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## Election 2015 – A Call to Prayer

### A call to prayer for Canada

With a federal election scheduled for October 19, the EFC encourages Christians to invite God to work in the hearts and minds of all Canadians as we consider the future of our country. As in each election, there are important issues at stake.

Canada needs strengthened families and secure marriages. Canada needs to protect its most vulnerable – children and youth, those living in poverty, those who are homeless or exploited, the unborn, seniors and those living with disabilities. Canada needs to share its blessings with the world, especially meeting commitments made to foreign relief and development work, and in welcoming refugees fleeing persecution and violence. And Canada needs a strong commitment to religious freedom domestically and internationally.

### Pray for rulers

As we are commanded in Scripture to pray for all those in authority, so that we may live lives of godliness and holiness (1 Timothy 2:2), we can ask God's blessing on our elected officials, and all those who will be elected. We can pray that Canada will be a nation that "exalts righteousness" (Proverbs 14:34).

### Pray for candidates

Elections are times for candidates to discover what is important to their constituents. Pray that candidates' eyes will be open to the principles that are vital to a healthy and productive society. Pray that candidates and their families will experience protection, wisdom and grace during this time of great stress for them.

### Pray for voters

Pray that voters will focus on the issues of central importance for building a just nation and that every potential voter will cherish and exercise the right to vote.

### Pray for a mission

Pray that God will lead us into a greater understanding of our role as citizens, and of our life together as a nation.

### Psalm 33:12-15, 20-22 (NIV)

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people he chose for his inheritance.  
From heaven the LORD looks down  
and sees all mankind;  
from his dwelling place he watches  
all who live on earth—  
he who forms the hearts of all,  
who considers everything they do.

We wait in hope for the LORD;  
he is our help and our shield.  
In him our hearts rejoice,  
for we trust in his holy name.  
May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD,  
even as we put our hope in you

## Understanding Canadian Elections

### Why is our electoral system the way it is? A five-point refresher.

1. The Canadian electoral system is modeled after a parliamentary system of government similar to that of the United Kingdom.

This system consists of three important parts:

- i. The Sovereign, represented in Canada by the **Governor General**.
- ii. The Upper House, or as it is commonly known, **The Senate**. Members of the Senate are appointed by the Governor General on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.
- iii. The Lower House, or **House of Commons**, consisting of members who are chosen by the citizens of Canada through the federal election process.

The **Governor General's** responsibility is to:

- ensure the continuity of government;
- summon Parliament;
- set out the government's program by reading the Speech from the Throne;
- give Royal Assent, which makes Acts of Parliament into law;
- sign official documents;
- meet regularly with the Prime Minister; and
- exercise his/her right to be consulted, to support and to caution.

The **Senate** acts as:

- a second review on government action and legislation proposed by the passage of a bill through the House of Commons;
- a 'historical' regional representative so that all areas of Canada will be represented;
- an investigative body engaged in detailed studies of complex or controversial issues.

The **House of Commons** is made up of representatives:

- who are a democratically elected body, consisting of 308 members (338 after this election), known as Members of Parliament (MPs).
- elected from geographical demarcations known as ridings (established through a formula set out in the Constitution), with one member chosen per riding.

2. In Canada's electoral system, the candidate with the most votes in each riding wins. This is referred to as a **first past the post** system. An absolute majority is not needed. The candidate with the most votes in any given riding will receive a seat in the House of Commons and becomes a **Member of Parliament** (MP).
3. A **political party** is a group of individuals who together endorse candidates for election to

the House of Commons. They also establish a constitution and bylaws, and elect a leader.

Each party may endorse only one **candidate** per riding. Candidates who run for election without party affiliation may be designated as independent or as having no affiliation.

To obtain the right to put the party name on the ballot, under the names of the candidates it endorses, a political party must register with the **chief electoral officer**.

After an election, the party with the most elected representatives usually becomes the **governing party**. The leader of this party becomes the Prime Minister of Canada and chooses people (usually MPs of his or her party) to head the various government departments. These department heads are referred to as **ministers**.

The party with the second largest number of MPs is called the **official opposition**. All the elected candidates have a seat in the House of Commons, where they vote on draft legislation (called **bills**) and thus have an influence on government policy.

4. All citizens age 18 and older have the right to vote and express their voice in choosing parliamentary representatives.
5. Voting is a responsibility and a privilege. Wise and informed choices ultimately lead to better representation, better government, and more effective leaders.

## Guidelines for Church Engagement in Elections

Whether it is federal, provincial, municipal or school board elections, your church can participate in the democratic process.

However, given that many churches are registered with the Canada Revenue Agency as charities with the ability to issue income tax receipts, there are certain considerations and policies that must be considered. The government has set out specific guidelines that outline the allowable political activities of charities.

### What churches can do

Here are five actions that churches can take to encourage their members to be responsible Christian citizens during an election:

1. Church members are encouraged to get to know the candidates, pray for them, and ask about issues of interest or concern. It is highly beneficial for members to become involved in the electoral process and to vote. During a federal election, the EFC publishes an election kit that provides information on federal jurisdiction issues of particular interest to Evangelicals.
2. As a charitable institution, a church must be non-partisan. In other words, a church may not endorse a particular candidate or political party, or use its resources to support a candidate or party (even if they attend your own church).
3. Church staff, volunteers or members of a church are free to engage in political activity outside the church, on their own time and/or with their own money.
4. Churches may invite all candidates to speak at the same event or service where the church meets. Churches can also organize an all-candidates' debate.
5. Churches are free to provide information on issues of interest or concern that flow from Biblical teaching, as long as the church does not link its views to any party or candidate. A church is also allowed to publish how **all** Members of Parliament, provincial representatives or municipal councillors or school board trustees voted on a given issue.

Get your congregation or faith community involved with election issues. Invite them to pray for the candidates, and consider how they can respond to God's call to justice through the election process.

Share information about all-candidates meetings and encourage people to vote!

Remember that your vote matters. The number of people who vote in an election can steadily increase if churches choose to get their congregations involved.

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Some actions, however, may put a church's charitable status at risk.

### What churches cannot do

1. Invite candidates to speak at different times, or at separate events or services.
2. Promote or oppose **any one** (or more) candidate or political party.
3. Post signs for a candidate or political party on church property.
4. Endorse a candidate or party from the pulpit.
5. Highlight or publish how one particular party or candidate voted on a given issue.
6. Distribute literature for **any one** candidate or party.
7. Encourage its members to vote for a particular candidate or party.
8. Link its views on issues of concern with those of a particular party or candidate.
9. Collect a church offering for a political candidate or a political party.

Churches that engage in prohibited activities such as partisan politics can face deregistration and lose their charitable status.

### What churches may do

Certain Canada Revenue Agency policies as well as certain provisions of the Income Tax Act permit a limited amount of "political activity" to be undertaken by churches that are registered charities.

A **political activity** is an activity that is non-partisan in nature, that is connected and subordinate to the church's charitable purposes, legal and which falls within the expenditures limits as prescribed by the Income Tax Act (more on this below). The Canada Revenue Agency considers a church's activity to be political when

- they explicitly communicate (regardless of the form) a call for political action;
- they explicitly communicate that a law, policy or government decision should be maintained, opposed or changed;
- their materials establish that the purpose of the activity is to incite, organize or pressure government representatives to maintain, oppose or change the law, policy or a government decision.

The government has set limits on expenditures and resources spent on advancing political activities. As the *Income Tax Act* requires that charities must devote "substantially all" of their resources to charitable activities, only the remainder can be spent on political activities. As "substantially all" has been interpreted to mean 90% or more, this means that a church can only spend 10% or less of its resources on political activities (smaller charities with annual incomes between \$50,000 and \$200,000 may spend a little more than the 10% limit, please

contact the Canada Revenue Agency for more information).

Resources spent include financial assets, as well as anything used to achieve these purposes such as use of the church/charity's premises, equipment, staff, volunteers and directors. Please note that resources used for political activities cannot be applied towards the church's disbursement quota requirements.

Some examples of political activities include:

1. Organizing a rally, march or public prayer gathering at or near a legislature or other prominent location in order to pressure government representatives to change or adopt a policy or position.
2. Buying space in a newspaper or magazine or buying radio time in order to promote a position that the church is supporting and attempting to pressure the government to change or adopt a policy or position.
3. Organizing a letter writing campaign for its members to pressure the government to change or adopt a policy or position.
4. Creating a mass mailing campaign to members to encourage them to contact the government to change or adopt a policy or position.
5. Preaching a sermon on a biblical principle and encouraging members to contact the government to encourage them to change or adopt a policy or position.

As long as the church itself remains non-partisan, individual members in their personal capacity are free to exercise their freedom of speech and their freedom of choice.

Encourage family, friends and other church members to value and make good use of their democratic right to vote, and to speak up about issues they are passionate about.

*This document is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. If you are unsure about a certain event or campaign, seek legal counsel and/or contact the Canada Revenue Agency directly.*

## Planning to Hold an All Candidates' Meeting

An increasing number of churches and ministry associations are organizing and holding all candidates' meetings during election campaigns. These are non-partisan events where all the candidates in the riding are invited to share their views and answer questions from the audience.

Partnering with other churches may maximize attendance and candidate participation. All-candidate meetings provide helpful information to church members and the local community about where their local candidates stand on issues of concern.

### Five steps to hold an all candidates' meeting

#### 1. Pick a **date!**

Choose a place, date and time for the meeting. At the very beginning of the election call (while candidates' calendars are still empty) is the best time to contact each candidate to make sure they are available that day.

#### 2. Plan the **meeting format**

- Choose a time limit for opening remarks from candidates (usually not more than 5 minutes) and the order the candidates will speak.
- Choose a time limit for questions and answer period (such as 1 hour or 40 minutes) and a time limit for each question and answer (e.g., 30 seconds for each question, one minute for the answer).
- Choose the candidate speaking order (e.g., alphabetical).
- Choose the closing remarks order (such as reverse order from opening remarks).
- Choose a time limit for closing remarks (usually not more than 3 minutes).

#### 3. Choose a moderator and a timekeeper

##### The **debate moderator:**

- Introduces candidates and moderates questions from the audience.
- Explains guidelines and schedule for the evening and makes sure the rules of the meeting are being followed.
- Remains neutral and does not get involved in questions or answers.
- Puts a stop to any personal attacks.

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The **timekeeper**:

- Monitors time and notifies the candidates and questioners of the time limits.
- Controls stopwatch and gavel or bell.
- Notifies candidates one minute (and perhaps again 30 seconds) before the end of the time limit for opening and closing remarks.

4. Send out the **invitations!**

- Send an invitation to each of the candidates in the riding, asking them to participate.
- Send them the guidelines and format for the evening.
- Ask them to provide a brief bio to help the moderator introduce them.
- Let them know there will be tables available for their literature and whether any signage will be permitted (and signage limitations).

5. **Advertise**

- Advertising your meeting is very important. People will need to hear about the event a number of times in order for it to be noted and remembered.
- Notify the local newspaper, deliver flyers in the community, and send a press release to the local media.
- Give the date, time and location of the meeting, and the names and party affiliation of the candidates.
- Inform your congregation of the meeting through a bulletin insert or announcement.

The most important thing to do is just start. You'll be surprised how details will start to come together after you begin.

## Tips for Holding an All Candidates' Meeting

### Set up

- A table (or tables) should be set-up in the foyer for each candidate's literature.
- Tables, chairs and microphones should be set up at the front of the auditorium (on a raised platform if available) for the candidates, with name and party signs that can be read from any seat in the auditorium. Provide water for the candidates. Have the candidates sit in alphabetical order according to surname.
- If possible arrange two floor microphones (numbered) or identified locations (if microphones not available) to be available for the audience, with questions alternating between microphones.

### Guidelines for the audience

The moderator should inform the audience of these guidelines at the beginning of the meeting:

- This meeting is an information forum, not a forum for debate.
- The candidates and parties have already formulated their position on issues.
- Candidates' response to intelligent and discerning questions will reveal their positions on issues of concern to the audience, who then will be able to make an informed decision at the ballot box.
- There is no need to voice your agreement or disagreement with the candidate's response. You can do that at the ballot box.
- No personal attacks will be permitted.
- A timekeeper (with a stopwatch and gavel or bell) will be appointed to monitor and notify candidates and questioners of time limits; the timekeeper will notify candidates one minute before the end of the time limit for opening and closing remarks.

### Advertising and Information

Deliver flyers in your neighbourhood two weeks in advance of the meeting, giving the date, time and location of the meeting, and the names and party affiliation of the candidates. Ideally an all candidates meeting should be scheduled approximately two weeks prior to the election.

Distribute a church bulletin insert two Sundays before the all candidates meeting, giving the time and date of the meeting, a list of the candidates and their parties, along with perhaps some of the information from the document "Sample questions for candidates." If the sample questions are distributed, a copy of the insert should be given to each candidate before the meeting.

Questions on issues could be prepared in advance by the church's social concerns committee, and made available on a table in the foyer for the audience before the meeting.

## Sample Schedule for an All Candidates' Meeting

### 7:30 p.m. start

Welcome and opening prayer requesting God's blessing and direction on the evening by the pastor.

Introduction of the moderator by the pastor.

Introduction of the candidates by the moderator from brief biographies provided by the candidates before the meeting.

Moderator explains the guidelines and schedule for the evening (provided to candidates prior to the meeting).

Opening remarks by candidates (between 2–5 minutes each – this will depend on number of candidates, timeline for meeting and duration of question and answer time); presentations made in alphabetical order according to surname.

Moderator opens the question and answer period:

- Each questioner must be recognized and acknowledged by the moderator, then state their name before posing one question.
- The questioner then identifies the candidate(s) to whom they wish to address the question.
- The questioner must state the question within 30 seconds and the candidate(s) must answer within one minute (or less).
- The moderator must remain neutral and must not get involved in the questions or answers, except to possibly reword the question in the interest of clarity.

You may wish to consider a question and answer period followed by a “lightning round” of “yes” or “no” questions. Provide each candidate with large coloured “yes” cards (e.g., green) and “no” cards (e.g., red). Have all candidates simultaneously respond to a series of five to ten yes or no questions by holding up the appropriate card. (See Factsheets below for samples of issues).

### 9:15 p.m. closing remarks

Candidates' closing remarks (up to 3 minutes each) in reverse order to opening remarks.

Moderator will direct anyone who did not have opportunity to voice their question(s) to see the candidates following the meeting at their individual literature tables in the foyer.

### 9:30 p.m. meeting ends

## Fact Sheet: Children and Youth in Government Care

Throughout Scripture God commands us to love our neighbour and care for the vulnerable, the needy and the oppressed (Matthew 25:34–40). Among those specifically identified are the fatherless: God is the father of the fatherless (Psalm 68:5), He defends the cause of the fatherless (Deuteronomy 14:29) and we are instructed not to deprive the fatherless of justice (24:17). We are instructed to take up the cause of the fatherless (Isaiah 1:17, Jeremiah 5:28) and the Apostle James says the religion that God accepts as true and faultless includes caring for the fatherless (James 1:27)

In Canada there are over 30,000 children and youth waiting to be adopted. Those who are not adopted will age out of the system, left to be on their own with no family, no community and typically no high school diploma or job prospects. They are parentless and often stigmatized, through no fault of their own. Many turn to shelters and the streets with nowhere else to go.

More and more families are in crisis, often resulting in more children entering the foster care system. But the child welfare system is already fragmented and fatigued. Rates of child poverty and the number of children reliant upon food banks are also growing.

In 2010 a House of Commons committee studied the issue of adoption and fostering and made 19 recommendations in the majority and minority reports. More recently, the Federal Government has altered the tax credit rules to make adoption more affordable.

There are no national standards or co-ordination of programs and services provided to children and youth who end up in the foster care system. Each province is different – there is no national standard for definitions of a child or services provided. There is a shortage of adoptive families and foster homes. Provincial advocates for children and youth and others have called for a national children’s commissioner and for co-ordinated national programs.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- What will you do to address the need for a permanent home faced by many Canadian children and youth? What are you doing to raise awareness about these “voiceless” citizens?
- Do you support a national review of programs that focus on children and youth, particularly those in government care?
- Do you support a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to addressing the complexity of the issues that children and youth are facing?
- Will your party and party leader commit to forming a national children and youth strategy across federal departments, in conjunction with provincial ministers and departments?

## Fact Sheet: Environmental Issues

### Caring for Creation

God's love and care for creation is evident throughout the Scriptures. It is also clear that God delights in His entire creation, not just the parts relevant or useful to people. All things in heaven and on earth, spiritual and physical, are His handiwork. Humans were not created separate from the physical creation. Rather, we are part of it. We were created by God along with all the other things and living creatures.

One key difference between us and the rest of creation is that God created humankind to be stewards (caregivers) of His creation. This task is part of our discipleship. Individually and collectively, we are accountable to God for what we do with and on this planet.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- What measures do you propose to care for and protect the environment in Canada?
- What measures do you propose to ensure Canada does its part to care for and protect the environment globally?

## Fact Sheet: Family Integrity

### What is a family?

God has established families to provide physical, emotional and spiritual care for their members.

The Bible teaches that marriage is a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman. It is the primary relationship within which children are born and nurtured. Marriage forms the foundation of families. God showed his intent for marriage in creation, and Jesus' teaching upheld this union of a man and a woman in marriage.

Canadian families are increasingly under stress. Family breakdown is common, with 40.7% of marriages statistically projected to end in divorce within 30 years. Common-law relationships fare worse – approximately 60% of common-law relationships break apart. Children are experiencing their parents' separation at increasingly younger ages.

The average age of Canadians is increasing as the “baby boom” generation reaches retirement years. As the Canadian population matures, aging parents become increasingly dependent on their adult children (often parents themselves) for assistance.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- Do you support a formal government review of how federal programs and policies have impacted the family?
- What policies do you propose to reduce the stress on families and target a decrease in the rate of family breakdown?
- What programs would you envision to assist families caring for aging parents or grandparents?

## Fact Sheet: Global Poverty Reduction

### Care for the Vulnerable Globally

As Christians, we are called to care for those living in poverty. We are also called to uphold the dignity of all persons. We can encourage our national leaders to do the same.

In 2000, Canada signed the Millennium Declaration, committing itself to achieve the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)), aimed at cutting severe global poverty in half by 2015. The eight MDGs Canada committed to were:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

For 2015 and beyond, the UN has proposed a set of sustainable development goals that will expand and build upon the MDGs. Governments, civil society and other partners will be invited to adopt them ([www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals)).

Canada also committed to increase its contribution to Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of its Gross National Income (GNI). In 2013, Canada's ODA dropped more than 11% to 0.27 percent GNI, due to exceptional payments made in 2012 for climate change and debt relief and to budget cuts affecting 2013. The 2014-2015 federal budget indicated that spending on humanitarian and development assistance would not change this fiscal year.

Canada has taken the lead on global initiatives to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health. In May 2014, Canada hosted a global summit calling world leaders and Canadian experts to increase efforts to eliminate preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- What steps will you take to ensure that global poverty reduction is a priority in Canada's international policy?
- Will you support Canada's adoption of the post-2015 sustainable development goals?
- Do you support the commitment to increase Official Development Assistance to 0.7% of Gross National Income? Will you commit to a timeline for achieving that goal, including interim targets?

## Fact Sheet: Indigenous Peoples

First Nations, Inuit and Métis occupy a special place in Canada due to their treaties, UN declared indigenous rights, and their protected status in the Canadian Constitution. The *British North America Act* upon which our *Constitution Act* was based states that the government is responsible for “Indians and lands reserved for Indians.”

The Federal Government is responsible for social services, education, infrastructure and all other programs and services on First Nations territories and has different but equally clear obligations toward Inuit and Métis as well. The issue of funding for First Nations education, social services and infrastructure is emerging as a key issue for Indigenous Peoples for the election.

Under previous funding arrangements, beginning in the early 1990s, a funding increase cap of two per cent was placed on First Nations budgets. The cap has remained in place since then, despite the increase in population and inflation outpacing the two per cent cap.

As a result the funding for First Nations education, for example, is lower by about \$3,500 per student on reserves than for students elsewhere funded by provincial governments. Funding for social programs is also an important factor in this election. According to the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, funding for child welfare is about 60 per cent of that for off-reserve funding.

Adding to this already challenging environment is the release, in June, of the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada – a multi-year exploration of the 150+ year impact of residential schools. The recommendations are wide-ranging, re-iterating much that has already been made public through the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal People in 1995.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- Do you agree that Canada has a constitutional fiduciary responsibility toward First Nations, Inuit and Métis people?
- What will you do to ensure Canada keeps its word with Indigenous Peoples in the future?
- How will you ensure consultation with First Nations people is not an after-the-fact notification of government policy, but is truly prior-consent in nature as required in the *Constitution Act*?
- What specific actions will you take to ensure that an investigation of missing and murdered Indigenous women takes place – one that is open and public in nature?
- How will you work with Indigenous communities to ensure equivalent per-capita

spending and infrastructure development to provide fair access to education for First Nations people?

- How will you ensure child welfare services for Indigenous Peoples are funded and supported in such a way as to ensure First Nations, Métis and Inuit people are assisted in their own provision and management of social services instead?
- What, specifically, what will you do to ensure that implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is done in an expeditious manner?

## Fact Sheet: Palliative Care

Life is a gift from God which should be respected and protected through all of its stages. Each human life has inherent worth, regardless of age or physical, mental or other abilities. Care for the sick and the elderly is part of God's call for Christians. Palliative care and emotional support are necessary and appropriate responses to those who suffer from terminal illnesses and/or are near death.

Studies of assisted suicide and euthanasia requests show that fear of death and anxiety about the dying process greatly influences the quality of a person's life and, ultimately, the quality of one's death.

Developed during the 1960s, palliative/hospice care consists of a holistic approach to a person's symptoms, and is concerned with relieving the patients' physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual suffering. Care involves a team of health professionals from different disciplines and volunteers who provide care and support for patients and their families. Its focus is on managing pain, alleviating symptoms and, most importantly, providing comfort and care for patients together with their families. It eases the path from life to death by helping people who are dying to live out their last days in the fullest way possible.

As an end-of-life treatment, palliative care addresses the psychological and existential factors that influence requests for assisted suicide and euthanasia. Palliative care targets the sources of a patient's anxiety, thereby renewing his or her will to live, the overall quality of his or her life and, ultimately, the quality of his or her death.

A Senate committee report has recommended greater support for palliative care funding and research to relieve pain and suffering. Most recommendations put forth have yet to be considered and implemented. And more recently – in November 2011 – a Parliamentary committee released a report, *Not to Be Forgotten: Care of Vulnerable Canadians* ([www.pcpcc-cpspsc.com](http://www.pcpcc-cpspsc.com)). This report details several recommendations for improving the availability and quality of palliative and end-of-life care.

Just last year (May 2014), the House of Commons voted overwhelmingly in support of a private member's motion (M-456) calling on the government to establish a Pan-Canadian Palliative and End-of-Life Care Strategy ([www.theEFC.ca/M456](http://www.theEFC.ca/M456)).

The Canadian Medical Association has also recently called for a national strategy to ensure quality palliative and end-of-life care is available to all Canadians.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- Currently only a small percentage of Canadians have access to palliative care. What steps will you take to ensure that all Canadians have access to quality palliative care?
- Will you support the establishment of a National Palliative Care Strategy?

## Fact Sheet: Poverty and Homelessness

### Care for the Vulnerable in Canada

As Christians, we are called to care for and bring good news to the poor and the vulnerable, and to uphold the dignity of all persons.

Poverty and homelessness are complex issues that defy a single, simple solution. Though there are common risk factors for homelessness – including family breakdown, violence, substance abuse, unemployment, mental and physical illness – those who are homeless each face their own unique circumstances.

According to the latest available Statistics Canada data (2011), 4.8 million people in Canada – 1 in 7 – are living in poverty. There is a critical lack of affordable housing. Rates of homelessness remain steady, with an estimated 250,000 individuals using shelters each year across Canada.

In November 2010, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources produced a report proposing concrete, well-researched steps the Federal Government can take to assist in the alleviation of poverty and homelessness (read the *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan*, [www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=4770921](http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=4770921)). The first of the 58 recommendations calls on the Federal Government to work in consultation with “the provincial and territorial governments, aboriginal governments and organizations, the public and private sector, and people living in poverty,” and to develop a national action plan for reducing poverty.

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy, a program operated by Employment and Social Development Canada, provides direct support and funding to help communities prevent and reduce homelessness. The Government’s 2013 Economic Action Plan announced renewed funding for it over five years, with a particular focus on the “housing first” approach.

While several provinces have introduced poverty reduction plans, the Federal Government has yet to take action on a co-ordinated national plan for poverty reduction or affordable housing.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- What will you do to address poverty in Canada, particularly as it affects families and their ability to care adequately for their children?
- Do you agree that the Federal Government needs to take leadership in developing a national poverty reduction plan?
- Do you agree that Canada needs a national affordable housing strategy?
- What specific measures will you take to assist the homeless?
- What is your position on efforts to remove local church congregations from being able to care for the needy as a practical extension of Christian love?

## Fact Sheet: Prostitution

### Protecting the Vulnerable

Prostitution exploits the vulnerable, violates human dignity, is violence against women, and is harmful not only to its participants but to Canadian society as a whole. The vast majority of persons in prostitution are not there by choice, but forced into prostitution because of poverty, addiction, marginalization or racialization.

Some are also victims of sex trafficking, having been brought to Canada – or moved within Canada – for purposes of being exploited in the sex-trade.

In June 2010, Bill C-268 became law, adding a new human trafficking offence specifically addressing child traffickers and providing a minimum sentence of five years imprisonment for anyone convicted of trafficking a minor in Canada. Bill C-310, which introduced extraterritorial jurisdiction to human trafficking offences, became law in June 2012.

Also in June 2012, the Federal Government introduced the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, aimed at overcoming the lack of collaboration between levels of government, law enforcement agencies and other stakeholder organizations. The second *Annual Report on Progress* for the action plan was released in May 2015 ([www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2014-ntnl-ctn-pln-cmbt-hmn/index-eng.aspx](http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2014-ntnl-ctn-pln-cmbt-hmn/index-eng.aspx)).

In September 2010, an Ontario Superior Court ruled that three Criminal Code provisions relating to prostitution were unconstitutional because they forced prostituted women to choose between their freedom and their security, as guaranteed under the Charter. The Governments of Canada and Ontario appealed the ruling and the case made its way to the Supreme Court of Canada. In September 2013, the Court released its unanimous decision, finding that all three laws in question were unconstitutional and gave the government a year to respond.

In response to the Supreme Court ruling, the Federal Government introduced Bill C-36, the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*, which received royal assent on November 6, 2014 and came into effect a month later.

For the first time in Canada, the purchase or attempted purchase of sex is illegal. The bill maintained prohibitions against pimping, against benefiting materially from the sale of another person's sexual services, and added a new offence making it illegal to advertise the sale of someone else's sexual services.

Under the new laws, those who are prostituted are seen as victims of exploitation and given immunity from criminal charges, except under specific circumstances.

(Continued next page)

With the introduction of Bill C-36, the government also committed \$20-million to fund exit services for individuals wishing to exit prostitution.

**Some questions to ask on this issue:**

- What will you do to further combat sexual exploitation, prostitution and human trafficking in Canada?
- What specific measures will you take to assist sex-trade workers in exiting prostitution? Will you commit to renewing and expanding the funding available for exit services?
- Do you support the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*?
- What will you do to support and enhance enforcement of the new laws?

## Fact Sheet: Refugees

### Love the foreigner residing among you

Throughout Scripture God commands us to love our neighbour and care for the vulnerable, the needy and the oppressed (Matthew 25:34–40). Among these are the stranger, the alien and the sojourner. Leviticus 19:33–34 states, “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them.... Love them as yourself.” As followers of Jesus, we know that Jesus and his parents were refugees in Egypt, fleeing the wrath of King Herod.

Then as now, people flee to another country in search of safety and security.

According to a report released by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in June 2015, there were 19.5 million refugees worldwide at the end of 2014 (up from 16.7 million in 2013) as a result of violence, persecution and poverty. The number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 was at the highest level ever recorded, rising to 59.5 million. This compared to 51.2 million at the end of 2013, and 37.5 million ten years ago. Most alarmingly, over half the world’s refugees are children.

The war in Syria has made the Middle East the world’s largest “producer” and “host” of forced displacement, numbering 3.88 million refugees and 7.6 million internally displaced people. Adding to this is the recent displacement of at least 2.6 million people in Iraq and 309,000 newly displaced in Libya, creating a historically unprecedented human crisis in the Middle East.

Canada has committed to settling 11,300 refugees from Iraq and Syria. Some federal parties have promised to increase that commitment. These are welcome – though ambitious – targets that will stretch our capacity as a country to process and receive refugees.

The majority of refugees settled in Canada are privately sponsored. Under the Middle East Refugee Initiative (started in early 2015 and facilitated by The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada at [www.theEFC.ca/MiddleEastRefugees](http://www.theEFC.ca/MiddleEastRefugees)), Christians in Canada right now have an opportunity to become directly involved in helping to rescue the refugee and welcome the stranger.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- What commitment does your party have to settle refugees, particularly those from the Middle East? What percentage of those do you expect to be privately sponsored?
- How will your party facilitate resettlement of these refugees in an efficient and timely manner, meeting stated deadlines?
- What kind of support (health care, training, etc.) will your government provide for these resettled refugees?

## Fact Sheet: Religious Freedom in Canada

Our primary responsibility as Christians is to worship God and obey him. An integral part of worshiping God involves speaking and actions in relationship with others. We obey God's commands by loving our neighbour, seeking justice and mercy, and respecting life – all of which involve “taking our faith public.”

Across the country, we have seen situations such as the following:

- Three provincial law societies oppose Trinity Western University's proposed law school not on the grounds of academic merit but because the Christian University has a community covenant that among other things affirms marriage as the union of one man and one woman.
- In Ontario the College of Physicians and Surgeons now requires doctors to set aside their religious beliefs in order to treat patients in all situations. The Saskatchewan College is considering adopting the same policy.
- A Catholic High School in Quebec has to go all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada to defend their ability to teach ethics and Catholicism from a Catholic perspective and not a secularist perspective.
- Some local, provincial and federal elected representatives were very critical of government funding being provided to, or public building being used by, Christian organizations not because of the content programs they offered but because they were Christian.
- Parents in various provinces are having their right to educate their children in accordance with their Christian beliefs and values challenged, in both private and public schools. Christian parents are also seeing their right to homeschool challenged by school boards.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- What is your view on religious expression in public life?
- Do you believe that people of faith have a right to express their religious viewpoints regarding public policy?
- What steps will you take to support freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom of association in Canada?
- Freedom of religion in Canada includes the right of parents to instruct their children in a manner that is consistent with their beliefs and values. Do you support this right?

## Fact Sheet: Religious Freedom Internationally

### Freedom of Religion

According to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

As Christians, we are called to care for our neighbour, particularly the vulnerable. Our neighbours include all people around the world, because God has created and loves them. In particular, we are to remember Christians who are persecuted for their faith.

Approximately 100 million Christians are persecuted worldwide, making them one of the most persecuted religious groups in the world. In more than 100 countries, Christians live daily under severe persecution, denied basic human right because of their Christian faith. A 2014 survey found that the number of recordable murders of Christians (specifically for their faith in Christ) doubled from 2012 to 2013, with half of those deaths taking place in Syria alone.

### Areas of increased persecution against Christians include:

- **North Korea:** For 13 consecutive years, ranked as the worst offender of persecution against Christians, this dictatorship is threatened by any religion and takes vicious and cruel steps to eradicate such threats.
- **Somalia:** Targeted by Islamic extremism and tribal antagonism Christians are extremely vulnerable to attack without a functioning government to protect them.
- **Iraq:** Parts of Iraq are controlled by Islamic State, where the implementation of Islamic law force Christians to convert, flee or pay an Islamic tax for religious minorities. In an unprecedented exodus, Christians are fleeing to the safer regions and away from attacks by extremists.
- **Syria:** After the declaration of a caliphate (strict Islamic leadership) by The Islamic State, attacks against Christians (kidnappings, beatings, murder) have increased sharply. Most Christians have been forced to flee and are now living as displaced persons, in unimaginable conditions.
- **Afghanistan:** Afghan citizens who convert to Christianity face intense societal and familial pressure. They are subject to discrimination, hostility and even violence by friends, family and community.

In 2013 Canada established an Office of Religious Freedom within Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. The mandate of the ambassador and team of officials is to protect, and advocate on behalf of, religious minorities under threat; to oppose religious hatred and

intolerance; and promote Canadian values of pluralism and tolerance abroad.

Members of Parliament may express concern about religious persecution and ask for religious freedom to be respected in their statements to the House of Commons, and during international visits. It has been noted in countries where persecution occurs, that correspondence received from Canadian MPs can be influential with governments of the countries where the persecution is taking place.

### **Some questions to ask on this issue:**

- How do you plan to address issues of religious persecution around the world?
- Regarding countries where persecution and human rights violations are occurring, how could the Canadian government negotiate in trade talks?
- Do you support the work of the Office of Religious Freedom?

## Fact Sheet: Reproductive and Genetic Technologies

The Bible teaches that God gives life as a gift. We believe that human life must be respected and protected through all of its stages, from conception to natural death. As Christians, in accordance with the Scriptures, we are also called on to care for the vulnerable, uphold human dignity and maintain family integrity.

Reproductive and genetic technologies hold out great promise for many people -- prevention and treatment of genetic diseases, children for those who are infertile, and major technological advances. However, some researchers have the attitude towards new research that "if we can do it, we must." They see human beings as nothing more than a set of genetic information which can and must change in order to improve. This understanding encourages some reproductive and genetic practices which involve the destruction of human life. In vitro fertilisation, for example, tends to create more embryos than are needed. These "spare" embryos may be destroyed or used for research. Human embryonic stem cell research extracts stem cells from early human embryos, which are destroyed in the process.

Some of these technologies change our understanding of what it means to be human. If parents can choose, for example, to give birth to a blond haired, blue eyed boy instead of a brown haired, green eyed boy, that boy will be a product of their own design. This will, in turn, change the structure and understanding of families. A surrogate mother carries and gives birth to a child in order to give it away. A family is created in order to be broken. If permitted, the reproductive cloning of adults would strike at the heart of what it means to be human while also blurring the distinction between parent and child. Anonymous donation of sperm or eggs withholds from a child the possibility of knowing his or her biological relatives.

In a December 2010 decision, the Supreme Court of Canada found certain sections of the *Assisted Human Reproduction Act*, the law in Canada which regulates most of the matters addressing reproductive and genetic technologies, unconstitutional. The EFC, which intervened in the case, was disappointed by those portions of the decision, which creates confusion and a virtual open season on certain aspects of human-animal genome experimentation and embryo importing, exporting, research and destruction. These areas may or may not be regulated by the provinces and we now have a patchwork of legislation across the country on these matters, rather than one, consistent, national standard, which the *Act* would have assured.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- Do you support a national standard for the regulation of genetic and reproductive technologies?
- Do you support the criminalization of human-animal genome experimentation?
- Do you support the criminalization of embryo experimentation?

## Fact Sheet: Respect for Human Life - Abortion

Life is a gift from God that should be respected and protected through all of its stages, beginning at conception.

There are no legal restrictions on abortion in Canada. Abortions may be performed up until a child is born. Court decisions have found that the unborn child should receive some measure of protection, but that it is up to Canada's Parliament and the provincial legislatures to determine what protection should be given.

In 1991 proposed abortion legislation was passed by the House of Commons and defeated by tie vote in the Senate. Since then no government has made an effort to introduce a new law. Canada is the only developed nation in the world to have no laws or regulations dealing with abortion.

While taxpayers pay for nearly every abortion performed in Canada, accurate statistics on the procedure are unavailable. Even Statistics Canada deems abortion data as being "unreliable" because clinics and hospitals are not required to report their information to the agency.

Research and statistics have shown that abortion can have negative effects on the physical and emotional health of women of all ages. Unplanned pregnancies are an issue that Canadian teen girls are facing, and many are responding by having abortions. A February 2011 Ontario Women's Health Equity Report showed that 60% of all teen pregnancies end in abortion and that 18% of Ontario teens aged 15-19 who had a hospital abortion reported having had a *previous* abortion. In most cases, teens are not required to have parental consent prior to undergoing this procedure.

Female unborn children are being aborted due to sex-selective abortion (gendercide). Women are reporting being coerced into having unwanted abortions of girls by family or community members.

### Some questions to ask on this issue:

- What do you believe should be the legal status of the unborn child?
- Would you support the introduction of legislation to regulate and limit abortion in Canada?
- What steps would you take to ensure proper reporting of the number of abortions performed?
- Would you support legislation that would specifically protect women from coerced abortions?
- Would you support legislation that would assist in preventing or limiting gendercide and sex-selection in Canada?

## Fact Sheet: Respect for Human Life - Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

Life is a gift from God which should be respected and protected through all of its stage. Each human life has inherent worth, regardless of age, physical, mental or other abilities. Christians believe that care for the sick and the elderly is part of God's call. We must not abandon those in need, nor deliberately bring about their death, even for compassionate reasons.

God calls Christians to care for the vulnerable, including the sick and elderly.

Historically, in Canada the terminally ill and elderly were protected by laws against euthanasia and assisted suicide. However, in February of this year, Canada's Supreme Court ruled unanimously that in some circumstances physician assisted suicide is permissible. The Court suspended its decision for 12 months in order to give Parliament the opportunity to re-write the affected laws. If Parliament does not respond, the current laws governing assisted suicide will become invalid.

Over the years, a number of Private Members' bills have been introduced to legalize assisted suicide and euthanasia, and these have all been defeated.

Prior to the Court decision, the Province of Quebec passed Bill 52 which allows "medically assisted death" in certain circumstances, but those changes have yet to take effect. The Federal Government established an External Panel to examine federal options in response to the Court's decision. A Provincial-Territorial Advisory Group has been established to provide advice on policies, practices and safeguards in their jurisdictions.

A society that seeks to solve problems by intentionally killing, rather than through providing optimal care, will increasingly devalue human life. Providing euthanasia and assisted suicide for certain classes of people exempts them from the full protection of the Criminal Code when they are most vulnerable. It compromises the medical profession and health care system, and undermines society's commitment to the sanctity of human life. In Belgium, for example, the sanctioning of euthanasia has led to an expansion of the classes of people who are killed. In the Netherlands it has led to an increase in involuntary euthanasia.

Medical professionals who oppose assisted suicide and euthanasia are concerned that they will be required to participate in the provision of assisted suicide and euthanasia if the practices are permitted in Canada.

### Questions to ask about this issue:

- Do you support or oppose the legalization of assisted suicide and euthanasia?
- Do you agree there is a need for broad and timely consultations on the issue before the

introduction of legislation?

- In light of the Supreme Court ruling, do you support stringent legislation that would minimize the occurrences of assisted suicide in Canada?
- How would you defend the freedom of medical and other professionals to refuse by reason of religion or conscience to participate in the provision of assisted suicide and euthanasia?
- Would you support legislation that would assist in preventing or limiting gendercide and sex-selection in Canada?