

Canada Watch

UPDATING YOU

On Canada's most immediate issues
(page 3)

SPOTLIGHT

Evangelical polling matters
(page 2)

EFC RESOURCES

Exploring new partnerships
(page 3)

Committee recommends removing charitable status for advancing religion

Churches and other faith-based charities foster hope, mutual support and belonging. They help make our communities more resilient and remind us of our purpose in living and our hope for the future.

But a parliamentary committee has made recommendations that would, if adopted, devastate many religious charities and destabilize the charitable sector. The proposals would remove the advancement of religion as a charitable purpose and "no longer provide charitable status to anti-abortion organizations."

The finance committee's recommendations for the next federal budget are particularly ill-conceived and short-sighted

since approximately 40% of Canada's registered charities advance religion.

Sometimes committee reports act as a trial balloon to see how strong a reaction there might be to an idea.

The finance minister doesn't have to adopt these recommendations. Strong advocacy can help ensure these proposals don't make it into the next budget.

The EFC has written to the finance minister and will continue to engage. Please join us by asking your local MP to oppose these recommendations. When ideas like these are put on the table, it's important to ensure MPs hear the concerns of Canadians about them.



Canada has long recognized advancing religion as a charitable purpose. Many churches and religious organizations have been granted charitable status on that basis. Our country has about 23,000 Christian congregations, many of which have charitable status. The impact of this change would also be far reaching and devastating to other religious charities, to those they serve and to Canadian society.

"Faith-based charities benefit their participants, their communities and Canadian society as a whole," says Julia Beazley, the EFC's public policy director. "Religious charities foster vibrant social networks, mobilize compassionate outreach, spark local volunteerism and foster community resiliency."

...continued on page 2

What you can do

- Ask your MP to support faith-based charities by keeping charitable status for the advancement of religion, and not to politicize charities by targeting beliefs about abortion. Find them at **OurCommons.ca**.
- Pray for churches and faith-based charities to thrive as they do the work God calls them to do. Pray for God's blessing and provision.
- Check **TheEFC.ca/CharitableStatus** for updates, or stay current by getting the EFC's weekly email at **TheEFC.ca/Update**.



**Centre for Ministry Partnership
and Innovation**

Convening and collaborating to support
the evangelical church in Canada



**Centre for Research on
Church and Faith**

Connecting research with ministry



**Centre for Faith and
Public Life**

Faithful witness through thoughtful,
constructive engagement in public life

...continued from page 1

Biblical teaching instructs us to love our neighbours, particularly those who are vulnerable. This leads Christ-followers to seek the good of Canadian society, whether the organizations we volunteer with and donate to are faith-based or not. It orients us and our communities outwardly, first toward God and then toward neighbour, in tangible, self-giving ways.

Churches and other religious charities foster social cohesion. Many charities whose core purpose is worship and the advancement of religion also offer pastoral, social and physical kinds of help. Such help is motivated by their religious beliefs and identity.

We need to remember this issue when the next election is called. The EFC encourages you to ask candidates whether they support advancing religion as a charitable purpose or whether they support efforts to remove it. Ask candidates also about their views on removing charitable status on the basis of beliefs, such as beliefs about abortion.

With your support the EFC is preparing resources for the next election, whenever it's called. Why not start discussions now among churches and other local organizations about possibly holding an all-candidates meeting in your riding during the next election? The EFC offers an online guide to planning such non-partisan public meetings at TheEFC.ca/Election.

It's never too early to talk with people who are running as candidates, and with current MPs. Candidates will be looking to connect with constituents when an election looms. The EFC will again prepare a new election brochure and suggested questions for candidates.

Please continue to pray with us for the good of our country. Please pray for those who hold elected office and for Christians to fulfil the law through loving our neighbour (Romans 13).



Evangelical polling matters

Polls move hearts and minds. They shape how we see the world. They shape how others see us as evangelical Christians. This is why it matters how we find Evangelicals on polls when we look for Evangelicals.

For example, American polling has historically considered religious groups as voting blocks. This conditions people to think of religion as code for politics. Why does this matter? Because now, in the USA at least, there are Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus who self-identify as evangelical because it has become a word linked with the Republican party.

Our researchers at the EFC Centre for Research on Church and Faith have been using a set of polling questions called the Christian Evangelical Scale since the early 2000s. It identifies those we call evangelically aligned by measuring beliefs and behaviours – but seven out of eight questions measure belief.

This matters because what it means to believe has changed. In the past, if you didn't believe in your church's doctrine, usually you would have found another church. Today, it's common for people to be in a church, not believe what the church believes, and feel no need to move as long as they have friends and feel welcome.

That's all good, but researchers are finding that when we ask about beliefs such people will say they agree with a doctrine – even though they know they don't believe it. Why would they do this? Because when they answer this question they're saying, "I belong to a group that believes or says things like this." Believing has become about belonging.

This means polling that mostly measures belief statements are not going to work as well anymore. In response the CRCF is planning to host a consultation on revising the Christian Evangelical Scale so that we and other researchers will find Evangelicals

when we do research on Evangelicals. Because shouldn't data about us accurately reflect us?

"Polls move hearts and minds. They shape how we see the world. They shape how others see us as evangelical Christians."



A note from EFC President David Guretzki

The EFC's Senior Leadership Team has recently completed a new strategic plan, and we've identified prayer as one of our top priorities. The EFC Prayer Card is something you can post on your fridge or use as a bookmark in your Bible. It lists monthly themes and requests that come directly from our staff. A printed version was included with the

previous issue of *Canada Watch*, but you can also find it online (également disponible en français) at TheEFC.ca/Prayer-Card. Please do pray for us (in English, French or any language) and let us know how we can pray for you – something we do regularly. (Our contact info is on the back page.) God is almighty, and works through prayer to move mountains. Thank you!



Cathie Ostapchuk

Exploring new partnerships

The mandate of the EFC Centre for Ministry Partnership and Innovation includes helping explore and form new networks for advancing the gospel. This means listening to affiliates' needs and nurturing platforms that build trusting relationships among leaders in various sectors.

Christian women are one such sector – a group that makes up more than half of our country's evangelical church community.

"Women are a critical demographic for the flourishing of the whole Canadian Church," says Cathie Ostapchuk, a new strategic partnership catalyst at the CMPI.

One month after she started with the EFC in June 2024, she participated in a consultation in Nairobi, Kenya, held by the World Evangelical Alliance Women's Commission. There she represented the EFC and connected with leaders from six continents. The consultation identified three critical issues facing women globally: gender equity, violence against women and girls, and leadership development.

Leading up to the annual October gathering of EFC affiliate leaders (Presidents Day), Ostapchuk met with senior women leaders among EFC affiliate organizations. Together they created a video presentation for attendees highlighting the remarkable voices of first-chair evangelical affiliate female leaders in Canada.

The next steps in this work include creating a resource hub for a Canadian Christian Women's Network. The proposed vision so far is: "Linking, resourcing and championing Canadian Christian women wherever they serve." The priorities under this vision for 2025 include creating a steering committee for this new women's network, a website, social media presence and a monthly email. The network will work to link and highlight Canadian women in ministry, participate in global efforts, encourage co-labouring with men for the Kingdom of God, and invite those seeking to belong to take their place at the table.

Plans are also underway to hold a summit in 2026 that brings together ministry experts, theologians and practitioners – both men and women in the Canadian church – and other voices to dialogue on how best to partner together for the flourishing of the whole Church.



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Advance requests for euthanasia:** The federal government has launched an online consultation on advance requests. This Health Canada questionnaire is open to the public until Feb. 14, 2025, at go.theefc.ca/advreq. An advance request would allow a person's life to be ended when they are no longer able to consent, removing a critical safeguard.

■ **Charitable status for advancing religion:** (See front page article.) The EFC has written to the minister of finance outlining the significance and benefit of religious charities in Canada and urging him not to adopt these two committee recommendations. Please express your concerns to your MP.

TheEFC.ca/CharitableStatus

■ **New euthanasia statistics released:** Health Canada reports the number of lives ended by medical assistance in dying (MAiD) continues to increase. About 1 in 20 deaths in 2023 were MAiD, a total of 15,343 people. Among those who were not dying who ended their lives by MAiD (Track 2), nearly half said loneliness/isolation and feeling like a burden were sources of

...continued on back

...continued from page 3

suffering. Almost everyone (more than 95%) who died by MAiD in 2023 named loss of ability to participate in meaningful activities as a source of suffering. The report notes less than 100 doctors carried out about 5,000 MAiD deaths in 2023.

■ **Religious freedom case:** The EFC and co-interveners have filed legal arguments in a case about a Christian organization that had rented a public venue. A Quebec cabinet minister cancelled the rental agreement weeks before the event because of the religious pro-life beliefs of the organization. In this case, the EFC is joining with the Canadian Centre for Christian Charities and Réseau Évangélique du Québec. The case will be heard this fall.

■ **Advocating for stronger safeguards:** The government of Alberta held a consultation on safeguards and the oversight of MAiD. The EFC participated in stakeholder meetings and submitted a written brief. The EFC asked the province to protect patients by allowing MAiD-free spaces, adding a specific end of life definition, and other safeguards. The EFC's brief also addressed issues such as expanding MAiD on the basis of mental illness alone, eligibility for mature minors and allowing advance requests.
TheEFC.ca/AlbertaMAiD2024

Commendations on our 60th

Many EFC supporters and affiliates wrote us in 2024 as we celebrated our 60th anniversary. Here are some highlights.



"The EFC has not only served as our collective voice on matters of ethics, ministry, theology, spirituality and social justice," wrote Fraser Roberts of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador. ***"It has also kept us well informed and appropriately engaged regarding the same."***

Marjory Kerr of Tyndale University also wrote. ***"For decades you have been a meaningful advocate on behalf of the Church in Canada, a passionate partner to seek the common good of our local faith communities and a trusted source for news and trends that impact us all."***

"We consider our membership in the EFC to be one of our most valued Christian partnerships," wrote Deric Bartlett of City Centre Baptist in Mississauga, Ontario. ***"We love the EFC for two primary reasons: The EFC enables us to experience unity with other Christians [and it] provides our congregation with compelling resources to guide our members in honest but charitable dialogue about ethical issues that matter to us."***

Marvin Brubacher of MentorLink Canada wrote, ***"Your creative energy and constant encouragement have inspired us to fulfill our mission and vision with greater focus, and to realize we are participants with many others in expanding God's kingdom worldwide."***

.....
SUCH WARM ENCOURAGEMENT IS A BLESSING FOR ALL WHO PARTNER TO SERVE THE CHURCH NATIONWIDE. THANK YOU!

-  Facebook.com/TheEFC
-  Twitter.com/TheEFC
-  TheEFC.ca/Podcasts
-  Instagram.com/evangelical-fellowshipofcanada
-  LinkedIn.com/company/The-Evangelical-Fellowship-of-Canada



10 Huntingdale Blvd, Scarborough, ON M1W 2S5
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.