

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Introduction

Canadians will go to the polls Tuesday, October 14, 2008. Once again, important issues are at stake in this federal election.

Canada needs strengthened families and secure marriages. Canada needs to protect its most vulnerable: children, the poor, the unborn and the disabled. Canada needs to share its blessings with the world, especially meeting commitments made to foreign relief and development work.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has prepared a number of brief resources. This election kit is available at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca and includes:

Introduction

A Call to Prayer

Tips for Electoral Action

Holding an All-Candidates Meeting

Political Engagement by Churches

Understanding Canadian Elections

Statement by EFC President Bruce J.
Clemenger

Fact Sheets on:

The Environment

Family Integrity

Freedom of Religion in Canada

Global Poverty Reduction

National Unity and Reconciliation

Poverty and Homelessness

Prostitution and Human Trafficking

Refugees

Religious Freedom Internationally

Respect for Human Life

Additional resources will be added as the EFC develops commentary on different issues as the Election progresses. You will want to check the website periodically to find out what's new.

EFC Election Kit 2008 – A Call to Prayer

A Call to Prayer for Canada

With election decisions ahead, 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.

We believe that important issues are at stake in this election.

Canada needs strengthened families and secure marriages. Canada needs to protect its most vulnerable – children, the poor, the unborn and the disabled. Canada needs to share its blessings with the world, especially meeting commitments made to foreign relief and development work.

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 Tim. 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.' (Prov. 13:34)

Pray for candidates

Elections are times for candidates to discover what is important to their constituents. All eyes need to be opened to the values that are vital to a healthy and productive society.

Pray for voters

Pray that voters will focus on the issues of central importance for building a just nation.

Pray for freedom

Religious freedom is a political issue for Canada in a new way. Pray that the Church might retain its freedom to be a blessing to Canadian society and the world.

Pray for a mission

We can ask God to 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

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. (NIV)

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Tips for Electoral Action

Five ways to engage yourself, your faith community, and your riding’s candidates:

1. Know the landscape

Discover who is running for election in your riding – and what they stand for.

See the current issue fact sheets at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/issues for questions you can ask in person or over the phone.

Learn the names of the various candidates, research their web-sites, and find out what they promise to do.

Explore more about your Federal riding at www.elections.ca .

2. Find the Facts

Educate yourself about social justice and moral issues. The EFC has developed 10 “Current Issues” fact sheets on:

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| ▪ Respect for Human Life | ▪ Family Integrity |
| ▪ Religious Freedom in Canada | ▪ International Religious Freedom |
| ▪ Prostitution and Human Trafficking | ▪ Refugees |
| ▪ Poverty and Homelessness | ▪ Global Poverty Reduction |
| ▪ Environment | ▪ National Unity & Reconciliation |

Use the factsheets to give yourself basic background information and talking points for discussions with candidates.

Use the election questions provided in these EFC fact sheets to question your candidates about their positions on these issues. Download the fact sheets from www.evangelicalfellowship.ca.

3. Talk about the kind of Canada you want

Consider the vision you have for Canada, and share that vision with the candidates. Find out when all-candidates meetings are, and attend them. When candidates campaign at your door, take the time to talk to them about their positions. Engage candidates in conversations about issues that are important to you as a Christian. Ask candidates how they will address injustice, and how they will commit to justice and equity for all peoples, including the unborn.

Engage with media by writing letters to the editor, getting involved with community radio or talk shows, and seeking a balanced perspective on all the news you hear. Let your opinions be measured by a broad range of reporting.

4. Link with other groups

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 social justice issues through the election process.

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

Your congregation can also hold their own all-candidates meeting. See the appropriate section in this EFC Election Kit for how to do it.

5. Vote!

Remember that your vote matters. The number of people who vote in a federal election has been steadily declining because most people do not think their vote matters.

Encourage family, friends, and colleagues to exercise their democratic right to vote, and to speak up for issues they are passionate about.

After the election, continue to follow the political process to make sure your elected candidates fulfill the promises they made. Remind them of their commitments, and foster accountability regarding the biblical issues, morals, rights and freedoms that are important to you.

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Holding an All Candidates’ Meeting

A growing number of churches 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 the local candidates stand on issues of concern.

Steps:

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) contact each candidate to make sure they are available that day.

2. Plan the Meeting Format

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

3. Choose a Moderator and a Time-keeper

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| Debate Moderator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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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| Time-Keeper | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 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. |
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4. Send Out the Invitations!

- Send an invitation to each of the candidates, 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.

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.

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Practical Suggestions for 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 raised platform if available) for the candidates, with name and party signs that can be read from any seat in the auditorium.
- 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.
- Provide water for the candidates.

Guidelines for the Audience

The moderator should explain the following guidelines at the beginning of the meeting:

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| 1. | This meeting is an information forum, not a forum for debate. |
| 2. | The candidates and parties have already formulated their position on issues. |
| 3. | 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. |
| 4. | There is no need to voice your objection to or disagreement with the candidate's response. You can do that at the ballot box. |
| 5. | No personal attacks will be permitted. |
| 6. | A time-keeper (with a stopwatch and gavel or bell) will be appointed to monitor and notify candidates and questioners of time limits; the time-keeper 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 this 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.

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Sample Schedule for an All Candidates' Meeting

7:30 pm Start Time

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 (up to 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 for samples of issues).

9:15 pm 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 pm Meeting Ends

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Guidelines for Church Engagement in Elections

Churches are charities that serve the common good. The government has specific guidelines that outline the allowable political activities of charities.

Here are five steps churches can take to encourage their members to be responsible Christian citizens during a federal 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.
- 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 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. See this link for how to do it.
- 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 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 social justice issues 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 a federal election can steadily increase if churches choose to get their congregations involved.

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

What can't churches do?

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Guidelines for Church Engagement *(continued)*

A Church may not:

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| Invite candidates to speak at different times, or at separate events or services. | Highlight or publish how one particular party or candidate voted on a given issue. |
| Promote or oppose <u>any one</u> candidate or political party. | Distribute literature for <u>any one</u> candidate or party. |
| Post signs for a candidate or political party on church property. | Encourage its members to vote for a particular candidate or party. |
| Endorse a candidate or party from the pulpit. | Link its views on issues of concern with those of a particular party or candidate. |

As long as a church remains non-partisan, individual members are free to exercise their freedom of speech and their freedom of choice.

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

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Understanding Canadian Elections: Five Points

The Bible encourages us to pray for our leaders. This includes praying for those in government. In Canada, those in government are elected in a democratic process in which each citizen has the privilege of voting for a candidate who is campaigning for elected office in the hope of governing. Following is a brief description of the Canadian electoral system that may be helpful to you.

Why is our Electoral system the way it is?

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:

- The ‘Sovereign’ represented by the Governor General.
- 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.
- 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 law;
- sign official documents;
- meet regularly with the prime minister; and
- exercise her right to be consulted, to support and to caution.

The Senate acts as:

- a second legislative review on government legislation and action,
- a ‘historical’ regional representative so that all areas of Canada will be represented;
- a non-ideological, routine revising chamber that picks up flaws in legislation that have avoided notice during a bill’s passage through the House of Commons, and
- an investigative body engaged in detailed studies of complex or controversial issues.

The House of Commons is made up of representatives:

- who create a democratically elected body, consisting of 308 members, 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.

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Understanding Canadian Elections *(continued)*

- 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 by-laws, 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.

EFC Election Kit 2008 – Statement from EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger

There are variety of important issues being debated in this election and at least one, abortion, will likely be absent as no party seems willing to dissent from the status quo. There also seems to be some agreement that a prominent theme will be that of leadership; who will form the next government and who will be entrusted with leading the opposition, and is there sufficient confidence to give one leader a majority mandate.

Within these dynamics I think a critical issue is that of civility and good governance. Coming out of what many have said was the most rancorous of Parliaments — where the rhetoric was often debilitating and caustic, when the tendency was to define oneself or one's position by belittling or marginalizing the other — and in a highly pluralized society in which we are groping for that which defines us as a nation and the basis upon which we can strive together for the public good, we need politicians who practise and will foster civility.

We need attitudes and approaches that will encourage an environment in which the substantive issues of the day, from the economy to the environment, from caring for the vulnerable and marginalized to addressing the rifts between peoples and regions, can be aired and debated with respect; where agreement can be found wherever possible; and where eventual “losers” in the policy debates as well as the “winners” can return to their communities and homes feeling good about their participation and empowered not by frustration, anger and hostility but by hope and passion for a better way, when justice will flow.

Who will contribute to the convening the nation's business so that not only will the outcome be just, but the process fair and constructive? It is vital that others who engage in the process also model civility. Yet politicians are crucial in this — for the process, as well as the outcomes, is what good governance is about. And that is what governments and our politicians are called by God to be and to do.

Fact Sheet: The Environment

Protecting the Planet

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, and God created humankind to be stewards of His creation. Individually and collectively, we are accountable to God for what we do with and on this earth.

Questions to ask on this issue:

- What measures do you propose to protect the environment in Canada and to ensure Canada does its part to 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 37% of marriages statistically projected to end in divorce within 30 years. Common-law relationships fare worse – approximately 60 percent 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 ages, parents become increasingly dependent on their adult children (often parents themselves) for assistance.

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 decrease the rate of family breakdown?

Protection of Children

As Christians, we are called to care for the vulnerable and to uphold human dignity. The Old and New Testaments include instructions to care for "the widow and the orphan," those who were powerless and vulnerable in their society.

Questions to ask on this issue:

- Do you support maintaining and enforcing the existing laws to provide greater protection for children?
- What new steps will you take to support the protection of children from abuse?

Fact Sheet: Freedom of Religion in Canada

What is 'Freedom of Religion'?

Our primary responsibility as Christians is to worship God and obey him. An integral part of worshipping God is speaking about him to others. We obey God's commands by loving our neighbour, seeking justice and mercy, and respecting life.

With the redefinition of marriage, we have seen situations such as the following:

- the Catholic Knights of Columbus in Vancouver faced a human rights complaint for refusing to host a same-sex wedding reception for religious reasons
- Saskatchewan marriage commissioner Orville Nichols has faced a human rights complaint for indicating he would only officiate at traditional marriages because of his religious beliefs. Marriage commissioners have been forced to resign in several provinces and others have cases in the provincial human rights process.

In Ontario:

- A Human Rights Tribunal has ruled it illegal for a Christian ministry serving the needs of the disabled to hire only Christian staff who share the ministry's Christian faith and service objectives
- The Human Rights Commission has recently encouraged the College of Physicians and Surgeons to require doctors to set aside their religious beliefs in order to treat patients in all situations.

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 and freedom of religion in Canada?

Fact Sheet: Global Poverty Reduction

Care for the Vulnerable Globally

As Christians, we are called to care for the poor. 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), aimed at cutting abject global poverty in half by 2015. The 8 MDGs Canada committed to are:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

(More details at www.micahchallenge.org/millennium_development_goals.)

Canada also committed to increase its contribution to Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of its Gross National Income (GNI).

It is an achievable goal that six countries have already reached and five more are on their way. Canada has neither met the goal nor made a plan to do so. Our current ODA contribution is less than half of the goal, at 0.33% GNI.

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?
- 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?
- What concrete measures will you take to make agricultural trade fair and beneficial for poor countries?

Fact Sheet: National Unity & Reconciliation

Why is National Unity Important?

The Bible calls Christians to be peace-makers.

The apostle Paul always introduces his letters by asking God to grant grace and peace.

Canada is a nation of many peoples and cultures. Canada is also experiencing elements of division, with feelings of alienation expressed by those in Western Canada, in Quebec and in our Aboriginal communities.

Questions to ask on this issue:

- What steps will you take to bring reconciliation among communities in Canada, including French and English Canadians, among our Aboriginal communities and different multi-cultural communities in Canada?

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, family or other violence, unemployment, substance abuse, mental and physical illness, those who are homeless each face their own unique circumstances.

Churches in Toronto and Vancouver have recently been in the news facing challenge from local government because of their efforts to feed the poor and give the homeless a place to stay during extreme weather conditions.

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?
- What specific measures will you take to assist the homeless?
- What is your position on efforts that could remove the local church from being able to care for the needy as a practical extension of Christian love?

Fact Sheet: Prostitution and Human Trafficking

Protecting the Vulnerable

Prostitution exploits the vulnerable, violates human dignity and is harmful not only to its participants but also to Canadian society as a whole.

Prostitutes are victims of sexual exploitation; some are also victims of sexual trafficking, having been brought to Canada for the purposes of being exploited in the sex-trade.

On December 13, 2006, the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws presented the report, *“The Challenge of Change: A Study of Canada’s Criminal Prostitution Laws”* to the House of Commons. There is not a common consensus among Parliamentarians to address this issue.

Similarly, on February 22, 2007 Motion 153 on Human Trafficking was passed unanimously in the House of Commons, *“That, in the opinion of the House, the trafficking of women and children across international borders for the purposes of sexual exploitation should be condemned, and that the House call on the government to immediately adopt a comprehensive strategy to combat the trafficking of persons worldwide.”*

On February 27, 2007 the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women released their study on Human Trafficking, entitled [**Turning Outrage into Action to Address Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation in Canada**](#).

Questions to ask on this issue:

- What will you do to combat sexual exploitation, prostitution and human trafficking in Canada?
- What specific measures will you take to assist street sex-trade workers in exiting prostitution?
- Do you think prostitution should be removed from the Criminal Code and be made legal in Canada?

Fact Sheet: Refugees

Protecting the Vulnerable

The Old Testament instructs God's people to love the orphan, the widow, and the stranger within their country.

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

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are over 10 million refugees in the world today as a result of violence, persecution, and poverty. As Christians, we are called to welcome those who seek refuge in this country. In order to do this well, we need a coherent refugee and immigration policy based on compassion and care for our neighbor.

In 2002, Parliament passed the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), which guaranteed refugee claimants the right to a merit-based appeal if their claim was denied. This appeal was a needed safeguard to ensure that vulnerable refugees are not turned away in error.

In November 2005, after three years of postponing the establishment of the Appeal Division, the Immigration Minister announced his decision not to implement the appeal process at all. Without a Refugee Appeal Division to re-examine the facts of a case, very little can be done to remedy a situation once a bad decision is made.

Bill C-280, An Act to Amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is awaiting Royal Assent.

Questions to ask on this issue:

- What steps will you take to make the refugee system more transparent, compassionate and just?
- Will you actively support a merit-based appeal system for refugee claimants?

Fact Sheet: Religious Freedom Internationally

What is 'Freedom of Religion'?

Our primary responsibility as Christians is to worship God and obey him. An integral part of worshipping God is speaking about him to others. We obey God's commands by loving our neighbour, seeking justice and mercy, and respecting life.

Why are we interested in 'International' Religious Freedom?

As Christians, we are called to care for our neighbor, particularly the vulnerable. Our neighbors include all people around the world because God has created and loves them. As Christians, we are particularly to remember other Christians who are persecuted for their faith. More than 200 million people in over 60 countries are denied their basic human rights because of their Christian faith. Members of Parliament may express concern about religious persecution and ask for religious freedom to be respected through correspondence, statements in the House of Commons or during international visits.

In April 2005, the federal government released an International Policy Statement. It did not mention religious persecution, although it is a highly visible category of violation of international human rights.

Questions to ask on this issue:

- How do you plan to address issues of religious persecution around the world?
- Do you support the government of Canada taking into consideration the issue of religious freedom in a country when involved in trade discussions with that country?

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, using any means available. Court decisions have found that the unborn child should receive some measure of protection, but that it is up to the Parliament and the provincial legislatures to determine what protection should be given.

Since 1991 when proposed abortion legislation was passed by the House of Commons and defeated by tie vote in the Senate, Canada has had no law regulating or preventing abortion and the government has made no effort to introduce a new law.

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?

Euthanasia

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

Currently, the terminally ill and elderly are protected by laws against euthanasia and assisted suicide, but there have been a number of initiatives in Parliament that would make assisted suicide legal, including Bill C-506, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Die with Dignity)*, which was introduced June 12, 2008.

A Senate Committee report has recommended greater support for palliative care funding and research, to relieve pain and suffering.

Questions to ask on this issue:

- Do you support maintaining and enforcing the existing laws against euthanasia and assisted suicide?
- Currently only 5% of Canadians have access to palliative care. What steps will you take to support palliative care?