

Canada Watch

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Agents of peace: Responding to hate by promoting civility

By Bruce J. Clemenger, EFC Senior Ambassador, President Emeritus

In these tumultuous times, public acts of hatred in Canada have risen significantly. Much of this increase was sparked from the Oct. 7 massacre of Jews by Hamas militants and the subsequent conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

Antisemitism has dramatically increased since then as well as anti-Muslim hatred. People, businesses and religious institutions have been targeted. There are also other international conflicts that have caused tensions among Canadians based on religious identity.

Hate can be disseminated in seconds, particularly through social media. Attacks on church buildings across Canada have also risen dramatically.

Will we allow suspicion and distrust to grow? Will we hide our religious beliefs from others out of fear of judgment and condemnation?

The EFC believes faith traditions can nurture civility and respect across religious differences in the face of injustices and the spectrum of grief. We can encourage dialogue and even cooperation for the public good.

The EFC has been involved in such efforts for decades, with the help of our donors and supporters. Promoting civility and dialogue among faith communities diffuses hatred and a mob mentality. It promotes peace.

One significant expression of civility is the Canadian Interfaith Conversation.



The EFC is a founding member. We gather together as organizations from a variety of faith traditions for dialogue and collaboration. I serve and represent the EFC on the executive committee along with representatives of the Jewish, Muslim, Baha'i and Latter-day Saints communities, and different Christian traditions.

While we have deep differences on matters of faith and belief (which we acknowledge in a civil way), there is also much we can agree upon, including condemning hate and denouncing its expression towards individuals and religious institutions and by mutually promoting dialogue about living peaceably.

In a June press conference, this

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Please join us

- Spend some time making a positive connection with your local member of Parliament, even if you disagree with them.
- Set a goal to pray for your MP daily or weekly.
- Thank your MP for serving in office.
- Visit TheEFC.ca/CivicEngagementKit for more tips on connecting with politicians and those who serve our communities.



**Centre for Ministry Partnership
and Innovation**

Convening and collaborating to support
the evangelical church in Canada



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constructive engagement in public life

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group released *Standing Together Against Hate Based on Religious Identity*. The statement was signed by a number of leaders from a variety of faith communities – and more than half of the signatories were affiliates of the EFC.

"We aspire to dialogue which facilitates mutual understanding and enables people of diverse backgrounds to work together for the public good. Across our differences, we appeal to all Canadians to reject hateful rhetoric and stand together against hate," as I said at the press conference.

The signatories of the statement committed to stand against hate, to work towards understanding, justice and peace, to reject the glorification of the perpetrators of violence, and to urge those of our own faith tradition to not allow their faith to be a cause for hatred of another.

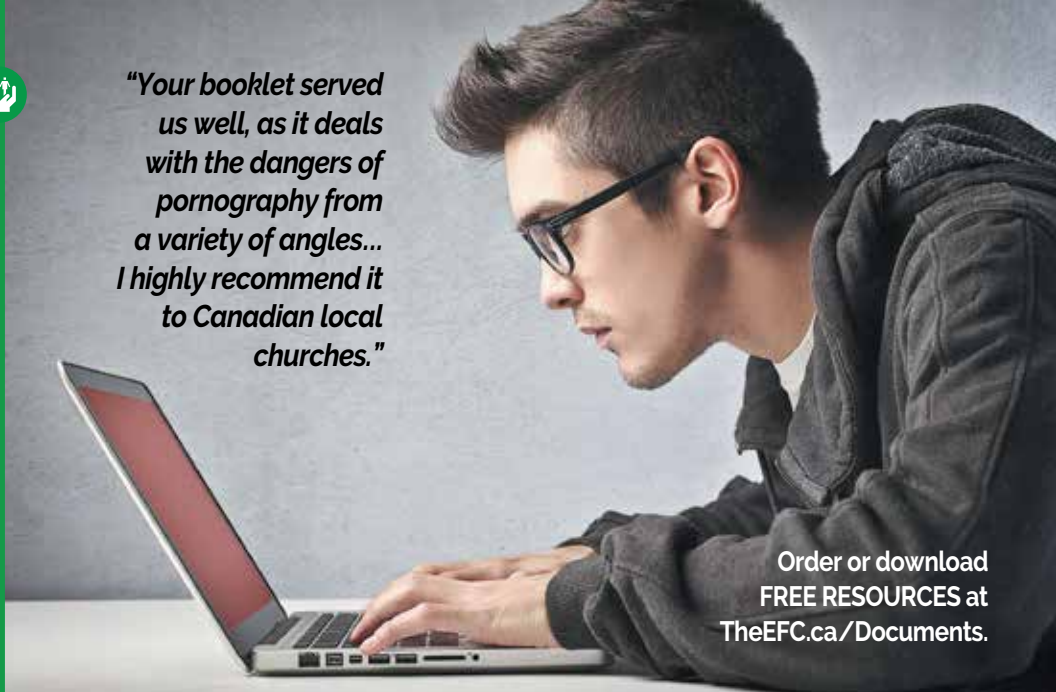
We called on the Canadian government to support the efforts of faith groups to provide medical and humanitarian aid to victims, particularly children, of international conflict. We also asked the government to ensure faith communities had proper resources to protect their facilities in Canada, to develop a comprehensive strategy to foster understanding about hate based on religious identity, to work with other levels of government to ensure hate crimes units are informed about hate based on religion, and to offer our assistance to hate crimes units.

The Interfaith Conversation will continue to foster dialogue between major faith traditions in Canada. We work with the federal ALL-Party Interfaith Caucus to promote conversations exploring the intersection of faith and public policy and host a biannual conference exploring the contribution of religious communities to the public good.

As Christians we affirm the importance of toleration and respectful dialogue to practise civility and show hospitality, particularly to those who are suffering and in need. The EFC's participation in this group is one expression of this task.



"Your booklet served us well, as it deals with the dangers of pornography from a variety of angles... I highly recommend it to Canadian local churches."



Order or download
FREE RESOURCES at
TheEFC.ca/Documents.

EFC resources available for you

Small groups, churches and organizations are using EFC booklets to inform, prompt discussion and reflection, and consider practical responses to key issues. We're hearing encouraging stories how these booklets are being used in ministries across Canada.

At a workshop for the parents of junior and senior students on the dangers of pornography, Pastor Leon Johnston gave out copies of the *How Pornography Harms* booklet. He says, "Your booklet served us well, as it deals with the dangers of pornography from a variety of angles. Furthermore, it refers you to other resources for exploration. I highly recommend it to Canadian local churches."

Bryan Gillmore, staff at Karis Disability Services (formerly Christian Horizons), just ordered 300 copies of the *Life Together* booklet to distribute at leadership conferences this summer. He says, "*Life Together: Disability and Belonging in the Church* is a resource every Christian leader must read. The content and conversations explored provide real practical tools for Canadian Churches in becoming communities of belonging. The Canadian Church cannot be the full living Body of Christ unless all people belong and are actively participating. This resource is a practical tool to help the church live the gospel well."



EFC donors enable this good work, which helps individuals, churches and ministries across Canada. You can order or download free resources at TheEFC.ca/Documents. If you have used them, or have suggestions for other topics, our team would love to hear from you at efc@TheEFC.ca.

"The content and conversations explored provide real practical tools for Canadian Churches in becoming communities of belonging."



A note from EFC President David Guretzki

Thank you for your faithful support of the work and ministry of the EFC. As you read through this *Canada Watch* you will see just a glimpse of the variety and depth of the work we are able to do with your help. As summer ends and fall begins, we launch a new season of engagement on Parliament Hill, continue with important research projects

that will strengthen the witness of the Church in Canada, and nurture partnerships that remind us we are stronger together. I want to remind you that at the EFC we regularly pray for our donors, affiliates and friends. Thank you for how you pray for us and keep this essential work strong with your gifts of funds and prayer.

EFC defends women and children

How are Canadians, especially youth, being harmed by illegal sexual images online? Over the past few months, the EFC has raised awareness among MPs about the harms of these images in a brief to a parliamentary committee. We've collaborated with other organizations to address this issue, in meetings with leaders of non-profits, at conferences and more. It's important to be engaged and recommend positive changes as we know individuals, families and church communities are struggling to know how to navigate the onslaught of sexually explicit images online.

The EFC joined this summer with others in a video statement delivered to the UN Human Rights Council, stating that prostitution is a system of violence that harms women and girls. The EFC has engaged on the topic of prostitution both legislatively and in the courts over many years. Engaging internationally on this issue is another way for the EFC to communicate with the Canadian government. The report of a UN Special Rapporteur explicitly condemns prostitution as a human rights violation, and in supporting the report, we can convey this message to Canadian leaders.

The EFC continues to call upon the Canadian government to uphold our prostitution laws and to enact laws that protect children and youth from sexually explicit images.

What will a healthy and vibrant Canadian Church look like in 2030?

Toronto-area EFC donors and friends are invited to an evening public discussion. Join **David Guretzki**, the EFC's president, in discussion with **Lee Beach** of McMaster Divinity College and **Dorothy Pang** of Tyndale Intercultural Ministry Centre.

All are welcome. Q & A to follow discussion.



October 23, 2024 / 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. / Evangel Temple, Toronto



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Online harms bill:** MPs are expected to continue debate on Bill C-63, the *Online Harms Act*, when Parliament resumes in the fall. While Bill C-63 addresses the ways children and youth are sexually victimized online, the EFC has serious concerns about the hate crime provisions and changes to the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Learn more at TheEFC.ca/C-63.

■ **Update on euthanasia:** A bill moving through the Senate, Bill S-248, would allow advance requests for MAiD. This bill has passed two of three Senate votes and will next be studied by a committee of senators. Advance requests set a dangerous precedent of not requiring people's consent at the time their lives are ended. Throughout the summer, EFC staff have spoken at events to raise awareness on MAiD and collaborated with other organizations on initiatives to support the sanctity of life and to support people in vulnerable situations.

■ **Supreme Court intervention:** The EFC and the Association for Reformed Political Action were granted co-intervener status before the Supreme Court in a case called *R. v. Kloubakov*.

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Two men who worked for a Quebec-based escort agency run by convicted traffickers were convicted of financially benefiting from prostitution and procuring women into the sex trade. Our joint intervention has submitted legal arguments in support of Canada's prostitution laws.

■ **Protecting Canadians from sexually explicit material:** As Parliament resumes this fall, the EFC will be supporting two bills that seek to protect Canadians, particularly youth, from the harms of sexually explicit material online. Bill S-210 and Bill C-270 would require pornography platforms to prevent minors from accessing pornography and to verify the age and consent of those depicted in sexually explicit images before they are uploaded. See [TheEFC.ca/S-210](https://www.thefec.ca/S-210) and [TheEFC.ca/C-270](https://www.thefec.ca/C-270).

■ **Advocacy on prostitution:** The EFC, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Salvation Army delivered a video statement to the UN Human Rights Council. They affirmed the report on prostitution by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls. The Christian organizations are urging countries, including Canada, to recognize prostitution as a system of violence and exploitation that harms women and girls. See [TheEFC.ca/UNprostitution](https://www.thefec.ca/UNprostitution).

Three years of *Faith Trends*

The EFC's *Faith Trends* podcast launched three years ago. It started in makeshift home offices in fall 2021 and just wrapped up its third season in the EFC's new media studio. While our surroundings and our skills as podcast hosts have improved, the purpose of the podcast has remained unchanged. The goal is to make distinctly Canadian research accessible for ministry practitioners in Canada.

As a small team, we can only take on a few major research projects at a time. That means we spend two to three years working with the same subject matter, and several months sharing the findings to affiliates around the country. The podcast helps us keep up to date on what is being done by others in the ministry research community. It also helps us connect affiliates with people who are equipped to answer questions we don't have the capacity to.

In preparation for the podcast, we typically read books, dissertations, reports and other articles recommended to us by our guests that will help us have an informed discussion that will go beyond the surface of a summary and press into implications. We also always ask our guests how listeners can access them directly, because research is more a conversation than a monologue. What is learned from research needs to be mobilized and disseminated so that the findings can not only be implemented, but further adjusted, learned from and responded to.

Research tends to beget more research. The podcast is like a pollinating bee that spreads the findings around for others to receive and respond. We've covered topics ranging from clergy wellness, to artificial intelligence, trends in Christian music, evangelism and climate change. All three seasons of *Faith Trends* can be found on most podcast platforms (as well as [TheEFC.ca/FaithTrends](https://www.thefec.ca/FaithTrends)) and we look forward to a fourth season of conversations that connect recent and relevant research with ministry in Canada.

FAITH TRENDS
PODCAST
CONVERSATIONS THAT CONNECT RESEARCH AND MINISTRY

To learn more visit, [TheEFC.ca/FaithTrends](https://www.thefec.ca/FaithTrends)

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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.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



SANCTITY OF LIFE



CHURCH & MISSION



FAMILY & COMMUNITY



CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE