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EFC work on conscience protection

The need for conscience protection is becoming even more urgent. The government is making sweeping changes to medical assistance in dying (MAID) this year. This issue has been on the forefront of the EFC's efforts in Ottawa in 2020 and early this year. Bill C-7 is expanding euthanasia to people who are not dying but who live with disabilities and even to people who have mental illness alone. The next parliamentary conversations on this topic will be whether mature minors should be eligible for euthanasia.

No one should be compelled to help bring about the death of another person against their deeply held beliefs. Conscience protection is essential and that's why the EFC is working hard to see this need is addressed.

Even medical staff who don't object to all euthanasia may feel they cannot end the life of a patient who still has decades

to live, or whose request is motivated by despair over inadequate living conditions or lack of support. News reports tell of Canadians with disabilities who are considering hastened death because of their financial needs.

Doctors told the Senate committee studying Bill C-7 this winter why they couldn't participate in ending the life of a patient. Dr. Sephora Tang explained that her job as a psychiatrist is to help her patients hold on when they are despairing.

"My patients need to see that I remain firm in giving them hope, that I'm not going to give up on them even if, in a moment of desperation, they want to end their lives," said Tang. "They need to come to me and be guaranteed that I'm not going to collude in their suicidal urges and their hopelessness, because my job as a psychiatrist is to give them hope when they have lost all hope."



Tang also described the pressure on doctors to participate, "Right now in Ontario, if a patient were to request medical assistance in dying, the College [of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario] expects me to make a mandatory referral to somebody who would be able to provide that service... If I do not comply with that that College requirement, I could be sanctioned for that. That could include the removal of my licence as the most severe penalty."

"It's very hard to prevent suicide when you're asked to facilitate it," she said.

The Senate voted against adding clear, specific conscience protection to Bill C-7 and instead voted to expand MAID to allow euthanasia for Canadians with mental illness alone. As MAID expands, it becomes even more critical

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What you can do:

- Visit www.CanadiansForConscience.ca to quickly and easily send an email to your representative in the government to ask for conscience protection
- Keep abreast of this issue and more at www.TheEFC.ca/Conscience
- Watch the webinar we hosted on this issue at www.TheEFC.ca/Webinars

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to establish strong, clear conscience protection. The EFC has been interacting with the government on this issue at every opportunity.

We also recognize the implications of a lack of conscience protection for all Canadians. Consider a student applying to medical school if the entrance exam screens out pro-life students, or a paramedic required to be present when a doctor is ending the life of a patient at their home.

Compelling doctors and others to participate in MAID creates a poisoned environment that reduces the quality of care available to patients. Physicians, including palliative care physicians, are feeling intense pressure to participate in euthanasia against their conscience or deeply held beliefs.

Over 1,300 physicians have signed a declaration stating that they do not want to end the lives of the patients under their care. Thousands of Canadians have heeded the call of the EFC and the other organizations active on this issue to interact with their MPs and Senators.

We can maintain both high-quality patient care and protection for the deeply held beliefs of medical professionals in Canada. The EFC and our partners in this issue are speaking with and for that group of highly dedicated health care workers. The EFC is also a member of the Coalition for Healthcare and Conscience, and some of our work on this issue has been under that umbrella, promoting conscience protection across Canada.

"We can maintain both high-quality patient care and protection for the deeply held beliefs of medical professionals in Canada."



"People tend to define what a family is: by WHO THEY ARE and by WHAT THEY DO."



Cultivating faith in families

Not surprisingly, the research in our Canadian Evangelical Family Faith Formation study is showing that contemporary families have grown in complexity. As we've been interviewing family and ministry experts, we've come to learn there are two main ways people tend to define what a family is: by *who they are* and by *what they do*.

We've learned from our literature review that these responses are known as *structural* and *functional* definitions of the family. Structural definitions are largely based on the roles and legal obligations family members have toward one another. We subscribe to structural definitions when we list our dependents on a tax form or make proxy healthcare decisions as "next of kin."

Structural definitions don't account for the quality of these relationships however, and so many experts have opted for *functional* definitions, which define a family by family-like behaviour. This means even non-relatives could be considered family if their actions are like those of a close, biological relationship. Ideally, the structural and the functional family are the same people, especially when it comes to caring for and nurturing children in a stable environment. As many of our interviewees have commented, we don't always get to work with ideals.

Defining the family is important because it not only names reality but shapes it. Churches that tend to operate with a strict structural definition of family may have ministry programs to marrieds, parents and singles, but may isolate non-traditional yet functional families who might need similar support – and might need it even more.

The concept of the church as a family unit itself, that is, the body of Christ that is connected and concerned with one another's welfare and wellbeing for the sake of the part and the sake of the whole, is distinctive in Christian research on the family. In this sense, the Church is a family organized for mutual support and mutual purpose, and individuals who belong to the church family can experience bonds of kinship in the family of God.

The impact of family definitions on faith formation is just one of the many issues we are exploring in this study, which includes more than a dozen partner organizations. www.TheEFC.ca/CEFFFS



Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

Much of The EFC's focus in 2020 was working with churches and ministries and engaging governments in the high-demand environment of Covid-19, and alongside other issues of concern. In *Faith Today*, I spoke into the pandemic calling for prayer, compassion and generosity; and trusting in God's mercy.

As many of you know, I was in a life-threatening battle with Covid 19. It was a journey of understanding more deeply the "pestilence" that is Covid 19. It re-affirmed for me the powerful fighting presence of praying communities and confirmed the witness and message of the Church in times like these.

I am deeply grateful for your prayers and support of the vision and mission of The EFC. *In season and out, and no matter the challenges we face, we continue to speak into critical issues before us.* Thank you for standing alongside.



Sacred Seeds update

Members of the EFC Indigenous-Settler Relations Working Group continue to work toward the actions agreed upon by the EFC, in pursuit of reconciliation and right relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The recommendations can be found in the *Stewarding Sacred Seeds* document (www.TheEFC.ca/IndigenousRelations). As a reminder, the paper looked back at the history of the EFC's engagement in reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and identified barriers to meaningful and sustained evangelical engagement in reconciliation. Here is an update on some key activities.

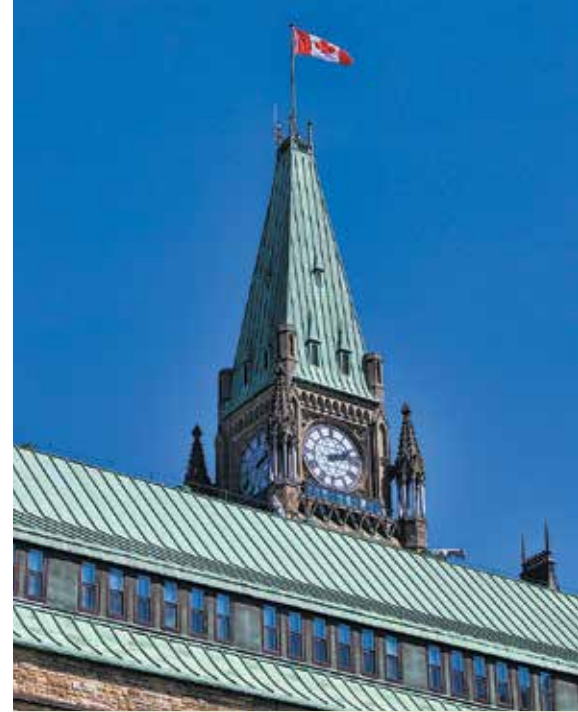
Seven Commitments Working Group: The EFC's Indigenous-Settler Relations Working Group is evolving into the seven commitments working group, made up of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders across Canada. The mandate of the new working group will be to follow through with the implementation of the seven commitments.

Reconciliation Through Transformative Relationships: A partnership of the EFC and Reconciliation Thunder, this initiative strategically pairs Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian Christians together to embark on a relationship building journey. An initial cohort of five pairs have completed a series of meetings. A series of videos and conversation guide is being produced that will highlight the importance of friendship-building in reconciliation.

Speaking Events: The EFC's Joel Gordon and Andrew Thunder, an Indigenous ministry leader peer, recently spoke to churches about reconciliation and how churches can journey toward understanding reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. They also spoke at the Today's Teens conference about anti-racism and reconciliation from an Indigenous and Black Canadian perspective.

Find out more: Contact Joel Gordon, Director of Partnerships & Ministry Innovation, at gordonj@theEFC.ca.

To learn more contact Joel Gordon – gordonj@theEFC.ca



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Pornography:** The EFC submitted a brief to the parliamentary ethics committee asking for pornography platforms like Pornhub be held accountable for hosting child sexual abuse and exploitation images. The EFC recommended pornography sites be required to verify age and consent of each person appearing in videos on their sites, and recommended requiring pornography sites put in place age verification to ensure consumers of content are adults.

A letter to the ethics committee signed by 104 survivors of sexual exploitation and 525 stakeholder organizations from 65 countries, including the EFC Centre for Faith and Public Life, requested a full criminal investigation for MindGeek for appearing to have violated Canada's child pornography laws and laws against sharing intimate images without consent. Find an EFC action kit at www.TheEFC.ca/Pornography

■ **Euthanasia:** Bill C-7, a government bill to expand medical assistance in dying to those who are not dying and to remove key safeguards passed in the House of Commons. The Senate accepted those changes and recommended broadening the bill. At time of publication, the

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House of Commons is poised to allow MAID for mental illness alone.

More than 100 organizations and allies of the disability rights community, including the EFC, signed a letter by the Vulnerable Persons Standard asking all MPs to stop and rethink the dangerous changes in Bill C-7. The EFC sent a letter to Senators, urging them not to pass Bill C-7. www.TheEFC.ca/C-7

■ **Conversion Therapy Ban:**

A government bill to ban conversion therapy in the Criminal Code is moving through Parliament. Coercive or involuntary efforts to change sexual orientation or gender identity are wrong. However, the EFC has serious concerns that the definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6 is so broadly stated and vague that it will limit freedom of expression and religious teaching and practice. Find resources at www.TheEFC.ca/C-6.

■ **Ban on Sex-selective Abortion:**

MP Cathay Wagantall's private member's bill to ban abortions done to select the sex of the child is expected to come up for debate in the House of Commons this spring. private members' bills are a good way to raise awareness of an issue, although they rarely become law. The EFC supports Bill C-233. Find a sample letter to MPs at www.TheEFC.ca/C-233.

Heart and hands

Carmen Lee is the clerical services finance assistant for the EFC.



"My job duties," she says, "are general clerical works and some finance functions, mainly account receivables. I also translate EFC materials into Chinese, as required."

I work like I'm working for the Lord. Donors' appreciation of our work and staff is the biggest encouragement to me. Their kind words always make my day. Thank you for how you help us in this important work."

Ambassadors on Zoom

The EFC has local ambassadors in many Canadian provinces who are available to make presentations at an online gathering of your community. Ambassadors can bring a

message of greeting and encouragement, as well as updates on issues of concern to Canadian Christians. Email our team at speakers@theEFC.ca to book a speaker or find out more.

- Jason Jairam, Vancouver, B.C.
- Neil Siemens, Innisfail, Alta.
- Adam Driscoll, Moose Jaw, Sask.
- Wayne Durksen, Warman, Sask.
- Stéphane Couture, Quebec City, Que.
- Sheldon MacLeod, Moncton, N.B.

PRAYER REQUEST

APRIL/MAY: Pray for the EFC's research team as they study family faith formation and how we can support parents in the discipleship of their kids. Please pray for their other research on small churches to help pastors and other leaders understand the unique needs and dynamics in smaller congregations.

Warm words from donors

We love to hear from our donors and partners in our mission to "unite Evangelicals to bless Canada in the name of Jesus." Thank you for praying for us and our work, and we consider it a privilege to pray for you as well. Here is a recent note of encouragement from a donor.

"Dear All Staff at the EFC. I just want to take a moment to thank you for all that you do. We appreciate you and thank God for this organization. Thank you for your undying courage and determination."

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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.

