

UPDATING YOU

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The EFC's work on pro-life freedom issues

Scindy was a third-year university student when she discovered she was pregnant. She tells her story on the Pregnancy Care Canada website. Scared about the pregnancy and all it meant, Scindy went to a pregnancy care centre for help. "I was expecting to feel some sort of judgment but I never felt that," she says.

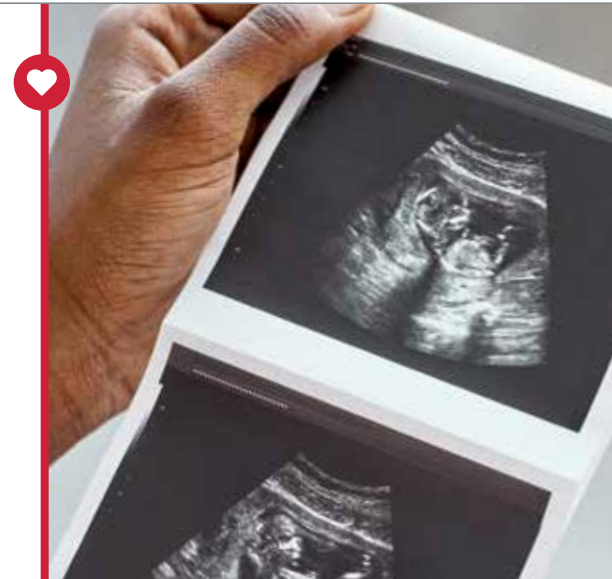
"It was all love. No lie. It was all love. The person I met with, she really just helped me explore my options. ... My son is five years old, and the centre is still with me."

There are so many stories like Scindy's. Over the past 20+ years centres affiliated with Pregnancy Care Canada have supported almost 160,000 women and men, including providing things like diapers clothing and prenatal education for tens of thousands.

The mandate of these centres is to provide a safe environment for women to make pregnancy decisions that are fully informed, evidence-based, consistent with their belief system and free from external influences. They respect a woman's right to make her own decision and seek to provide medically accurate information on abortion, adoption and parenting.

It should be common ground for Canadians to believe that a woman in distress, facing an unplanned pregnancy, should be able to find a listening ear and caring support.

Pregnancy care centres offer that. These volunteer-driven ministries care for women in all stages of pregnancy, and many provide supplies and support post-pregnancy, including concrete aid and parenting help. Many



also operate out of Christian beliefs.

But pregnancy care centres and pro-life organizations are being singled out for additional government scrutiny and possible exclusion from charitable status.

In late 2021 the government released its ministerial mandate letters which document what the prime minister expects each of the cabinet ministers to prioritize and accomplish in their role.

The finance minister was instructed to "introduce amendments to the *Income Tax Act* to make anti-abortion organizations that provide dishonest counselling to pregnant women about their rights and options ineligible for charitable status."

These measures are obviously intended to be directed only at

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How you can help

- Donate to the EFC's work to defend the rights of pro-life organizations to continue to serve women, men and children in Canada.
- Call your MP and express your concern about these developments. See the EFC's resources to help at www.TheEFC.ca/CharitableProLife.
- Use the enclosed prayer card to continue to pray regularly for the work of the EFC.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



SANCTITY OF LIFE



CHURCH & MISSION



FAMILY & COMMUNITY



CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE

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organizations with a particular view on abortion, the pro-life position. The instructions suggest that participation in the public square and a level playing field with respect to government programs could be jeopardized by a values test.

Does the government intend to single out organizations with particular beliefs about when life begins? Will these ministries be subject to greater scrutiny? Will the government penalize pregnancy care centres in particular for the beliefs that undergird their work? How will "dishonest counseling" be defined?

If the government is targeting groups based on their beliefs about when life begins, then many pro-life organizations in Canada will be in jeopardy.

Remember, we're allowed to disagree in Canada with our government, and even charities are allowed to do that. As the Canada Revenue guidance states, "a charity is free to advocate for retaining, opposing, or changing any law, policy, or decision of government."

If one type of charity is at risk, all charities are at risk of running afoul of the government and losing their charitable status. Today, it is pregnancy care centres in particular and pro-life organizations in general that may be at risk.

The EFC supports the work of Pregnancy Care Canada and their affiliated centres as they provide care and support for women and children. We are also working hard to ensure the government respects the right to freedom of belief and opinion of Canadians, including charities and pregnancy care centres.

Call your MP and express your concern about these developments. See the EFC's resources to help at www.TheEFC.ca/CharitableProLife.



CONVERSATIONS, PRAYERFUL DISCERNMENT AND COLLABORATION



Spotlight on EFC Centres: Ministry Partnership & Innovation

"The EFC Centre for Ministry Partnership and Innovation is a relational, consensus driven centre," explains director Joel Gordon. "Our role is help facilitate conversions where ministry leaders and grow together as listeners, co-learners, co-labourers and collaborators."

The Centre's mandate includes the creation of resources like conversation guides, relational programs, training opportunities, resource hubs and websites. "This work is often about developing courageous spaces for conversations, prayerful discernment, and collaboration," says Gordon.

HERE ARE A FEW OF THE CENTRE'S MOST RECENT AND ONGOING PROJECTS.

> Abuse Awareness and Prevention Network. This new network is made up of pastors, trainers, abuse prevention practitioners and other leaders from Canadian Christian organizations, denominations or institutions. The network explores and discusses the importance of abuse awareness, prevention and responses. AbuseAwareness.net

> Seven Commitments Working Group. This group is comprised of leaders and influencers from a broad spectrum of evangelical communities and inter-church contexts working together to journey toward right relationship between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people in Canada. TheEFC.ca/SevenCommitments

> Reconciliation Through Relationships: This program pairs Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together to build friendships and strengthen cross-cultural understanding. It was launched in 2021 by Indigenous leaders Jimmy Thunder and Diane Campeau in partnership with Joel Gordon, a non-Indigenous convener from the EFC. The initiative is a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to engage in meaningful conversation and interaction. RightRelationship.ca

> Welcome Church: A training resource to equip churches to welcome newcomers to Canada into their communities in warm and welcoming ways. There is a growing network of churches across Canada who have training and are ready to welcome newcomers into their community. WelcomeChurch.ca



Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

Public engagement is a vital expression of our faith, as *Canada Watch* readers have seen repeatedly in the EFC's advocacy and resourcing churches for effective witness. As a youth I was called into this work (Ezekiel 3). I am thankful for the opportunity to serve the EFC for over 30 years and how your support has

enabled the growth and influence of evangelical engagement in Canada. Five years ago, the board and I began developing an executive transition plan. This year, my 20th as CEO and president, we announced I will become the EFC's senior ambassador and president emeritus, effective Jan. 31. In this new full-time role, I will continue to oversee the EFC's court interventions and strategically write and speak on faith and public life. Executive vice-president David Guretzki will become our new CEO and president, and I celebrate the range of gifts and abilities he brings. We remain deeply grateful to the Lord for your prayers and support in our mission and engagement. Together we are stronger, blessing Canada in the name of Jesus.

Studies coming your way: Parenting Faith, Canadian Evangelical Small Church

The research team at our Centre for Research on Church and Faith has been busy finalizing two public reports on the discipleship of children in the home and the experiences of small churches in Canada. These reports are anticipated for release at the end of January.

"We're excited to get these uniquely Canadian insights into the hands of Canadian churches and Christians," says Lindsay Callaway, EFC researcher. "We think both studies will have practical implications for how the Canadian Church exists and ministers at this time in our history."

She and Rick Hiemstra, who together make up the EFC's research team, have already begun presenting on their research this fall. They've spoken at three small church pastor retreats across Canada hosted by Small Church Connections, one of the ministry partners in the study. And the team presented the research from both studies at a gathering of affiliate leaders at the end of October.

Rick and Lindsay will be available to speak on the research in the New Year and are also open to exploring new research partnerships with affiliates to help ministry leaders make data-informed decisions.

A short public report was also released recently in conjunction with the EFC's launch of a Canadian Christian Women's Collaborative Network. This small-scale study on the needs of Christian women leaders was commissioned by this new group's steering committee to inform its developing mandate and structure. The group is looking to convene a formal research partnership in the New Year that will focus on Christian women in Canada. Watch for more!



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Euthanasia:** In March 2023, people with mental illness alone will become eligible for hastened death, known as Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD). This change in the law was passed in 2021, with a two-year delay before taking effect.

A special committee of MPs and Senators is studying MAiD and whether to expand eligibility to children and youth under 18. Many witnesses are recommending this change, with some recommending the death of severely disabled infants. The committee is also studying whether to allow hastened death for people who are no longer able to consent, through advanced directives. The EFC made a submission to this committee in May 2022, asking them to halt the expansion of MAiD. The committee's report is now expected in February 2023.

■ **Disability and belonging:** As Christians and church communities, we need to support the survival and flourishing of people with disabilities. The EFC is working on a new resource on disability and belonging for churches. The laws allowing MAiD for people with disabilities who are not dying are an extreme form of discrimination against people with

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To learn more please visit www.TheEFC.ca/Research

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disabilities, also known as ableism. We need to consider our own attitudes and approaches to people with disabilities, to identify ableism in our church communities.

■ **Prostitution:** An Ontario lower court heard a challenge to the prostitution laws in October. The EFC was an intervener in the case, arguing in support of the laws as an essential tool in the fight against sexual exploitation. A ruling in the case has not been released at the time of publication.

■ **Human rights review:** The EFC is preparing a brief to the UN review of human rights in Canada, in partnership with the World Evangelical Alliance. The brief will recommend Canada uphold freedom of religion, address sexual exploitation including human trafficking, prostitution and pornography, respect international commitments on the rights of people with disabilities, and more.

UPDATES ON THE ISSUES

that the EFC is currently involved with are always available on our website www.TheEFC.ca

Presidents Day 2022 gathered leaders

Dozens of affiliate leaders of ministries, schools, churches and charities joined together in Toronto recently for the EFC's Presidents Day. The annual gathering, held in person for the first time in three years, brings together Christian leaders of EFC affiliates to enable them to network together, to hear about the work of the EFC and how it can serve their organizations, and to be encouraged and celebrated for a day.

Attendees heard reports from the EFC's three centres, viewed new EFC videos, were encouraged by the EFC's Prayer Ambassador Roger Helland, met the EFC's new Global Liaison Phil Wagler, and considered an address from EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger entitled *A Call to Resilience: Kingdom Witness in Turbulent Times*.

This year's event culminated in a banquet to honour the work of Clemenger in his 20 years as EFC president and CEO and his transition into the new roles of senior ambassador and president emeritus at the EFC.

Check out the EFC's new introductory video

Do you ever wonder what the EFC is all about? Sometimes we may not do the best job of telling our own story, or give enough details about the breadth of the work the EFC is involved in, which you make possible because of your faithful support. We have a brand new, short introduction video our team created that conveys the EFC's work succinctly and we think pretty effectively.

We'd love to hear your feedback and if you learned anything new about the EFC's work in Canada. Email us at canadawatch@theefc.ca and let us know!

Visit www.TheEFC.ca/Videos to view our new video and learn about the work of the **EFC's three centres and communications hub.**



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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.



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