

CanadaWatch

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Parliamentary Review: How your support helped bring biblical values to Ottawa

As a new Parliament begins, here are some of the activities, grouped by four themes, that the EFC engaged in with the previous Parliament, bringing biblical principles to bear on the issues of the day.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The Canada Summer Jobs situation challenged the ability of Canadian churches and Christian organizations to be eligible for government grants. The EFC was very active on this issue, writing and meeting with MPs and cabinet ministers, participating in the crafting and delivery of a significant interfaith statement, hosting exploratory and strategy meetings, and engaging with the media on this issue. The federal government removed the troubling attestation, although the new program guidelines still raised concern. Some groups were still denied funding based on interpretation of the guidelines.

Bill C-51 proposed to remove the only specific protection for religious clergy and for worship services in the Criminal Code. The EFC engaged on multiple levels, such as helping to coordinate an interfaith letter to the Justice Minister, creating a written brief and appearing at a parliamentary committee. The committee changed the proposed legislation to retain protection for clergy and worship services in the *Criminal Code*.

Religious discrimination study – The EFC discussed an increasingly anti-religious climate in Canadian culture and asked the federal government to make a sustained and transparent commitment to upholding freedom of religion, and to modeling tolerance and respect. We shared our research and briefed a parliamentary committee.

The EFC asked for help for Rev. Hyeon Soo Lim, a Canadian pastor held in North



Korea for more than two years, and then celebrated his safe return and thanked the federal government for Canada's action.

The EFC supported proposed bills by individual MPs about conscience protection on issues such as medically assisted suicide. None of these bills were passed before the election was called.

SANCTITY OF LIFE

Euthanasia – The EFC made numerous submissions and appearances at parliamentary committees on Bill C-14 and medical assistance in dying (MAID). The EFC is fundamentally opposed to euthanasia and assisted suicide. When legalized, we requested safeguards for vulnerable Canadians. The EFC engaged in every step, from intervening in the Supreme Court case, to submissions to parliamentary

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How you can be involved:

- Let's pray together for the work to come with Canada's newest Parliament
- Can you introduce the work of the EFC to Canadian Christians passionate about having a practical and compassionate voice in issues of religious freedom and care of the vulnerable in our country?



committees, to meetings and correspondence with MPs and Senators. We helped craft and share an interfaith statement and press conference on Parliament Hill. Some of the requested changes were included in the bill. Bill C-14 ultimately passed with more safeguards and restrictions.

The EFC submitted research to a study the federal government requested from the Council of Canadian Academies on expanding MAID to include minors and people who are solely mentally ill.

Palliative care – The EFC supported a private member’s bill to establish a palliative care framework in Canada and made recommendations to Health Canada on how palliative care should be defined to better serve Canadians. The Framework on Palliative Care is now being implemented.

CARE OF THE VULNERABLE

Sexual exploitation – The EFC wrote about the public health impacts of pornography, highlighting increased porn-related violence against women, in briefs to the health committee and the status of women committee. The EFC requested support for the current prostitution laws that criminalize demand for paid sex.

Human trafficking – In a brief to the justice committee, the EFC called for increased support for victims of human trafficking, and for the renewal of a national strategy to combat trafficking. The new National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking was released in September. The EFC requested changes to Bill C-75, so that *Criminal Code* penalties related to trafficking would remain more serious indictable offences. The bill was passed without making the changes we’d requested.

CHURCH & MISSION

The EFC briefed the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector about the church’s distinct role in Canadian culture. The committee’s report suggested ways to strengthen the charitable sector without specifically mentioning the role of churches.



New EFC Research: Canada is not changing. Canada has changed

By David Guretzki, the EFC’s executive vice-president and resident theologian

This summer, the EFC commissioned a survey of Canadians about their religious attitudes and affiliations. We’ve done surveys like this every half-decade or so for the last 25 years. This one was the largest.

The EFC’s Director of Research, Rick Hiemstra, agrees the evidence shows that Canadian society is not just changing: It has indeed changed momentarily in this last decade. (Stay tuned to future issues of *Canada Watch* where we’ll talk about some of these findings.)

In view of massive cultural and religious shifts, we have a choice. We can choose to despair that we are losing ground, or we can keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Saviour and Lord of Creation. Even as the tides of culture shift beneath our feet, our Anchor holds. Jesus continues to call us to take a step, like Peter, into the waters, whether they be stormy or not.

tance in dying to those who are not in danger of imminent death have stalled in a B.C. case (although not entirely in a Quebec case). A national strategy on dealing with human trafficking is being enacted. Over 10,000 copies of our free *Battling Pornography* resource have been distributed to help Christians help those caught in the trap of porn addiction. The *Renegotiating Faith* study on young adults is challenging ministry practitioners and parents to think strategically about the next generation of faith.

The EFC has been at the forefront of these efforts and we couldn’t have done it without your generous financial and prayerful support. We are deeply grateful for supporters like you who pray and give sacrificially. The EFC has unique opportunities like few others in the evangelical community to speak out for biblical principles in the public square. And of course, we’re thankful that even now, we still see positive responses, even in a changed Canada.

Good things are happening. Parental rights to be informed of how their children are being educated in school were protected in Alberta. Efforts to expand accessibility to medical assis-

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Note From the Executive Vice-President David Guretzki

A new Parliament is a new opportunity for Canadian Christians to engage compassionately on issues of concern for the Church. At the EFC we spend time thinking about the *how* of our engagement, as well as the *what* and the *why*. We believe

the tone of how we speak, write or call – whatever our form of political engagement is – matters greatly, because of the gospel we represent. Salt and light should bring flavour, warmth and clarity, not anger or harsh words and attitudes. Will you join with us as Canada enters a new chapter, to be as fully present in our communities as we can, serving Christ by serving our neighbours? We believe we also serve our neighbours when we speak truth into the pressing issues of the day. Thank you so much for continuing to do this work with us.

Behind the Scenes of the EFC's Latest Research on a Changed Canada



By Rick Hiemstra, EFC director of research

Between August 12-16 the EFC worked with Canadian polling company MARU/Blue to survey a representative sample of 5,014 Canadians 18 and over about their views on religion, religious tolerance and public policy. This survey is part of a series on religion in Canada that the EFC has been conducting roughly every five years. We vary the public policy questions we ask, but we also try to include some of the same questions on religious beliefs and behaviours so we can provide our affiliates with an objective picture of how the religious landscape is changing.

This year we included questions on conscience protection for health care providers, whether internet providers should verify that children aren't accessing online pornography, and religious tolerance. Our tracking questions probed Canadian's Christian beliefs and behaviours, the importance of religion in people's daily lives, and their understanding of human origins and our final destiny.

Over the next year the EFC will be analyzing the data along with our Christian higher education partners and bringing you stories in *Faith Today* and through other communication channels. We are looking forward to this. EFC affiliate leaders will have the first public look at the data on October 24 in Montreal when they gather for our annual Presidents Day event.

Having a clear sense of our culture and of our faith is important for knowing how best to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. The EFC invests in research to help equip you to make the best ministry decisions. Thank you.

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EQUIP YOU TO MAKE THE BEST MINISTRY DECISIONS.**



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Human trafficking:** The EFC welcomed a new National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking in September. The strategy focuses on preventing trafficking, protecting victims, prosecuting offenders, working in partnership and empowering victims and survivors to regain independence. The EFC had urged the government to adopt a national strategy against trafficking that uses the *Palermo Protocol* definition of human trafficking, in a brief to the Justice Committee last year.

■ **International religious freedom:** Algerian Christian leaders and the World Evangelical Alliance are asking for Canadian help to raise awareness of their plight as churches are forcibly closed. EFC Executive Vice-President David Guretzki wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs requesting she raise this issue with Algerian authorities and to uphold religious freedoms around the world. The EFC is a partner of the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, taking place on November 3 this year. Churches can register to receive free 2019 IDOP resources at www.IDOP.ca.

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■ **Engagement kit:** The EFC has created an engagement kit that includes "How a bill becomes law in Canada" and "Meeting an MP: What to expect." The kit also includes information on what churches can and cannot do, as well as ways to communicate with MPs.

www.TheEFC.ca/Engagement2019.

■ **Physicians conscience case:** The doctors and organizations who brought forward the legal challenge of policies that require doctors to provide a direct referral against their deeply held beliefs have chosen not to appeal the decision of the Ontario Appeal Court. The Appeal Court ruled that the policies of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario violated the doctors' religious freedom, but that such a violation was justified in order to ensure patient care.

■ **Alberta Bill 24:** The court is not proceeding with a challenge of Alberta Bill 24, which required that schools not inform parents of their child's participation in a Gay Straight Alliance club or event, even for the youngest students. A new provincial government in Alberta has replaced the legislation put in place by Bill 24.

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

Heart and hands

Aileen van Ginkel is the EFC's vice-president of ministry services. In this new Canada Watch feature, we will be asking members of the EFC team to share with you an insight about their work and how they experience first-hand the impact of your generosity on the Church and the public square in Canada.



My drives back home from event planning meetings give me good time to reflect on the purposes of the work I do with the EFC. I did that recently and considered the work we're doing to prepare for the "Our Common Calling Forum" in October 2020. I was reminded of the privilege we have at the EFC to work with the highly gifted and committed people who lead the ministries affiliated with us. Next year's Forum will be another occasion for us to provide opportunity for peer-to-peer conversation, for exploring collaboration and for encouraging one another in ministry, especially in changing times – such a crucial part of the work we do at the EFC.

The work of building networking and partnering relationships is made possible by the assistance we receive from donors and affiliated congregations. I'm grateful that together we can help the Church in Canada address challenging situations in hope-filled ways.

Such hope depends so much on prayer as well as financial support. My gratitude deepens as I reflect back on the Forum planning meetings. We've been so aware of the need to be "discerning" planners – servants of God who are willing to drop one plan in favour of another, because we've been attentive to listening for God's leading in Scripture and prayer. Please join us in praying that the Forum will attract participants who do the same. **We will tell you more about the Common Calling Forum in future issues of Canada Watch.**


Election 2019

As Evangelicals, let's lead the country in praying for the candidates and for newly elected MPs. We know being an MP is a demanding job with a significant learning curve. Family life and personal support networks are stretched and challenged as elected representatives shift their focus to Ottawa from all across Canada. Let's together pray for wisdom, grace and strength for each MP and MP's family. Will you join the EFC also in congratulating MPs. Seek out the MP elected in your riding – whether you voted for them or not – and watch for positive opportunities to interact. The new Speech from the Throne will help us all understand the new government's priorities and plans. We encourage you to watch and listen, as we will be.

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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.

