looks like.

Sometimes laws are passed that come down on the side we support. Sometimes a law or policy we believe to be important is passed. That's a day of celebration for us. Even though we are steadfastly committed to the good of the country, we often find ourselves at odds with the majority on certain key issues, such as euthanasia and assisted suicide, pornography or prostitution.

Earlier this year, the EFC's Centre for Faith and Public Life helped bring a survivor of exploitation, a police officer and other experts to Parliament Hill to talk about Quebec's successes in addressing sexual exploitation. MPs and senators were able to hear directly from experts about the realities of sexual



exploitation in Canada and why deliberate, coordinated action is so important. This event spurred genuine conversation and had an impact. Bridges were built and ideas exchanged – success.

Sometimes success looks like helping to moderate a trend. We recommend changes to mitigate the harms of policies we believe are negative. Sometimes, we hear a phrase quoted from our arguments in a court decision, or we see a footnote from our brief in a committee report. When that happens, we know our views have been heard and influenced the result, even if the outcome isn't what we hoped.

When the parliamentary justice committee conducted its review of Canada's prostitution laws, the EFC's brief was

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How you can help

- Consider the EFC's Partners in Faith program. Your monthly donation helps the EFC team be present on Parliament Hill. TheEFC.ca/Donate.
- Bear faithful witness with us by mailing in the enclosed postage-free card about medical assistance in dying. Give the second postcard to a friend or family member to send in.
- Receive our ongoing gratitude for how you make the work of faithful witness possible.

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quoted four times in the final report. While the committee did not unequivocally endorse the current prostitution laws, as we recommended, it heard our arguments that vulnerable people may enter prostitution because they lack meaningful choices. This, too, is something to celebrate.

But there is another kind of success. Sometimes a law or court decision runs counter to what we believe is God's best, and there are serious negative consequences for Canadian society and individuals.

It's difficult to accept. In those moments, it would be easy to conclude that our efforts – the research, networking, writing, meetings, conversations over coffee, answering questions and submitting briefs – have all been for nothing.

But it is then that we reflect on the nature of our calling. We are called to faithful witness. We are called to be courageous. We are called to speak truth in the public square with humility and respectful engagement.

When we have been faithful in those things, we are successful. And the Judge of who is faithful sees us.

Whether there is a tangible positive outcome, whether our influence has resulted in a "less bad" outcome, or whether we share our faithful witness, with your help, the EFC is working at the intersection of faith and public life.



Centre for Ministry Partnership and Innovation

Our Common Calling

The EFC and three other organizations – Lausanne Canada, Canadian Centre for Christian Charities and Christian Higher Education Canada – formed a partnership in 2020 called Our Common Calling (OCC).

OCC connects and dialogues with Christians across generations, cultures, sectors and theological traditions. It aims to deeply understand the Canadian landscape and support collaboration between groups who might not know about or normally work together. Each of the four partners contributes from their different strengths to further that mission.

The most well-known OCC initiative is Welcome Church, which equips churches to welcome newcomers in their neighbourhoods.

Faith at Work, OCC's newest initiative, is a partnership with the Faith at Work Network.

Through discussion forums, networking and collating resources, Faith at Work seeks to address questions like: *How can churches more effectively equip God's people to be disciple-makers in the workplace? How can Christian schools better prepare students to be leaders in the marketplace? How can organizations facilitate cross-cultural mission engagement through their vocations?*

"OCC is a catalytic presence," says Jon Fuller, executive director of Our Common Calling. "We support existing communities in what they are already doing well, amplify their initiatives for the wider Canadian church community, and look for gaps to fill or walls to take down."

One of OCC's upcoming projects will be gathering 150 leaders and influencers in May 2024 to explore what it means to follow Jesus in the Canadian context, celebrating both our unity and diversity.

> To learn more, www.OurCommonCalling.ca

Join us in a practical, simple act of faithful witness

A law allowing euthanasia for mental illness alone has already passed and will take effect in March 2024. This is an urgent time to act. Please send the enclosed postcard to your local MP and ask them to stop MAID for mental illness. **Follow up with a phone call to the MP's office to say you're very concerned.** Find your MP's contact information at ourcommons.ca/members. The EFC strongly supports a new bill that would reverse that change in law. Ask your MP to support Bill C-314 this fall. For more information, see TheEFC.ca/TAkeActionOnMAID. Ask your church leadership to participate in this initiative. Give the second postcard to a friend or family member to send in.

PLEASE SEND THE ENCLOSED POSTCARD TO YOUR LOCAL MP



A note from EFC President David Guretzki

In the last *Canada Watch*, we shared that I was embarking on a listening tour of EFC affiliate leaders, to understand better what they are experiencing today in Canada and how the EFC can help. That has begun and it is a fascinating exercise. I am grateful and so impressed by the good work and ministry being done across our nation. EFC affiliate organizations are an impressive bunch,

committed along with us to bless Canada in the name of Jesus. They too are grateful to the EFC donors who help us serve them. What I am hearing most often, so far, is "You are our voice. Keep doing what you're doing." We will, while also exploring how to do it even better. Thank you for how you help us do just that.



New research project on digital and social media

The EFC's Centre for Research on Church and Faith is breaking ground on a new research project. The study will focus on the effects of digital and social media on faith formation and church ministry. This project didn't start the way our research typically starts, however. Normally, an affiliate approaches the EFC with a question, and the EFC casts a wide net to our affiliates to see if others are asking the same kinds of questions. We then have a consultation to narrow the focus, and the research department develops a research plan around which a partnership forms and guides the process.

This time the EFC was approached to be a co-applicant for a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., a foundation dedicated to funding research on topics of faith, education and community development. This meant a research plan had to be prepared before the consultation and partnership formation process. How did we know a digital and social media project would be in the interest of our affiliates?

The Centre for Research on Church and Faith has been having conversations with EFC affiliates about the effects of digital and social media on the Church for several years now. We surveyed parents in our *Parenting Faith* study about their digital media habits, so we've already been tracking trends in Canada, and our research team even had a book club where we read and discussed seminal works like Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*. Because of our ongoing relationships with affiliates, we had a pulse for the kind of project they could get behind, and we could act quickly and efficiently when a funding opportunity presented itself.

While our funding proposal was topical, our research partnership will help refine the question so that it best serves their needs. We're thankful for the relationships of trust that have been built and maintained over the years so that we can continue to innovate and take advantage of opportunities on behalf of our affiliates.



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Child access to pornography:** A bill to protect children and youth from online sexual exploitation will be in the House of Commons this fall. Bill S-210 has been passed in the Senate. The bill would make it a criminal offence to make sexually explicit material available to minors online, for a commercial purpose. See the EFC's sample letter at TheEFC.ca/S-210.

■ **Human trafficking:** A bill to change the definition of human trafficking will be in its final stages in the House of Commons this fall. The bill was intended to remove the requirement that a trafficking victim, or a person in those circumstances, would feel fear. This would increase the chances of convicting traffickers and be less likely to re-victimize survivors. A House of Commons committee has removed the key provisions of Bill S-224. The EFC will be asking MPs to put the proposed new definition of human trafficking back in the bill. TheEFC.ca/S-224

■ **Prostitution court case:** A decision in the constitutional challenge to the prostitution laws is expected at any

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time. (It has not been released at time of publication.) The EFC is an intervener in this case, arguing purchasing sexual services is exploitative in and of itself and that the current laws protect human dignity and equality.

■ **Bill to protect pregnant women defeated:** A private member's bill that would have increased protection for pregnant women was debated and defeated. Bill C-311 would have made the abuse and harm of a pregnant woman a factor for judges to consider in sentencing. It would have signaled that harming a pregnant woman is a serious crime and may have meant a longer sentence. The bill was defeated 205 to 113.

■ **Stopping Internet sexual exploitation:** The EFC supports a private member's bill that would require those making or distributing pornographic material for a commercial purpose to verify the age and consent of each person depicted. For more information and a sample MP letter in support of Bill C-270, see TheEFC.ca/C-270.

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

EFC senior ambassador honoured for contribution

Bruce Clemenger was honoured June 6 with the 2023 Dr. Victor Goldbloom Award for Outstanding Interfaith Leadership, presented by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA). Clemenger is senior ambassador and president emeritus of the EFC. Richard Marceau, a vice president at CIJA, explains the reasoning behind the award.

"Canada is an increasingly diverse country – ethnically, culturally, socially and religiously. It is therefore increasingly important for people of different groups to meet, discuss and exchange ideas to know and understand one another better. This is something Bruce Clemenger, throughout his many years with the EFC, has long understood. In memory of the late Dr. Victor Goldbloom, this award recognizes the contributions of leaders from various faith communities in advancing interfaith relations.

"It is no secret that the EFC and CIJA have differing views on theological, political and societal issues. This is to be expected. But under Bruce Clemenger's leadership, those differences have always been approached respectfully, enabling the two organizations to listen and to engage meaningfully with one another."

EFC donors help *Faith Today* excel

The team of writers, editors and podcasters at *Faith Today* are celebrating eight first-place awards from an annual contest held by the Canadian Christian Communicators Association. "This is our best showing yet at these national, annual publication awards," says Bill Fledderus, senior editor of the magazine and co-host of the Faith Today Podcast. "We are very grateful for the EFC donors whose gifts help make EFC magazines and podcasts both possible and excellent."

Among other awards, *Faith Today* won for best feature, editorial, opinion piece, blog, podcast and socially conscious religious journalism article. The topics covered by these articles include navigating grief, how medical assistance in dying is transforming end of life care in Canada, the academic work recovering voices of female biblical scholars, and an examination of the role of Christians at the convoy during Covid in Ottawa.

"We can see the essential role of Christian journalism in Canada to tell stories from a perspective that just isn't seen elsewhere," says Fledderus. "It's gratifying to have this confirmation from our peers that we are doing this work well."

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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.

