

CanadaWatch

CENTRE FOR FAITH & PUBLIC LIFE

The EFC in the courts and on Parliament Hill.

SPOTLIGHT

A quick guide to Motion M103 on Islamophobia and religious discrimination.

EFC RESOURCES

Your response to our *Faith Today* offer is encouraging. Thank you!

Evangelicals came together to help refugees. Your support is helping!

There was one topic on everyone's mind at the EFC's annual President's Day gathering in November 2014. Evangelical leaders from across Canada voiced deep concern for the displacement of millions of Syrian and Iraqi refugees fleeing war and conflict.

Many of these leaders were already taking steps to enlist their individual denominations and churches in Middle Eastern refugee sponsorship. The EFC drew up a joint "Statement of Intent" for Middle Eastern refugee sponsorship to be signed by denominational leaders that communicated to Canadians and the Canadian government our collective commitment to action.

"On that President's Day, we saw the power of coming together, unified, on an issue of pressing concern," remembers Bruce J. Clemenger, EFC president. "We

were uniting to bless Canada, and in this case a very troubled part of the world, and welcoming our newest Canadian neighbours in the name of Jesus. It was almost two years ago that Clemenger, along with some denominational leaders, visited Chris Alexander, the minister of immigration at the time, to deliver the carefully crafted statement. That was just the beginning.

The EFC went on to help refugee partnerships by facilitating a working group of denominational Sponsorship Agreement Holders. This group includes those directly involved in refugee sponsorship, leaders of refugee-support and resettlement agencies and those who engage with government on this issue.

Canada has now welcomed more than 40,000 refugees from the Middle East. Canadian evangelical churches from



coast to coast have begun the difficult but rewarding task of helping Syrian and Iraqi refugees create homes, learn English, find work, and settle their children into schools and communities. Church communities come with a built-in ability to welcome and help stabilize these traumatized families in their new homes, providing resources and support.

"That kind of structure makes church groups a perfect landing spot for traumatized families who have fled war and persecution," says Clemenger.

We intuitively know, and studies repeatedly show, that this type of refugee settlement experience – of welcome into community by private sponsorship groups – is very different

... continued on page 2

What you can do...

- Read the *Faith Today* article "What churches are learning as they sponsor refugees" from the Sept/Oct 2016 issue, available at www.FaithToday.ca/LearningRefugees.
- Because many families have already arrived, ask a local sponsoring church how you can help with the resettlement

process by helping to meet practical needs and offering friendship.

- Watch for an upcoming resource and discussion booklet on refugees produced by the EFC. You can check for updates and resources on a variety of topics anytime at www.TheEFC.ca.



from that of many Government Sponsored Refugees. The relationships established in private sponsorship are likely to continue far beyond the official one-year commitment sponsors make to their refugees.

So how many refugees have been sponsored by Canadian evangelical churches since 2015?

The evangelical denominations that signed the Statement of Intent represent about 5 percent of Canadians. We estimate that the number of refugees sponsored by evangelical churches represents approximately 19% of all Blended Visa office-referred and Privately Sponsored Syrian and Iraqi Refugees who came to Canada between November 2015 and January 2, 2017. Proportionately, that is almost four times as many as our numbers – demonstrating our concern and commitment to help.

Canadian evangelical churches have been a significant part of the Canadian Middle Eastern refugee sponsorship story, helping to provide new homes and lives to many displaced individuals, and providing the important but often overlooked element – a welcoming community.

"It has been amazing to watch how churches have come together and welcomed refugees into their midst," says Clemenger. "It's not an easy task. There is a myriad of paperwork to complete, a sometimes-arduous process of being approved as sponsors and then waiting for the family to be approved at the other end. There are significant funds to raise, apartments to find and furnish, and that's all before the family actually arrives. When they land, we are hearing from churches that is when the real work, and of course the real reward, begins."

For the EFC, the conversation of common concern that began that President's Day grew into common action and a network of encouragement and support to empower individual churches and denominations as they embarked on the journey of sponsoring refugees, sometimes for the very first time.



A quick guide to Motion M103 on Islamophobia and religious discrimination

Canadians are hearing many different responses, often polarized, to the proposed Motion M103 on Islamophobia and religious discrimination. The EFC is carefully evaluating this proposal and considering its strengths, weaknesses and how best to respond. We have also heard from many Canadians from across the country that are concerned about the potential impact of this motion.

Here is a summary:

M103 is a private members motion introduced by MP Iqra Khalid in December 2016. M103 is not legislation and does not propose any law that would criminalize speech. It is a motion asking the House of Commons to recognize a problem and study it.

If passed, the motion would express the opinion of the House of Commons that:

- The government should condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination.
- The government should ask the Heritage Committee to study how to reduce and eliminate systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia.

The EFC's response

We have issued an official statement on M103 and on the term Islamophobia, and created a brief video of Bruce Clemenger responding (all at www.TheEFC.ca/M103).

We are concerned that motion M103 uses the term "Islamophobia."

- We recommend the term Islamophobia be deleted from the motion or replaced by a term like "anti-Muslim hatred."
- The EFC generally supports a study of religious discrimination, as proposed in the motion. Such a study could include issues like conscience protection and the accreditation of TWU's law school. However, we cannot support M103 in its current form.

"The EFC is speaking on this issue with the voice it is known for – compassionate, constructive and biblical."

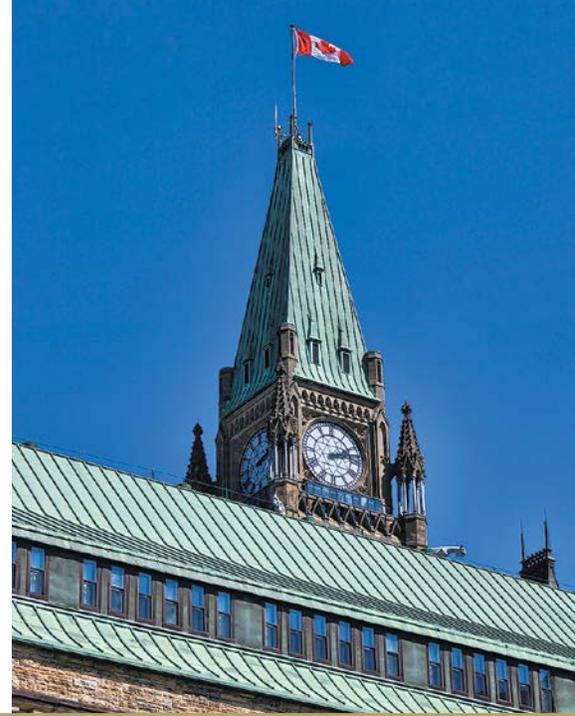
The EFC is speaking on this issue with the voice it is known for – compassionate, constructive and biblical. EFC President Bruce Clemenger is urging all Canadian Christians to take this time to show the love of Christ for our neighbours of other faiths, especially in the wake of such disturbing and tragic incidents as the recent shootings at a Quebec mosque and an increase in anti-Semitic threats and incidents.



Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

Are these updates – helping refugees and responding to Motion M103 – a contradiction? Not at all. The focus of our laws is the protection of people, including their freedom to live out their faith. Our laws, however, do not protect the beliefs themselves. Our courts do not take sides in determining which beliefs are true and which are false. Rather, they protect the rights of people and communities to express their faith, unless the expression is incompatible with maintaining a free and democratic society. Canada has always been home to a spectrum of religious beliefs, and the EFC has always worked hard to protect the religious freedom of all, for we all share the same freedoms.

We care for vulnerable people and we seek to steward and protect our cherished freedoms. We are here in Ottawa, interacting with M103 and continuing our work encouraging networks and churches helping refugees. Both are possible. Both are essential. Thank you for your help.



You are supporting religious freedom in Canada with the EFC's intervention in an upcoming case

The EFC will be at work, because of your help and support, to protect the religious freedom of Canadian doctors who do not wish to participate in assisted suicide and euthanasia. **We have been granted intervener status**, along with the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario and the Christian Legal Fellowship, in the upcoming College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) case to support the rights of physicians to not participate in physician-hastened death.

The case will be a judicial review at the Ontario Divisional Court. The EFC's intervention will support the five physicians and three physician groups, including EFC-affiliate Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada (CMDS), who are bringing this challenge.

The EFC is opposing a policy in Ontario that forces doctors to provide referrals for euthanasia and assisted suicide against their conscientious objections. The loss of conscience protection in our largest province could set a precedent for other



Canadian jurisdictions. Here is a reminder of what Canadian Christians need to know about this case:

- Federal legislation states that no one should be compelled to participate in euthanasia or assisted suicide.
- In Ontario, the CPSO policy requires doctors to give referrals to patients who want euthanasia or assisted suicide.
- Currently, doctors who uphold the sanctity and dignity of human life from conception to natural death may face the difficult choice of capitulating or leaving the profession.

Your financial gifts and prayerful support have brought us to this point. We are at work on preparing a detailed and effective set of legal arguments (a factum), and we will be present in court. Please continue to pray for this important case as we work to protect both religious freedom and life itself in Canada.

Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Pornography:** Motion M47, which calls on the Health Committee to study the public health effects of sexually violent degrading images online, is now before the parliamentary health committee. The EFC has encouraged a thorough and complete study which the committee plans to hold in April, with a report due to Parliament by July 2017. The EFC submitted a brief to the Committee. We have been hard at work sharing information and research on the public health impact of Internet pornography, and will also create a resource booklet and study guide on the issue of pornography that will be available in late spring for churches and individuals.

■ **Religious Freedom:** The EFC participated in the Call to Conscience campaign, urging Ontario residents to contact their MPPs to ask them to protect the conscience rights of doctors opposed to euthanasia and assisted suicide. Meanwhile the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) is already forcing doctors to participate by providing a referral, despite their objections, when a patient decides to end their life. No other country does this. The EFC has been granted intervener status in a case that challenges the CPSO policy.

...continued on page 3

The Supreme Court of Canada has agreed to hear two appeals regarding Trinity Western University as this EFC affiliate continues to seek accreditation in all provinces for future graduates of its proposed law school. The EFC continues to stand with TWU in these cases.

■ **Palliative care:** The EFC supported much-needed attention to palliative care in a written submission in support of private member's Bill C-277. This bill would require the Health Minister to set up a palliative care framework, collect data, and identify education and training needs. Bill C-277 is being reviewed by the health committee.

■ **Euthanasia:** The EFC will seek intervener status in the Lamb case out of B.C., a challenge to the new euthanasia laws in Canada by some who want the laws expanded. The lawsuit is trying to eliminate the provision that requires someone's death to be "reasonably foreseeable." If successful, a person would not need to be terminally ill and near death to receive assisted suicide or euthanasia.

■ **Religious discrimination:** The EFC has provided analysis of Motion M103 and a sample letter that concerned citizens can use to write to their MPs. The EFC also issued a statement denouncing the horrific attack against Muslims at prayer in Quebec earlier this year, expressing our vigorous commitment to strive for tolerance and respect for all.

Your response to our *Faith Today* offer is encouraging. Thank you!

Thank you to the *Canada Watch* readers who are saying "yes!" to our special half-price subscription offer to *Faith Today*, Canada's Christian magazine. Although you may pick up a copy at your church for free, we are asking you to consider leaving that copy for someone else, and pay for your own to be delivered right to your home.

Why?

- When you pay for *Faith Today*, you are helping us keep Christian print journalism alive and well in Canada. Christian journalism plays a vital role in our country, telling stories no other media tells.
- Christian journalism brings the national Church together, sharing inspiration on



how we can bless Canada in the name of Jesus in creative and significant ways.

- Christian journalists are an essential part of the fabric of religious freedom in Canada. They protect the Church, while sometimes still calling it to accountability and growth. Your subscription supports them.

Canada Watch readers can subscribe to *Faith Today* for only \$14.99 a year.

The editors, Bill Fledderus and Karen Stiller, would love to call you to thank you personally when you sign up.

Call toll-free at 1.866.302.3362 or visit www.FaithToday.ca/CanadaWatch and subscribe today. Thank you!

Warm words from donors

We appreciate you, our donors, so much. Your faithful, financial participation in the mission of the EFC to bless Canada in the name of Jesus (in a myriad of ways) makes it all possible. We are partners together. Here is an encouraging word we received recently from a friend to the EFC.

"God bless you and provide His protection, wisdom and discernment as you stand in the gap protecting our religious freedom... We become disheartened until your newsletter arrives encouraging us to take action with you by writing our MPP & MP. Thank you!"

FT The Faith Today blog posts exclusive new material several times per week, following up on important issues raised in Canada's Christian magazine. Blog.FaithToday.ca

f Join the conversation and like us on Facebook. www.Facebook.com/TheEFC

 **EFC** The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Box 5885 West Beaver Creek Post Office,
Richmond Hill, ON L4B 0B8 Canada
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.

