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A decade of MAiD

As we pause and reflect on the 10 years since Canada's first euthanasia law was passed, how do we hear God speaking to us? How does our faith encourage us, giving us hope and purpose?

Medical assistance in dying (MAiD) is the legal framework for euthanasia and assisted suicide in Canada, a practice that has been rapidly expanded and adopted like in no other country in the world. The EFC is opposed to MAiD, believing that it fundamentally devalues human life and normalizes suicide.

About 100,000 people have ended their lives via MAiD in the last 10 years, roughly equivalent to the population of Cape Breton, N.S., or Prince George, B.C.

The annual report on MAiD for 2024 indicates about one in every 20 people who died in 2024 died by MAiD.

"When the law was first debated,

I think many Canadians imagined MAiD would be rare, a last resort," says Julia Beazley, EFC Director of Public Policy, "But that isn't the case. It's becoming increasingly widespread and normalized. The MAiD law uses subjective language, with few meaningful safeguards and a troubling lack of oversight."

The original law from 10 years ago, passed June 17, 2016, limited euthanasia and assisted suicide to those whose natural death was "reasonably foreseeable." But this term allows for wide variability in how doctors interpret it.

The second law, passed in 2021, expanded eligibility to those with a chronic illness, disease or disability who weren't nearing death. It also allowed MAiD for those with mental illness only, with a delay before that expansion would take effect. MAiD for mental illness will now take effect in March



2027 unless another law is passed to stop or delay it further.

MAiD normalizes the idea that a life with limitations, illness or loss of ability might not be worth living. That the answer to suffering is to end one's life.

As Christians, where do we find hope and encouragement in the midst of this?

God made us, loves us, and has a purpose for all our days. Our value doesn't rest on our health, age or ability. We can hold on to this ourselves in difficult circumstances or in the face of diminishing capacity, and we can remind our neighbours. Each person's life has value and meaning.

The data about why people choose MAiD points more to existential suffering than physical pain. People's recorded

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What you can do

- Pray for our country, for those struggling around us and for God's help to love our neighbours. Plan a special prayer event on June 17 to mark a decade of MAiD.
- Get a digital or print copy of *Life Together* for yourself and your church.
- Consider the Declare and Resolve statement as a personal or church commitment. TheEFC.ca/DeclareAndResolve

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reasons for dying by MAiD are usually an inability to participate in meaningful activities, loneliness, isolation and/or fear of being a burden. These are areas where church and faith have so much to offer – hope, comfort, community and meaning.

In 2023 more than 50 leaders of Christian organizations signed a statement on euthanasia that is still very relevant today. Leaders committed to demonstrate the love of God in the lives of those feeling abandoned and to mobilize their communities to care for and support those who are suffering. Individual churches made this their congregation's commitment, as well. This is a commitment we can hold to together (TheEFC.ca/DeclareAndResolve).

As churches we can also consider our welcome to people experiencing disability. The EFC's free booklet, online at TheEFC.ca/LifeTogether, helps individuals and churches begin that conversation.

We can also ask for laws to be changed. "Asking for good laws is one of the ways we can love our neighbour," says Beazley. "We want our country to be a place where people seeking treatment can receive it. Where our neighbours are supported to live, not facilitated to die. Where conversations about MAiD are only initiated by patients, and no one feels pressured toward euthanasia by their healthcare providers."

After Jesus told a parable about a man who had been robbed and left for dead, ignored by religious leaders but cared for by a Samaritan, He asked, "Which of these three proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among robbers?" The expert in the law answered that it was the one who showed mercy. And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

As we pause to reflect on a decade of MAiD, let's ask God how he is calling and equipping us to be neighbours.



Research partnerships equip youth ministry

At an April devotional meeting of EFC staff, guest Sid Koop, a youth ministry leader with almost 30 years' experience, retraced what he called the "profound impact that the EFC has had on next generation ministries in Canada."

The 2011 *Hemorrhaging Faith* research first helped to identify the drivers and barriers that influence youth engagement with churches, said Koop. "Those ideas continue to resonate in the youth ministry community today, helping us to know what to focus on, pointing to biblical truth about real and rigorous discipleship."

The 2019 *Renegotiating Faith* research on the life phase after high school helped highlight "the need for mentorship, pushing leaders to be more intentional about creating frameworks that help volunteer leaders live out incarnational ministry with students." Koop argues such Christian community is the best answer to current concerns about young people using artificial intelligence to cope with mental health struggles.

The 2023 *Parenting Faith* research has underlined for youth workers the importance of operating as allies with parents in the faith formation of children and youth.

And Koop anticipates the *Influencing Faith* research currently in progress will "help us understand how youth are looking [in social media] to meet longings" for Jesus-centred community.

All these projects, conducted in partnership with multiple other ministries and denominational groups, help create an awareness of the urgent needs around youth work and understanding of ways forward, Koop said.

"...research has underlined for youth workers the importance of operating as allies with parents in the faith formation of children and youth."

His sharing was a great encouragement to staff. *Canada Watch* readers should also be encouraged that their donations have made all this partnership research possible (TheEFC.ca/Research). Koop, based in Kelowna, B.C., is executive director of Youth Worker Community.



A note from EFC President David Guretzki

The phrase "every tribe, tongue, people and nation" is a refrain in the book of Revelation. In April I put on my theologian's hat and presented an academic keynote on this refrain to the Evangelical Missiological Society (in Toronto, simulcast to Edmonton, Langley and Steinbach). To understand

God's mission for Christians, we look from Adam and Eve, God's first covenant creatures, across to the heavenly community portrayed in Revelation, where human diversity is not erased but instead incorporated into a mosaic of praise and worship. Praise appropriate to our amazing God needs this diversity, and that reality should inform our actions today as we share the gospel to all without seeking to erase ties of kinship, language and nationality. I'm grateful the EFC gets to be part of this mission, enabled by your support. Thank you!

Connecting ESL, refugee, international student ministries



Welcome Church is an EFC initiative that so far networks about 150 churches across Canada involved in supporting refugee families and international students, including some churches that offer English as a second language (ESL) programs.

The network offers a training video series for churches that want to be more intentional about such efforts, and so that all the volunteers in a community can end up on the same page regarding best practices. Churches that complete the training series are listed on an interactive online map, a tool newcomers can use to find a church that meets their needs.

Welcome Church is led by Raymond Cheng, a former industrial engineer who pastored East Toronto Community Baptist Church from 2005 to 2026.

He sees enabling the sharing of resources and expertise as a key aspect of the network, which includes a variety of newcomer settlement organizations and experts. He says partnerships between larger congregations and smaller ones can also be mutually beneficial.



He points to a 2024 Welcome Church event in Winnipeg that helped connect some congregants who wanted to start ESL programs with expert advice and names of potential instructors. Welcome Church has local liaisons in various cities who help make similar contacts. It has held events in Montreal, Peterborough, Northern Ontario, Vancouver and Toronto.

Learn more at WelcomeChurch.ca.



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Religious freedom:** Providence Health Care is being taken to court by a family and some euthanasia advocates who are challenging the B.C. government policy which allows faith-based facilities not to provide euthanasia. The EFC was granted intervener status and argued in support of freedom of religion for private religious healthcare institutions. The case wrapped up hearings in April, and we are awaiting a decision.

■ **Hate crimes bill:** Bill C-9 is moving through the Senate at time of publication. Some changes were made to improve the bill before it was passed by the House of Commons, however the bill removes the religious belief defence. This defence can be invoked in response to charges of the wilful promotion of hatred. It serves as a safeguard for the expression of good faith religious beliefs. The EFC is preparing a written submission for the Senate committee studying the bill. TheEFC.ca/C9

■ **MAiD for mental illness:** The EFC has urged a special committee of MPs and senators studying MAiD for mental illness to reverse the law that will allow this expansion in March 2027. If Parlia-

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ment allows the expansion of MAiD to go ahead, additional safeguards would need to be added. The EFC's written brief strongly recommended requiring a direct assessment by a psychiatrist and that MAiD be a last resort after all reasonable treatment options have been tried.

■ **Protecting minors online:** A bill to protect young people from the harms of online pornography has passed in the Senate. Bill S-209 would make it a criminal offence to make pornographic material available, for commercial purposes, to minors online. Mainstream pornography frequently depicts violent and degrading sexual content. The bill will now move through debate and votes in the House of Commons.

TheEFC.ca/S209

■ **MAiD safeguards:** Alberta has passed a bill that puts in place additional safeguards for euthanasia in their province. These safeguards include limiting MAiD to adults who are in their last year of life and requiring only patient-initiated discussions of MAiD. The EFC and others had recommended these limits in a consultation in December 2024, and the EFC commends Alberta for passing them. This is an example other provinces could follow. TheEFC.ca/AB18

Maritimers reflect on MAiD

Over four days in April, Christians across the Maritime provinces gathered in Halifax, Moncton and Charlottetown for a series of public events addressing the important and complex issue of medical assistance in dying (MAiD).

Hosted by Inspire Christian Media Ministries Inc., which operates Inspire. FM radio stations throughout the region, these events created space for meaningful engagement on a topic that continues to shape Canadian society.

EFC President David Guretzki presented alongside leaders from Canadian Bible Society, Christian Medical and Dental Association of Canada, Focus on the Family Canada, and PEI Life/Life Canada (National). Together these leaders and audiences explored legal, biblical, ethical, pastoral and practical perspectives, helping everyone to deepen and round out their understanding.

More than 340 people attended, reflecting a strong desire to better understand implications for individuals, families and the Church. Many expressed appreciation for the thoughtful tone, depth of insight, faithful reflection and opportunity to ask honest questions. And they consistently indicated a desire for ongoing resources and guidance as they seek to respond in Christlike ways in their contexts.

Invite an EFC speaker to your gathering and browse available topics at TheEFC.ca/Speakers.



EFC President David Guretzki presents on tour.

COMING EVENTS [See TheEFC.ca/Calendar](http://TheEFC.ca/Calendar) for details and to register

- > **World Refugee Sunday**, June 14 and/or 21
- > **MAiD in Canada: A Matter of Life & Death**, featuring EFC President and Resident Theologian David Guretzki, Vernon, B.C., Oct. 3
- > **EFC Presidents Day and Pastors Day**, Toronto, Oct. 22

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The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (*Alliance évangélique du Canada*) is the national association "calling Evangelicals to greater visible unity in gospel witness." 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.

