

# CanadaWatch

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## Can we prevent euthanasia laws from softening?

A recent Quebec court decision could signal major changes to the medical assistance in dying (MAID) law in Canada. In the September 2019 *Truchon* decision, the court struck down the requirement that a person's death must be "reasonably foreseeable" to be eligible for MAID.

The decision won't take effect until March 2020, to allow the government to put a new provision in place if it so chooses.

Disability advocates are gravely concerned about this change. They believe people with severe disabilities, who may already have trouble accessing the medical and social supports they need, are likely to feel more pressure to end their lives.

During the election most party leaders stated their intentions to soften the MAID law and expand the Quebec decision across the country.

The EFC is dismayed that this decision could lead to the removal of a key safeguard. The EFC is strongly opposed to euthanasia and assisted suicide. We urged the government in 2016, if it was going to go ahead with legislation, to include the strictest possible safeguards and limits.

"Reasonably foreseeable" is not a precise term, but at least it made clear the intention of the law that a person had to be dying in order to be eligible for MAID. That clause helped to provide needed protection for vulnerable Canadians.



When the MAID legislation was originally debated, many Canadians expected the new law would be limited to individuals who were dying. However, removing the "reasonably foreseeable" requirement will end that limitation.

The "reasonably foreseeable" requirement had also been the subject of another court challenge over in British Columbia. Julia Lamb, a 25-year-old with spinal muscular atrophy, and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association launched a challenge days after the MAID law passed in June 2016.

But in September 2019 an expert witness for the federal government, who was defending the law, submitted a report stating that "reasonably foreseeable" was flexible enough wording that Julia Lamb would already be considered eligible for

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### How you can be involved:

- Pray for wisdom, grace and courage for our elected leaders.
- Write the prime minister and your local MP to ask that any changes preserve the strongest possible safeguards and eligibility limitations, as well as strong, specific conscience protection for health care workers. For tips, see [www.TheEFC.ca/Engagement2019](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Engagement2019) and [www.TheEFC.ca/MAID](http://www.TheEFC.ca/MAID).
- Pray for protection for vulnerable Canadians, and consider reaching out to neighbours who may need support, such as people living with disabilities, in long-term care or in a hospice/palliative care program.



MAID by some medical professionals.

The report explained Julia Lamb's life would be at risk if she refused medical care, and if she stated an intention to refuse medical care that would be enough for some MAID providers to consider her eligible for MAID.

We expect changes to be proposed soon after Parliament resumes on December 5. The proposed changes are likely to remove the requirement that a person's death be "reasonably foreseeable" so that the federal law aligns with the Quebec court decision. It's also possible that a proposed change may expand who is eligible for MAID, for example, by removing the requirement that a person must be able to consent at the time of their death and allowing MAID by advance request.

An amended law on MAID may also expand eligibility to mature minors or people who have solely psychological illness.

If the law is going to change, it is important to ask MPs to include the strongest possible safeguards and limit who is eligible for MAID. This may also be the time to ask MPs to include strong, specific conscience protection so health care workers are not compelled to be involved in MAID against their deeply held beliefs.

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**Vice-President appointed to international work**

David Guretzki, executive vice-president and resident theologian of the EFC, has been selected to help shape the global work and mission of the World Evangelical Alliance by serving on its international council. He and the fellow members of the council were commissioned at a recent international gathering in Jakarta, Indonesia. Guretzki attended the November meetings along with Joel Gordon, the EFC's creative director, and Bill Fietje, chair of the EFC board.



# EFC Ambassadors share EFC message across Canada

Here's a helpful overview of some of our EFC Ambassadors, who are helping to introduce more Canadians to the EFC and its mission across Canada. We asked them for the top thing they tell people who ask about the EFC.



**JASON JAIRAM – Vancouver, BC**

"The EFC's mission is to unite the true body of Christian believers by providing resources, research and being a forum and constructive voice for biblical principles in all aspects of Canadian life."



**NEIL SIEMENS – Innisfail, AB**

"The EFC is doing important work relating to religious freedom, conscience protection in health care, parental rights in education, sanctity of life, MAID, palliative care, and unregulated abortion. The EFC's research on pornography and the recent *Renegotiating Faith* report are examples of how we equip and empower the Canadian Church."



**ADAM DRISCOLL – Moose Jaw, SK (also an EFC board member)**

"Human flourishing is at the heart of the gospel, and it is good news for all. Jesus speaks, 'I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.' My vision as an EFC Ambassador is to encourage people, as in 2 Corinthians 5, to receive God's ministry of reconciliation and likewise become ambassadors of peace and flourishing in Canada."



**WAYNE DURKSEN – Warman, SK**

"Kids matter. Every young person in Canada deserves an opportunity to encounter the living Christ. For sure, effective parents, families and churches can make a difference if we understand and address the influences shaping the beliefs of our kids."



**STÉPHANE COUTURE – Quebec City, QC**

"I talk about Scripture and how it impacts our lives today and specifically how it informs the work and mission of the EFC. I enjoy sharing updates about the issues the EFC contends with; and how we are working together to impact life and society for the good in Canada."



**SHELDON MACLEOD – Moncton, NB**

"The EFC loves and serves the local church. We do that elevating their local voice to federal leaders, connecting ministries, and through leading research and resources such as *Renegotiating Faith* that help churches reach their communities for Jesus."

**>> TO BOOK A EFC AMBASSADOR EMAIL – [speakers@TheEFC.ca](mailto:speakers@TheEFC.ca)**



## Note From Executive Vice-President David Guretzki

What an experience it was to attend the recent international gathering of the World Evangelical Alliance in Jakarta, Indonesia. Standing in a packed convention centre and worshipping our God together with hundreds of Evangelicals

from around the world was an experience I will always remember. It was also wonderful to hear from our brothers and sisters from so many other countries who look to the EFC for inspiration in bringing together and working with a wide range of affiliates and also, of course, our work of bringing a biblical and compassionate voice to the issues that matter to us. Please know that your support of the work and mission of the EFC makes us a strong beacon of light even beyond our borders. Thank you.



## Peace and Reconciliation Network available to help Canadian churches

**T**he Peace and Reconciliation Network (PRN) is a global initiative of the World Evangelical Alliance, the global evangelical family of which the EFC is a partner. The PRN serves churches and organizations to strengthen peacemaking and reconciliation as a central component of whole and biblical mission.

The polarized, conflicted reality of life is evident everywhere these days, in our political climate, family situations, neighbourhoods, schools and churches. How can Canadian Evangelicals respond?

The PRN believes evangelical Churches are uniquely positioned to respond to polarized 21st century life. How is your local church learning and embracing the ministry of reconciliation that God has gifted you with? The PRN can help, by providing peace and reconciliation training and network leaders engaged in this ministry for greater effectiveness and mission synergy.

EFC affiliates and friends who want to learn more, to share their work of peace and reconciliation, to network with others, or to book a PRN speaker can contact PRN North American Director Phil Wagler in Kelowna, B.C., using the email below.



AN INITIATIVE OF THE  
WORLD EVANGELICAL  
ALLIANCE (WEA)

Phil Wagler, North American Director – [phil.wagler@weaprn.org](mailto:phil.wagler@weaprn.org)



## Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Civic engagement:** An election provides new opportunities to reach out and develop a relationship with your MP. Send a message of congratulations to your MP even if you didn't vote for them. Pray for your MP, the prime minister and the cabinet. Find how to contact your MP at [www.ourcommons.ca/Members/en/search](http://www.ourcommons.ca/Members/en/search).

■ **Medical assistance in dying:** A court decision in Quebec has struck down the requirement that a patient's death be "reasonably foreseeable" in order to be eligible for assisted death, effective March 2020. The prime minister has said he will introduce federal legislation in response to this decision. The EFC is preparing to argue for protection for vulnerable Canadians and the strongest possible safeguards. Contact your MP using the sample letter at [www.TheEFC.ca/MAID](http://www.TheEFC.ca/MAID).

■ **Prostitution:** Canada's laws on prostitution will soon be reviewed in Parliament. These laws target sex buyers and pimps, based on the view that that prostitution is inherently violent and exploits women and children. Pro-prostitution groups are asking for prostitution to be decriminalized. The EFC is developing resources

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that defend and support existing laws. Contact your MP using the sample letter at [www.TheEFC.ca/Prostitution](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Prostitution).

■ **Religious accommodation:** The EFC has asked Elections Canada to recommend a change to the fixed election date so it is less likely to fall on a religious holy day. The 2019 federal election fell on the Jewish holy day Shmini Atzeret. EFC Executive Vice-President David Guretzki wrote, "This change of date would not adversely impact our faith community and would make a significant positive difference in the lives of observant Canadian Jews.... No Canadian should have a harder time exercising their democratic right to vote because of their faith." [www.TheEFC.ca/Letters](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Letters)

■ **Refugee booklet:** Our new, free booklet on how to sponsor and support refugees in Canada will soon be available. Full of practical tips and information, the booklet also walks through related biblical teaching. [www.TheEFC.ca/Refugees](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Refugees)

■ **Quebec Bill 21:** The EFC is looking into the possibility of intervening in a court challenge off Quebec Bill 21. This law bans government employees in a position of authority, including school-teachers and police officers, from wearing any religious symbols. The EFC considers Bill 21 a violation of religious freedom. [www.TheEFC.ca/QuebecBill21](http://www.TheEFC.ca/QuebecBill21)

## Heart and hands

*Bill Fledderus is a senior editor at the EFC magazine Faith Today. He also supervises EFC communications online, in social media and several other periodicals. In this new Canada Watch feature, we are asking members of the EFC team to share with you an insight about their work and how they experience first-hand the impact of your generosity on the Church and the public square in Canada.*



Recently, my work at the EFC has included helping a retired missionary and professor from Abbotsford, B.C., with an essay about healing. He emailed out of the blue wanting to write about how Christians respond when prayers for healing seem unanswered. He had already interviewed several people. He also said he is living with ALS, a degenerative disease.

Faith Today receives at least 150 emails per week, mostly unusable media releases and article proposals. But this query showed intelligence, faith and ability to write well. We responded by feeling out how well the writer might treat this topic with balance and fairness, and then got to work. Several weeks of back and forth have produced an essay that can be a faithful discussion starter across many denominational traditions.

Faith Today is not the only way for the diverse Body of Christ in Canada to share insights, wisdom, news and much more. But as more communication channels around us become shallow, narrow and sometimes twisted by bias, the need for thoughtful, balanced Christian journalism only becomes clearer.

We can only address that need because of the support of EFC donors and magazine advertisers. Taking the time to communicate well – to think, research, write, inspire, entertain, edit, design and deliver with excellence for the glory of God and in service to His Church – comes with a cost. Thank you for sustaining us in this crucial mission.

## The EFC gathers Canadian presidents in Montreal

Once a year the EFC invites its affiliate leaders to a day of learning. This year EFC Presidents Day drew 94 people, including denominational leaders, educational leaders, ministry leaders, guests from a nearby Church Planting Canada event, along with EFC board members, staff and invited speakers. Affiliate leaders were encouraged to bring along younger leaders to the day to participate in the discussions. "It was very encouraging to be able to report back to our affiliate leaders about EFC activities and also to hear from them," says David Guretzki, executive vice-president and resident theologian of the EFC.

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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.

