

September 2014

October 14 & 15

Dear Friend,

Two days in October. Mark your calendar. Two consecutive days in October have profound implications for ongoing and essential discussions that will impact the future of religious freedom and the value of human life in our nation for years to come.

On October 14 and 15, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada will help to shape the outcome of landmark cases before the Supreme Court of Canada. The cases involve euthanasia (*Carter v. Canada*) and religious freedom (*Saguenay*).

I will briefly unpack each case for you and then explain why it is so essential that the EFC is present. I am going to offer you three simple (and creative) ways at the end of this letter for how your voice can be heard and how you can be a powerful partner in these interventions.

## Mark October 14th on your calendar to protect religious freedom

The EFC will be heard in a case that is both very local and very national. The right for a group of city councillors in Saguenay, Quebec to open their meetings with prayer is being challenged all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Why does this matter? It is not that a city council must, or even should, open a meeting with prayer. We're not trying to rewind Canada back to the 1950s. We are long past that time. The point is that if a city council decides to pray for guidance and wisdom prior to a meeting, should the courts prevent them?

October 14

### PROTECT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**"This case has implications for any type of religious activity in a state-funded environment, such as a Christian group renting a publicly-owned auditorium for an event or a local church that meets in a school building."**

To remove a pre-meeting prayer as a legal option from a group of adults who wish to pray together is the state over-extending the concept of "neutral" ground into the ridiculous. It is not neutral for government or the courts to prohibit an activity – they are taking a stand. Neutral does not have to mean nothing.

True government neutrality in a pluralistic society seeks to be accommodating and respectful of diversity, which means everyone may have a place. This case has implications for any type of religious activity in a state-funded environment, such as a Christian group renting a publicly owned auditorium for

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an event or a local church that meets in a school building. The Supreme Court of Canada recognizes the implications of this case. That is why they are hearing it. That is why the EFC will be there.

If any kind of religious observance (Christian or otherwise) is unwelcome (and legally reinforced to be unwelcome) in Canada's public spaces, we will begin to see that thinking seep into other areas such as students meeting together for prayer in a public university, or chapels in airports, or prayers at Remembrance Day services.

With your help, the EFC will be there.

## **Mark October 15th on your calendar to protect human life**

The debate about euthanasia has never been settled and once again has reached a boiling point with the *Carter v. Canada* case. The case challenges Canada's longstanding laws that prohibit assisting another person to commit suicide.

*October 15*

### **PROTECT HUMAN LIFE**

**"The values we used to hold as unchanging (like the sanctity of life and the assumption that religion had a seat at the public table) are now seen as debatable, literally."**

Why does this matter? Our world view as Christ-followers demands that we show deep, unending compassion and that we care for the vulnerable and weak among us. In fact, Christians have always been at the forefront of the movement for hospitals, hospice and palliative care.

Of the Ten Commandments given to the Israelites one was "Thou shall not kill." We know that loving our neighbours as ourselves does not involve killing them when they are suffering. It means reaching out to comfort them.

The EFC brings the biblical principle of the sanctity of life as a deeply-rooted shared value that underpins the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* into this crucial Supreme Court case.

Remember, the experiences of other countries softening their laws against euthanasia show that this is the topic for which the term "slippery slope" could have been coined. If there really was a hill called the slippery slope – it would surely exist in the Netherlands or in Belgium where euthanasia against children was recently introduced.

Opening the door even further to euthanasia in Canada leads us to a place where our already precarious grasp on the value of human life in our country will lessen even more. The disabled will have to defend their right to life instead of owning it as an inherent right. In an already stretched medical care system the elderly and ill will have to fight for the right to live. And instead of being protected and cared for, the vulnerable will become numbers in a ledger and even more at risk of being harmed.

With your help, the EFC will be there.

## **Mark your calendar for two days in October**

These two days in October, and all the consequences that these cases imply, matter greatly. As part of the EFC family, you will know it is unusual for us to send you details of two different court cases in one letter.

Our team actually had a conversation about whether there was too much happening right now to present in one note to you. But we knew that you needed to know about both these cases and all they represent. If anything, these cases show us how it is more important than ever to take advantage of every opportunity that is made available to us to share the life-affirming principles in God's word with a clear and continuous voice.

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And if anything, the proximity in time and the importance in content are profound in themselves. Canada is changing. It is changing rapidly. The values we used to hold as unchanging (like the sanctity of life and the assumption that religion had a seat at the public table) are now seen as debatable, literally. They are debated widely, loudly and at every level, all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. And this time, it is happening over two days in October.

**We will be there. Here is what I am asking you to do:**

- 1 Literally mark your calendars for October 14 and 15 and on those days pray for these two cases. You might even say a quiet prayer in a public place as a symbol of your commitment to religion retaining its place in a free Canada.
- 2 On those two days, send a card, a note or a call to someone you know who is perhaps ill or very elderly and therefore vulnerable to potential changes in laws against euthanasia in Canada. Remind them of their value to you and to God.
- 3 Lastly, and very importantly, please make a donation to the EFC and help us be prepared for these two days in October. And all the days that will most surely and quickly come.

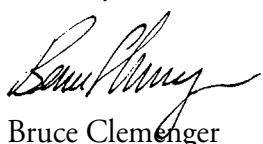
**"Well-intentioned laws and court decisions can still produce unintended consequences that can be harmful and directly impact people's lives. But that's not the way it has to be."**

You can help equip us to present the strongest cases possible, for these and in the future, by giving generously to the EFC's legal initiatives. Your donation is the well from which all our activity around these issues and more are drawn. Today that well is not dried up but the levels are lower than they should be for the five different court cases that the EFC will be involved in before the end of this year. The well of your financial support allows us to say "Yes! We will be there," when the EFC is called to bring biblical principles to matters of life, liberty and protection for the vulnerable in Canada and in landmark cases like these in the Canadian courts.

We have all experienced the slippery slope, when decisions made or policies are enacted that have negative consequences which were not anticipated by those involved. Fifty years has given the EFC a unique perspective, and we have seen the benefits that come from good decisions, as well as how well-intentioned laws and court decisions can still produce unintended consequences that can be harmful and directly impact people's lives. But that's not the way it has to be. The consequences of bad laws and poor decisions affect us all, just as good laws benefit everyone. This is why it is so critical that we are in the courts of Canada. Please support the EFC and help make your voice heard during our Two Days in October.

Thank you for joining with us once again.

Sincerely,



Bruce Clemenger

P.S. The slippery slope, we know what that looks like and what could happen. We have the opportunity to be there and the freedom to contribute to the debate and share a vibrant and affirming Christian vision of life. Please help our voice be strong.

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