

CanadaWatch

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Celebrating a legal win and remaining vigilant

The EFC is celebrating a decision by an Ontario court this fall that found Canada's prostitution laws to be constitutional.

The current laws protect human dignity and equality – so it's illegal to buy sex, arrange for the sale of another person or receive a benefit from the sale of another person's sexual services. As an intervener in this court case the EFC argued buying sex is inherently exploitive.

The judge concluded that all the provisions of the prostitution law are constitutional. He described these laws as "a carefully crafted legislative scheme that prohibits the most exploitive aspects of the sex trade while immunizing sex workers from prosecution."

In his decision the judge noted Parliament's view of the harms of prostitution is

well grounded in evidence. Significant numbers of sex workers come from marginalized and racialized groups, particularly Indigenous girls and women. He also found there is a strong link between sex work and trafficking, and that violence and the threat of violence are present in the everyday lives of many sex workers.

"The EFC has long argued prostitution is not merely a series of interactions between purchaser and purchased who exist independently of one another," says Julia Beazley, director of the EFC's Centre for Faith and Public Life. "Prostitution is part of a system of exploitation that is based on structural inequalities and preys on vulnerabilities."

The EFC wholeheartedly applauds



this decision and Justice Goldstein's careful analysis of these complex and important issues.

The coalition of sex workers who launched the challenge to the laws is planning to appeal. Donor support thus far enabled the EFC to act as an effective and respected intervener. The EFC will apply to intervene again in support of these laws that stop exploitation.

Meanwhile there are ongoing and new concerns with the Canada Summer Jobs program. Many churches and faith-based groups apply for Canada Summer Jobs grants to help hire summer staff. These grants offer welcome support and have a positive impact. While many groups have no

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What you can do

- Enjoy with us a rare moment of a victory in the courts. We did it! And it was possible only with your help. Thank you.
- Continue to donate toward and pray for the work of the EFC. It's uniquely challenging but immensely satisfying to know we bring a voice of biblical compassion and insight into some of the most pressing issues of the day.
- Share what you learn in this issue of Canada Watch with a friend. We will happily mail out a copy or send it by email to anyone you would like.

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difficulty in having their applications approved, other groups feel they are being targeted for review or denied approval based on their religious beliefs.

"If the government is going to offer grants there must be a level playing field without screening on the basis of religious beliefs," says Beazley. "We've heard from enough faith-based groups that we are concerned these are not just isolated incidents."

A problematic values-based attestation was part of the Canada Summer Jobs application in 2018. The application was changed in 2019 and following years, but there is concern that values-based screening may be carried out by some staff behind closed doors.

That kind of potential screening out of the applications of religious organizations can hinder the work of churches and faith-based groups that foster vibrant social networks, spark volunteerism and help make communities resilient. We know evangelical churches often work to alleviate poverty and care for those who are vulnerable in Canadian communities.

The EFC expressed concerns about the grant program in a written submission to a parliamentary committee this fall. We asked for faith-based groups to be considered for grants based on their actions and activities, not to be screened out of the program because of their beliefs.



**On March 17, 2024
MAiD will be permitted
for those whose only
underlying condition is
MENTAL ILLNESS.**



Centre for Research on
Church and Faith

Centre for Research charts evangelical thinking on MAiD

As part of the EFC's campaign to raise an alarm over the rapid expansion of euthanasia, we commissioned a poll of 2,000 Canadians conducted by the Angus Reid Forum in September. The results give insights into how Canadians and Evangelicals in particular think and feel about medical assistance in dying right now.

We learned only 51% of Canadians are aware euthanasia will become available in Canada in March for reasons of mental illness alone, while Evangelicals are more likely to be aware (59% of Evangelicals say they know, rising to 66% among Evangelicals who attend services more than once a week).

Forty-six per cent of Canadians support MAiD for mental illness – which drops to 7% among Evangelicals who attend services at least weekly (compared to 21% of Evangelicals who attend once a month or so, and 27% of those who never attend).

Three-quarters of Evangelicals who attend at least weekly (75%) oppose MAiD for mental illness.

A clear majority of Canadians (61%) agree that if MAiD is expanded on the basis of mental illness, a safeguard should be in place that MAiD be a last resort after all reasonable treatment options have been exhausted. This is in striking contrast to what the law requires, which is that a person requesting MAiD be informed of available options.

Only 3% of Canadians believe no additional safeguards are needed if MAiD is expanded on the basis of mental illness alone.

Our survey also shows young adults are less likely to support MAiD for mental illness and more likely to support safeguards than other adults.

We hope these insights are helpful and interesting for you as you contemplate this huge shift in Canada in the weeks and months ahead. The EFC is extremely grateful for the donors and friends who see the value of original, Canadian research.

"In my opinion, some of the best current data and research on religion in Canada is coming out of the EFC's Research Centre."

– Sam Reimer, author of *Caught in the Current: British and Canadian Evangelicals in an Age of Self-Spirituality* and professor of sociology at Crandall University



A note from EFC President David Guretzki

Something wonderful happened at this year's Presidents Day. Led by the EFC's board chair Adam Driscoll, leaders from Canada's evangelical churches, schools and organizations from coast to coast stood in a large circle, held hands and prayed with each other. Later that evening, we finished the day by taking communion together. These

were special moments highlighting our shared faith, mutual support, high level of collaboration and trust. They were visible reminders that we are stronger together than apart. We are strong not because of our own doing but by the strength of the Spirit. The evangelical Church is at work in Canada. Thank you for your support in making the work of the EFC possible, as we help draw the evangelical community together for the betterment of our country.



Presidents Day meets in Calgary

Sixty-eight leaders of EFC affiliate ministry organizations, denominations and universities, seminaries and colleges met in Calgary in late October for the annual EFC Presidents Day. The unique one-day gathering is designed to provide a space of meeting together, sharing with other evangelical leaders and considering evangelical responses to some of the most pressing issues of the day. The EFC also had the opportunity to share updates and new and upcoming resources with the affiliates represented.



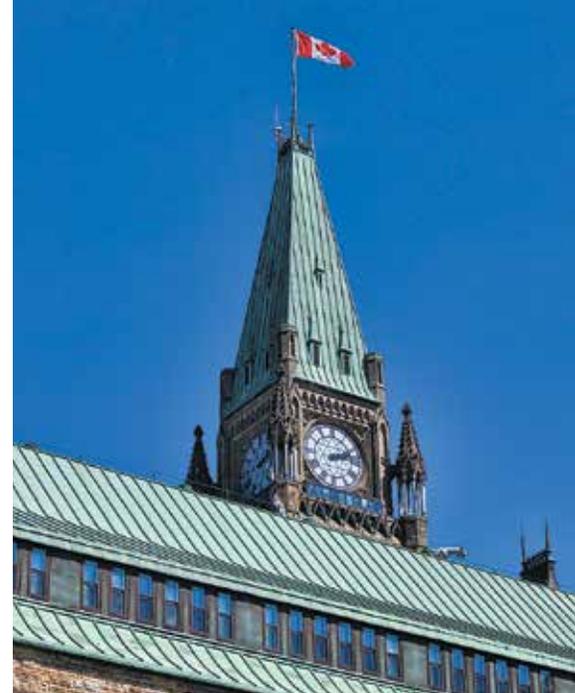
Each of the three EFC centres offered a summary of the work accomplished in the previous year and shared insights into what is coming up and how it can serve the evangelical Church in Canada.

"We exist to serve you," said EFC President David Guretzki as he welcomed participants to the event. The board of the EFC met earlier in the week, and Presidents Day also provided an opportunity for in-person meetings with the heads of denominations and members of Christian Higher Education Canada.

Presidents Day is hosted by the EFC board, and its members were present and available throughout the day to meet and actively listen to affiliate leaders.

CURRENT EFC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Adam Driscoll, chair
- Lynda MacGibbon, vice-chair
- Martin Kreplin, secretary
- Dave Hearn
- Wendy Lowe
- Gordon Gee
- Cliff Fletcher
- Joel Sherbino



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ More Canadians dying by MAiD:

The number of MAiD deaths in Canada continued its steep increase in 2022, according to Health Canada. Its new report says 13,241 people ended their lives via MAiD in 2022, a 31 per cent increase over the 10,092 MAiD deaths in 2021. The reasons include inability to participate in meaningful activities (86.3%), feeling like a burden (35.3%) and isolation/loneliness (17.1%).

A bill that would have reversed the law allowing euthanasia for mental illness was defeated in a close vote Oct. 18. The vote on Bill C-314 was 167 to 150. Unless the government passes a bill to delay, euthanasia for mental illness will be allowed in March 2024. Get resources to ask for changes to the law at TheEFC.ca/TakeActionOnMAiD.

■ Protecting children online:

A senator's bill to protect children from sexually explicit material online will be debated this fall. Bill S-210 has passed in the Senate and is proceeding through the House of Commons. It would require commercial pornography sites to ensure users are adults. Get a sample MP letter and more at TheEFC.ca/S-210.

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■ **Prostitution laws:** The EFC is asking the justice minister to take note of an Ontario Superior Court decision that found Canada's prostitution laws are constitutional. The judge noted the harms of the sex trade are well grounded in evidence, including a strong link between sex work and trafficking, and that violence and the threat of violence are present in the everyday lives of many sex workers. The EFC is asking the justice minister to ensure prostitution laws are enforced and to increase funding for both exit services and public education about the laws.

■ **Canada Summer Jobs program:** The EFC wrote to a parliamentary committee on the Canada Summer Jobs program in October. The grant program helps churches and faith-based groups hire youth to serve their community. Some, however, feel they are being flagged for review due to their religious beliefs. The EFC wrote, "If the government is going to offer grants, it must offer them on a level playing field and not use ideological screening to determine who is eligible to apply for funding."



Ignite brings churches together to pray

The EFC has been working with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Canada, National House of Prayer, Peace and Reconciliation Network, Vineyard Canada and local leaders in several cities to host one-day prayer gatherings.

Ignite gatherings in Ottawa, Calgary, Kelowna, Regina and Vancouver featured a half-day seminar for pastors and ministry leaders on cultivating a culture of prayer in local churches, followed by prayer ministry and a complimentary dinner. A public prayer and worship summit was held the same evening for the broader community to pray for unity and spiritual awakening. There was no cost to participate.

"It's been such a rich time of partnership building and service to our pastors, churches and praying people across the country," says Roger Helland, EFC Prayer Ambassador and Ignite organizer. "We're grateful to the EFC donors who see the importance of gatherings like these to unite Evangelicals to bless Canada in the name of Jesus."

Faith Today's 40th birthday

The EFC magazine *Faith Today* has been providing Christian journalism, perspective and inspiration for 40 years. Launched in 1983, it now reaches readers through 20,000 printed copies per issue plus social media, a video channel, audio podcasts, an app and special content at FaithToday.ca.

"I think 'explosion' is the only word that captures all the new ways our journalism now reaches people," says senior editor Bill Fledderus. "I've always loved that my job includes interviewing Christians across our country, but I never imagined I'd be doing it in front of a video camera from my home office."

Fledderus, based in Hamilton, Ont., shares editing with Karen Stiller of Ottawa. "We describe our work as Canada's Christian conversation," she says, "and engaging with so many audiences is invigorating to our work as journalists serving the Church. We're grateful to the EFC donors who see this work as important as we do."

PHOTO: The new home for the EFC's Centre for Faith and Public Life, Centre for Research on Church and Faith, president's office and more. If you make it to Ottawa, please come say hello at 275 Slater Street.

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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.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



SANCTITY OF LIFE



CHURCH & MISSION



FAMILY & COMMUNITY



CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE