



TOGETHER FOR INFLUENCE, IMPACT AND IDENTITY • AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015

# CanadaWatch

## CENTRE FOR FAITH & PUBLIC LIFE

The EFC in the courts and on Parliament Hill.

## SPOTLIGHT

Connecting with you directly: Webinars answer important questions from Canadian Christians.

## EFC RESOURCES

What *Faith Today*, Canada's Christian magazine, offers you in Sept/Oct.

## MAKING THE MOST OF EFC RESEARCH



## FOR YOU AND YOUR CHURCH

- Visit [www.theEFC.ca/research](http://www.theEFC.ca/research) to find studies on topics such as Bible engagement and links to other research of interest to Canadian Evangelicals.
- Listen to EFC webinars on topics such as euthanasia and religious freedom. Find recordings at [www.theEFC.ca/webinars](http://www.theEFC.ca/webinars) and sign up for the latest live webinars.
- EFC speakers such as Rick Hiemstra can bring research like this directly to your congregation or denominational conferences. Visit [www.theEFC.ca/speakers](http://www.theEFC.ca/speakers) to find the broad variety of topics available.

## What We Need to Know: EFC research can help us understand church trends in Canada

**A**s an EFC donor, do you wonder what is going on with evangelical churches in Canada? Are we doing better than other churches? It seems like it. Why is that?

In the EFC's work – made possible by partners like you – we gather Evangelicals together for impact, influence and identity in ministry and public witness. And we are learning many fascinating things about Canadian churches. Rick Hiemstra (RH) is the EFC's Director of Research. He shares his latest insights on church and culture, and what we need to know.

**CW:** In 2013 the EFC did a survey with Angus Reid that revealed all kinds of interesting insights into Canadian churches. One of which was the shifting idea of what a "regular attendee" looks like. What does regular mean?

**RH:** Everyone's saying that monthly or a couple of times a month is normal, but it's really a very small group. The group that is growing is those who never attend. You have very few people who are partially committed – most people are now either all-in (and attending weekly) or basically uncommitted. The perceived social benefit to religious participation is not there anymore. You might actually say there is a social cost.

There's a change in the way we view church. A lot of people go to church now because of what they get out of it. It's a transactional thing. They are there to receive, and if they are not receiving, their commitment to their congregation quickly evaporates.

**CW:** What message can a Canadian evangelical church take from this? We tend to think evangelical congregations are doing better than others.

**RH:** Yes, we are doing better. But that doesn't mean we are doing great. We're increasingly finding ourselves on the periphery of the culture. That is because there is a new and fairly aggressive civil religion. I call it 'WYRA' which is short for "Who You Really Are." The central problem for our culture is not that you're separated from God, but that you lack the knowledge of your true identity. Our culture preaches that when we discover who we really are, we will discover a super hero or someone who is perfect. Christians say who you really are is a sinner and that you need to be changed from who you really are into the image of Christ. This is the heart of the conflict that we're experiencing with our culture.

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**CW:** So, what's a church to do?

**RH:** We need to be making the argument that we're not actually wonderful, that we're sinners and we need to have a change in who we are. And that change has to be Christ.

**CW:** What else have you been researching, and what's next?

**RH:** We're seeing a growing number of people who, when asked about typical Christian theology, say they don't know. Either they're not connected into a church or they don't consider these questions significant enough to have an opinion. You get answers like "right or wrong is based mostly on what I feel." This points to the idea of a religion that is subjective.

We are working on a research project on the global missions engagement of local evangelical churches. We're looking at how people think about global missions and their participation. Typically, it's give, pray or go. We are trying to strengthen churches' engagement with missions and bring some clarity around the goals of mission trips.

**CW:** Any last thoughts for our donors?

**RH:** We often try to discount the importance of attendance numbers, but weekly attenders are crucial, they run your programs, they give. Our data shows there are a lot of traditions where attenders are older and going to be exiting.

A lot of churches take comfort in high levels of affiliation – those people who say they belong but don't attend – but affiliates don't run your churches. Commitment is like a ladder. The first rung is affiliation and the higher rungs are participation of some kind. The people who participate through attendance are qualitatively different in all kinds of things: giving, volunteering in and out of the church – they even have different health profiles. They are different than everybody else.

**CW:** Thank you, Rick!

## CONNECTING WITH YOU DIRECTLY



**WEBINARS**  
Answer important  
questions from  
Canadian Christians

Two EFC webinars are now available online. You can listen to a presentation on euthanasia or religious freedom anytime at [www.theEFC.ca/webinararchive](http://www.theEFC.ca/webinararchive).

Bruce J. Clemenger, president of the EFC, is briefly interviewed on each topic, and then answers questions from participants who email in their thoughts during the live taping.

The questions listeners sent in reveal very real concerns about the practical and ministry-related implications of living in a changing Canada.

- Do we need to be worrying about charitable status for churches in Canada?
- What if I'm asked to attend an event through my work that I'm not comfortable with? Can I say no?
- How do we support religious freedom in other places?
- If the Bible says we'll be persecuted, should we be worrying about religious freedom in the first place?

**The next EFC webinar will take place on  
August 27, 2015 at 1:00 pm (EST).**



Rick Hiemstra, Director of Research for the EFC, will share recent statistics and fresh research that will give pause – and a much-needed perspective on what it means to be the Church in Canada today. Your questions and insights will be welcome during the webinar.

**Register and find out about upcoming webinars anytime at [www.theEFC.ca/webinars](http://www.theEFC.ca/webinars).** And thank you for your gifts that help us provide this invaluable information and support directly to Christians across the country!



## Is your congregation an EFC affiliate?

**I**t's a win-win. When your congregation affiliates:

- You take your stand with the EFC's work to bring a respectful and biblical perspective to governments and courts across Canada and especially our federal government
- You join us as we monitor and address religious freedom issues in Canada and promote prayer and intervention for persecuted Christians around the world
- Your church and pastor are strengthened through resources, seminars and workshops made possible by the EFC

**And when more congregations join us as affiliates, the EFC grows even stronger. We can continue to:**

- Build positive relationships with government leaders and engage in government consultations
- Encourage partnerships among our affiliates
- Provide seminars and resources to facilitate more effective ministry and public witness
- Be an evangelical voice to Canada's media
- Connect regularly with MPs from all parties by providing helpful documents and briefing sessions
- Seek protection for the vulnerable (unborn, children/youth, elderly, marginalized)
- Promote religious freedom

**Speak to your pastor or church leadership today about EFC affiliation. We can help! Call 1-866-302-3362 or email [affiliationinfo@theEFC.ca](mailto:affiliationinfo@theEFC.ca) for more information.**

**Sept/Oct  
Issue**

**Coming up in Canada's Christian magazine**

**Here's some of what you will find in the Sept/Oct issue of *Faith Today*:**

- One of Canada's best-known (and maybe most outspoken) Evangelicals, John G. Stackhouse Jr., delves into evangelicalism in Canada today. What is working? What needs to change?
- Ministry in Canada's poorest postal code. Our writer portrays the plight of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and tells us how Christian volunteers are making a difference.
- Inside the world of short-term missions. Editor Karen Stiller visits Cambodia for a Samaritan's Purse water project and gains some insights into short term mission trips.

**Call toll free 1.866.302.3362 to subscribe to *Faith Today*.**



**On Parliament Hill**



## Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

◆ The EFC has met several times with Citizenship and Immigration Canada in support of a joint initiative by evangelical denominations working to settle refugee families from Iraq and Syria. The Canadian government would like to settle 3,000 refugees from Iraq this year and 10,000 from Syria over the next three years. Several EFC affiliate denominations are promoting the idea of settling refugees among congregations. The EFC, with your help, is working with the denominations to mobilize congregations and ensure the process is as smooth as possible.

◆ In a quick and disappointing decision, the Ontario Superior Court ruled the Law Society of Upper Canada could indeed choose not to accredit Trinity Western University's (TWU) proposed law school. TWU will appeal the decision. A similar case earlier this year had the opposite result – the Nova Scotia Supreme Court ruled against the Law Society of Nova Scotia and in favour

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of TWU. A third such case will be heard later this summer, involving the B.C. Law Society. The EFC is intervening in these cases to defend religious freedom, along with Christian Higher Education Canada, which represents evangelical colleges, universities and seminaries.

◆ With a fall federal election scheduled, EFC staff are working on our election kit. The kit will highlight questions on critical issues that voters can ask candidates, as well as guidelines for churches on what they can and cannot do during elections. We will keep EFC donors updated on the kit's progress.



Did you know that supporting the EFC is as easy as collecting **Air Miles**?

You can help reduce our travel costs just by using an EFC **Air Miles** card!

[www.theEFC.ca/airmiles](http://www.theEFC.ca/airmiles)  
or call toll-free 1-866-302-3362



The *Faith Today* blog posts exclusive new material several times per week, following up on important issues raised in Canada's Christian magazine. Visit [blog.faithtoday.ca](http://blog.faithtoday.ca)



Join the conversation and like us on Facebook.  
[www.facebook.com/theEFC](http://www.facebook.com/theEFC)

## In Your Own Words

We so appreciate hearing from you. Thank you for your encouragement. Here are some recent notes we have received.



*"Thank you for doing what most of us simply cannot do. Thanks for giving voice to us in the courts."*

*"Thank you for your ministry to our nation. Our prayers continue to be with you the staff for wisdom and sensitivity and boldness in the decision-making and effectiveness in the outreach. May God continue to bless."*



We remember each donor's request in prayer every Thursday when we gather as staff for weekly devotions.



One small step you can take to strengthen Canada is to spread **Canada Watch**.

Request extra copies to distribute to your friends or church members at  
1-866-302-3362 or email  
[gardone@theEFC.ca](mailto:gardone@theEFC.ca).



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*The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is the national association of Evangelicals, gathered together for influence, impact and identity in ministry and public witness. Since 1964 the EFC has provided a national forum for Evangelicals and a constructive voice for biblical principles in life and society.*