

CanadaWatch

UPDATING YOU

On Canada's most immediate issues. (Page 3)

SPOTLIGHT

Family Faith Formation research project builds. (Page 2)

EFC RESOURCES

The EFC joins Canadian religious leaders to speak out on Bill C-7. (Page 3)

Public Policy and the EFC in Ottawa

Often the EFC raises concerns over bills and policies being debated in Parliament, but it's always encouraging when we get to highlight a positive initiative worthy of support. Bill S-203, an act to restrict young persons' online access to sexually explicit materials, is one of those initiatives. This bill will make it a criminal offence to make sexually explicit material available, for commercial purposes, to minors online. Such accountability is urgently needed, and the EFC applauds this effort.

We know mainstream pornography frequently depicts violent, degrading and dehumanizing sexual content, which is so easily accessible by children and youth, a computer click or finger swipe away. Bill S-203 proposes to set up crucial protection for minors from the harms of exposure to online pornography.

Our team has expressed our support to the senator who introduced this bill and is working with partners in Canada and abroad to help make it more likely this bill will pass.

Meanwhile the EFC is also speaking into Bill C-6, a bill to ban conversion therapy introduced by the Justice Minister in October. Bill C-6 would create new criminal offences relating to conversion therapy, defined broadly in the bill as "a practice, treatment or service designed to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual or gender identity to cisgender, or to repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour."

Many people who have experienced conversion therapy describe despair and suicidal thoughts as a consequence. We recognize that initiatives to ban



conversion therapy arise from wanting to protect Canadians from such damaging effects. The EFC agrees that coercive and involuntary practices have no place in our communities or in our country.

However, we have serious concerns with the overly broad definition of conversion therapy in the bill, which includes practices, treatments and services to "repress or reduce... sexual behaviour."

The bill is missing important clarity on what is and is not targeted by the legislation, clarity that is essential to any *Criminal Code* offence. The EFC has questions about whether a sermon series or a youth Bible study, for example, or other programs or religious doctrine on sexual ethics would fit

...continued on page 2

How you can help

- Please pray over the significant shifts in law and policy in our country. We need wisdom and discernment as we engage.
- Contact your MP on these important issues. Visit www.TheEFC.ca for updates and resources to equip you to engage. Your help is crucial.
- Subscribe to *Faith Today* magazine for free at www.FaithToday.ca to get regular articles and insights on issues like these.
- Your support and gifts are essential to the witness and mission of the EFC and our partners. Thank you.

...continued from page 1

the definition of a practice, treatment or service.

While in agreement with the banning of coercive and harmful practices, the EFC is seeking assurances that religious instruction, parental guidance and supportive services for individuals wishing to order their sexual lives in accordance with their religious conscience, faith identity and personal convictions will not be captured by the bill.

We ask for your prayers for this work, for wisdom, grace and favour in our interactions with MPs and senators. We also ask for you to pray that our public witness would be understood in light of God's love and calling.

Our work also continues against the expansion of euthanasia in Canada. Bill C-7, which would remove key safeguards and allow people who are not dying to have their lives ended by "MAID," might well have passed by the time this *Canada Watch* reaches you. The EFC has interacted with the government on these watershed changes and we have been encouraging Canadians to speak out against the bill. If you participated in the outcry, thank you.

More debate on this issue will be coming. Parliament is set to begin its review any time on whether to expand euthanasia to mature minors and people with mental illness as the sole underlying medical condition. We will be continuing to work with our affiliates and our partners to determine our next, best and faithful steps in this new era in our country.



Learn more at www.TheEFC.ca/Research



Family Faith Formation research project builds

The Family Faith Formation Research Partnership formed in the summer of 2020 to investigate barriers to parents' engagement in their role as primary disciple-makers of their children and the roles that churches and ministry organizations might play in supporting parents as primary disciple-makers of their children.

There are 17 EFC affiliates who form this project, including seven denominations, partnering together to study holistic disciple-making in the home and how that can be supported by a faith community.

We are currently finalizing our literature review and will start interviews with ministry leaders soon. Our team is very excited about this project and all it represents. There is so much more we can do together than apart, and this project is an example of that.

Here are the members of the Family Faith Formation Research Project:

- Awana International Canada
- Be in Christ / The Meeting House
- Bible League Canada
- Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada
- Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec
- Christian & Missionary Alliance
- Christian Reformed Church in North America
- Faith @ Home Canada
- FamilyLife Canada
- Focus on the Family Canada
- Muskoka Bible Conference Centre
- One Hope Canada
- Promise Keepers Canada
- The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada
- The Salvation Army of Canada and Bermuda
- Truth Matters
- The EFC

CANADA'S CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

FAITH TODAY

Subscribe Today!

NOW FREE!

Personal home subscription to the EFC's print magazines is now free in Canada! Six issues of insightful Canadian Christian journalism per year delivered to your door. Sample and sign up at www.FaithToday.ca. Also try our audio podcasts!



Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

We held an engaging and meaningful annual EFC Presidents Day online this fall. Even with all the limitations of Zoom we saw great attendance and engagement in the issues we addressed and discussed together. Those included our role in addressing reconciliation, racism, Covid-19 and its impact,

working with refugees, and peace and reconciliation on a global level. Many of the ministry and church leaders who attended were interested in EFC updates on the issues with which we are involved in Ottawa (such as those identified in this issue of *Canada Watch*). Be encouraged. It is your support that makes the work of the EFC happen, and it is appreciated by our many partners from coast to coast.

Presidents Day Online Success

This year's Presidents Day, when leadership from the EFC and its affiliate denominations, schools

and organizations gather for learning, encouraging and networking, was an entirely online, virtual event held in late October. It was a success.

At our highest point of engagement in the day 175 participants joined in breakout discussion groups on topics like racism, conversion therapy, Covid-19 and its impacts, and Indigenous relations, as well as hearing speakers inform and inspire them in their work and mission in Canada.

"Our team pulled it together very well," says David Guretzki, EFC executive vice-president. "The tech was flawless, and the speakers and guests spoke powerfully into the present moment in Canada. We hope next year we will be in person again, but we were thankful it all went so well."



The EFC joins Canadian religious leaders to speak out on Bill C-7

Bruce J. Clemenger, EFC president, was one of 50 religious leaders who signed an open letter to all Canadians in opposition to Bill C-7, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*.

"We are obliged to express our strong concern and opposition to" a bill that "expands access to euthanasia and assisted suicide to those who are not dying. It perplexes our collective minds that we have come so far as a society yet, at the same time, have so seriously regressed in the manner that we treat the weak, the ill, and the marginalized," says the letter.

The letter was initiated by the EFC, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and other religious leaders. It reflects a unified position among diverse religious communities in the face of human suffering, dying and death, and the inadequacy of euthanasia and assisted suicide as responses.

The letter also points to palliative care, "a much more effective response to suffering and to protecting the sacred dignity of the human person. Palliative care addresses pain in a loving and caring environment.... It makes everyone into a better person." Read the letter at www.TheEFC.ca/C-7.



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Human rights in Sri Lanka:** The EFC wrote to the foreign affairs minister on the deteriorating human rights situation in Sri Lanka. Our international counterparts tell us that civil society organizations, and Christian places of worship and institutions in particular, have been visited and interrogated by intelligence agencies and officers. Canada will have representatives at a UN review of Sri Lanka's compliance with a resolution on human rights. www.TheEFC.ca/SriLanka2020

■ **Review of prostitution laws expected:** Parliament is expected to review Canada's prostitution laws any time. These laws are an essential tool in the fight against sexual exploitation. The EFC is working with other organizations to support the laws and to push for them to be upheld and enforced across the country. www.TheEFC.ca/Prostitution

■ **Fewer safeguards in the euthanasia regime:** A bill to remove safeguards and the requirement that a person's death be foreseeable to be eligible for hastened death progressed quickly through Parliament this fall. The EFC repeatedly and publicly shared its deep concerns over Bill C-7 and its impact in

...continued on back

...continued from page 3

particular on the disability community. The EFC also submitted a brief to the parliamentary justice committee. www.TheEFC.ca/C-7

■ **Conversion therapy ban:** The EFC believes the definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6 is overly broad, going beyond widely discredited practices to include efforts to reduce sexual behaviour. The EFC expressed its concern over the bill and proposed changes to MPs and cabinet ministers and made a submission to the parliamentary justice committee. www.TheEFC.ca/C-6

■ **Protecting children from pornography:** The EFC wrote a letter of support to a senator who is sponsoring a private member's bill to make it a criminal offence to make sexually explicit material available, for commercial purposes, to minors online. See how you can support this bill by signing a petition or adapting our sample letter to senators and MPs at www.TheEFC.ca/S-203.

■ **International Day of Prayer:** The EFC is a partner in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church held every year on the first Sunday in November. Many Canadian churches participated in praying for this year's focus countries of Bangladesh, Nigeria and Yemen. Resources are available to use at any time at www.IDOP.ca.

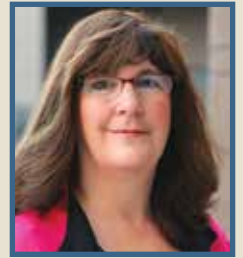
Heart and hands

Kathy Brooker is finance & office manager for the EFC.

I can't believe it's been over 22 years since I started working at the EFC in the accounting department. We have a very dedicated support staff that I work with in Richmond Hill. They have become like family.

Accounting may not seem very interesting for most, but there is a great responsibility to make sure we are good stewards of the Lord's money. This enables the rest of the amazing staff to do what they do best, whether it's monitoring what is happening in Parliament, producing *Faith Today* and *Love Is Moving* magazines, working with affiliates or the many more issues with which we are engaged.

We are always so amazed at how supportive our donors are with their sacrificial gifts, prayers and notes of encouragement. Thank you so much.



Prayer ambassador named for the EFC

Roger Helland, past district minister of the Baptist General Conference in Alberta, author and teacher, is the EFC's first official prayer ambassador. He joins a team of EFC ambassadors whose role typically is to speak in churches and to other organizations and individuals about the work of the EFC.

Helland brings a new dimension to this work, focussing on gathering leaders for prayer, both for their own work and witness and for the EFC's mission to bless Canada in the name of Jesus.

Located near Calgary, Helland hosted virtual prayer meetings on behalf of the EFC in the spring, with up to 100 participants who joined. *Canada Watch* readers will hear more about this initiative as it grows and develops.

"I am humbled, honoured and highly motivated to serve as the prayer ambassador for the EFC," says Helland. "If anyone would like to be considered for a role as a member of a team that regularly prays together for EFC, they can contact me. I'd love to hear from them." You can email him at hellandr@TheEFC.ca.

 [Facebook.com/TheEFC](https://www.facebook.com/TheEFC)

 [Twitter.com/TheEFC](https://twitter.com/TheEFC)

 [TheEFC.ca/Podcasts](https://www.TheEFC.ca/Podcasts)

 [Instagram.com/FaithTodayEFC](https://www.instagram.com/FaithTodayEFC)

 [LinkedIn.com/company/The-Evangelical-Fellowship-of-Canada](https://www.linkedin.com/company/The-Evangelical-Fellowship-of-Canada)

 **EFC** The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

103 - 9821 Leslie Street, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 3Y4
Tel: 905.479.5885 • Toll Free: 1.866.302.3362 • Fax: 905.479.4742
Email: EFC@TheEFC.ca • www.TheEFC.ca



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.

