

# CanadaWatch

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## Conscience work goes on as Parliament pauses

One of the most challenging Parliamentary sessions we can recall ended in June. Because of your partnership, the EFC was able to engage every step of the way with important issues such as conscience protection for medical professionals and major government bills on euthanasia and conversion therapy.

We also supported protection for children from online pornography, efforts to hold pornography sites accountable for hosting illegal content, reducing human trafficking, and more.

These unresolved issues require our continued attention. Conscience protection, for example, will be needed by more and more Canadians as Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) expands. Changes to the MAID law passed in March mean that people with mental

illness alone will be eligible for MAID starting in March 2023. Even more health care workers will be asked to go against their conscience and participate in the ending of patients' lives.

In May the EFC made a submission to a consultation on MAID policy in Ontario. The province has one of the least protective regimes for doctors in Canada, as does Nova Scotia. We shared our concerns about conscience protection and care of those who are vulnerable. We recommended specific changes to the policy.

During this entire process, we were reminded of how essential it is to have voices present in these dialogues that present a biblical view, with compassion, mercy and clear logic. We were able to remind the province's regulatory body, the College of Physicians and Surgeons



of Ontario, that freedom of conscience is the first fundamental freedom in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and foundational to many other freedoms.

The College already has a statement that recognizes doctors have the right to limit the health services they provide for reasons of conscience or religion. The College does not require physicians who have a conscientious or religious objection to provide MAID under any circumstances.

The EFC supports that statement. However, the EFC urged the College not to require doctors to provide an effective referral for MAID.

The EFC has long advocated for strong, specific conscience protection for health care providers and institutions.

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## What you can do:

- Become informed and equipped at [www.TheEFC.ca](http://www.TheEFC.ca) on these issues and more.
- Pray for your medical professionals. If you know their position on conscience issues, be sure to encourage them.
- Pray for the work of the EFC as we engage on issues like conscience protection.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



SANCTITY OF LIFE



CHURCH & MISSION



FAMILY & COMMUNITY



CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE

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No one should be compelled to participate in MAID against their conscience or deeply held beliefs or be screened out of health care training programs and medical schools because of their beliefs. Palliative care and hospice settings must also not be required to offer MAID.

We know health care providers within many fields, such as doctors, nurses, PSWs, pharmacists and administrators, who have deeply held beliefs that prevent them from participating in ending the lives of others through MAID.

EFC donors and friends are among those who work in medical fields. We know how complex and demanding such work is, and even more so during the pandemic. It is still more challenging now that MAID is expanding.

The government is able to make MAID available without compelling all practitioners or institutions to participate in it. It's unnecessary to force MAID to be available in every hospice or palliative care bed. Regulations should allow room for individuals whose beliefs do not include MAID and institutions that have policies against MAID.

The EFC supports Bill C-268, a federal private member's bill that would prevent medical professionals from being coerced to participate in MAID. Debate began in the House of Commons this spring. It will continue when Parliament resumes.

We will continue to work to protect conscience rights to ensure that not every doctor will be required to participate in ending the lives of their patients, and not every hospice or hospital be required to be a place where that happens. Thank you for your support and help in empowering us to do this important work.

**> Join us in protecting the rights of medical professionals.**



Participants in the Reconciliation Proclamation initiative

## Indigenous relations update

**T**he Seven Commitments Working Group is leading the implementation of seven commitments toward reconciliation the EFC presented in 2020. Another group, the Indigenous Advisory Council, will focus on advising EFC leadership around nurturing right relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Evangelicals in Canada. This second group is in the early stages of being formed.

The Seven Commitments group meets monthly to pray, discern and take steps toward sparking conversations and action around the commitments listed at [www.TheEFC.ca/SevenCommitments](http://www.TheEFC.ca/SevenCommitments). Established in March 2021, it is comprised of leaders from a broad spectrum of evangelical communities and interchurch contexts, including several of the EFC's denominational affiliates and partners.

The first of seven commitments involves sharing a document called the Reconciliation Proclamation. It was drafted in 1995 by Indigenous and non-Indigenous evangelical leaders and is currently being re-circulated to help us expand our awareness about reconciliation, Indigenous Peoples and colonial history. Several leaders across Canada gave voice to a reading of the

Reconciliation Proclamation in a collaborative video that will be used along with other tools to expand awareness about the proclamation, its meaning and implications for evangelical Christians.

Bill C-15, recently passed in Parliament, creates a framework for aligning Canadian laws with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and could serve as a catalyst for some of the EFC's commitments.

The EFC's Centre for Partnership and Ministry Innovation is also developing an exciting initiative called Reconciliation Through Relationships with the Indigenous-led organization Reconciliation Thunder. The initiative pairs Indigenous and non-Indigenous Christians to journey together in friendship and learning.

To learn more, visit [www.TheEFC.ca/SevenCommitments](http://www.TheEFC.ca/SevenCommitments)



## Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

Canada has been shaken by the recent confirmations of unmarked graves at the former sites of residential schools. We are told more will be discovered. Since the reports of the Truth and Reconciliation were released in 2015, the EFC has been engaged in conversations with Indigenous and non-Indigenous

evangelical leaders, leading to a working group which recommended to the EFC seven commitments that will guide us on a path to right relationships with Indigenous Peoples. The recent discoveries impress upon us the importance of honouring these commitments. You can read about the working group in this *Canada Watch* and find out more at [www.TheEFC.ca/SevenCommitments](http://www.TheEFC.ca/SevenCommitments). We will keep you up to date as this work unfolds as we do with all the issues that we work on, reliant as we are on your prayers and support.

## Interview with David Hearn, chair of the EFC board

David Hearn was appointed chair of the board in May.



### **CW: What role do you see the EFC playing in Canada in the next few years?**

**DH:** I am excited about the voice the EFC has been given – a voice that has incredible potential to strengthen and support the Church in Canada.

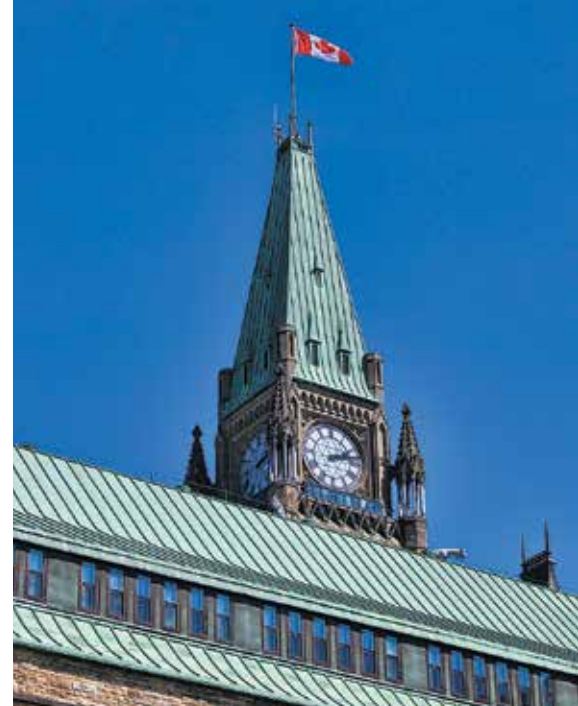
With its prophetic voice the EFC can call attention to areas of deep concern and needed intervention, such as racism, human trafficking, pornography, government overreach, and the dignity and protection of human life.

With its pastoral voice the EFC can offer support and care for church leaders by creating opportunities to connect outside their denomination or ministry venue and find safe, likeminded leaders who can bring refreshment and friendship at a deep level. With its proclamation voice the EFC can help to unify the Church of Jesus Christ in Canada to be on mission together. We may never agree on every tenet of theology, but we are pulled together by the majesty and mission of Jesus Christ.

### **CW: What would you like EFC donors to know about the work of the EFC?**

**DH:** I want donors to think of the EFC as a trellis for the Church in Canada. The trellis is not the focus; nobody walks into a vineyard and comments on the beauty of the trellis. It is always about the fruit. The EFC is passionate about supporting the Church by providing information about government policies, laws and bills that have a direct impact on the Church and its ministry and freedoms; researching current trends and challenges that the Church must face; and advocacy in legal matters where bringing a strong evangelical perspective can lead to change, rather than simply reacting to culture.

My prayer is that God will use the EFC to help the Church in Canada see what God is doing – there is something far greater going on than we can imagine. God is at work calling the nations to Himself and opening doors of incredible opportunity all around us. The EFC is poised to bring clarity and help the Church lead with stronger focus and intent.



## Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Conversion therapy ban:** Bill C-6 on conversion therapy has been passed by the House of Commons and is being debated in the Senate. It passed the second of three votes and will be studied by a Senate committee. The EFC recommends revising the bill to add clarity to the definition of conversion therapy and to ensure protection for religious teaching and practice.

[www.TheEFC.ca/C-6](http://www.TheEFC.ca/C-6)

■ **Conscience Protection:** The EFC made a submission to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on its Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) policy. The submission expressed concerns about conscience protection and care of those who are vulnerable and recommended specific changes to the policy. [www.TheEFC.ca/Conscience](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Conscience)

■ **Human Trafficking:** In May a parliamentary committee began a study of sex trafficking among Indigenous people. The EFC asked the committee to uphold the current prostitution laws that target sex buyers and pimps, and to provide for culturally informed, survivor-led support and exit services. [www.TheEFC.ca/Human-Trafficking](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Human-Trafficking)

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■ **Religious Freedom:** The Supreme Court of Canada released a decision in May in the *Aga* case, finding that matters of membership and discipline within a voluntary religious community are outside the jurisdiction of the courts. The EFC was an intervener in the case and welcomes the ruling as one that prevents courts from adjudicating on religious or doctrinal matters. [www.TheEFC.ca/Aga](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Aga)

■ **Protection of children:** A private member's bill originating in the Senate that would protect youth from exposure to commercial pornography sites has passed in the Senate. The next step for Bill S-203, the *Protecting Young Persons from Exposure to Pornography Act*, is to be debated in the House of Commons after the summer break. The EFC submitted a written brief in support of the bill. [www.TheEFC.ca/S-203](http://www.TheEFC.ca/S-203)

■ **Pornography:** A parliamentary committee is unanimously recommending that the government explore ways to hold commercial pornography sites accountable. The Ethics Committee heard from survivors whose images were posted on Pornhub without their knowledge or consent. The committee report recommends the age and consent of anyone depicted in pornography be verified before it is posted, an initiative the EFC supported. [www.TheEFC.ca/Pornography](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Pornography)

## Heart and hands

*Gina Waugh, director of affiliate and community relations*



I am grateful I've had the opportunity to work at the EFC for so many years (since 2001), and I believe strongly in the work. As of June 1 my role grew to become director of affiliate and community relations. I am excited about this new opportunity. One of my favourite things is to promote the EFC at conferences and events. I have the privilege of speaking with people for the first time about the EFC and also talking with many of our wonderful donors who have supported us for years. In my new role I look forward to working and building even stronger relationships with our affiliates and community. Thank you to all of you for your prayers and financial support. Without you we couldn't do what we do."

## Warm words from a donor

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 an EFC donor.

### PRAYER REQUEST


#### JOIN US TO THANK GOD

for the EFC's ability to work collaboratively with leaders in denominations, ministries, churches and Christian universities/colleges/seminaries. Please pray especially for our two Indigenous relations groups as they tackle barriers to reconciliation.

*"Warm Christian greetings to my sisters and brothers in CHRIST at the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Praying that GOD will bless you, protect you, keep you in health and provide for you in all of your needs spiritually, emotionally and physically. May HE cause HIS word to prosper in you and through you for HIS Glory, Honor, and Praise. In Jesus name Amen Looking unto JESUS the author and finisher of our faith Hebrews 12:2. Stand Fast! Keep looking up!"*

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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.

