

A photograph of a tall, ornate clock tower with a green roof, surrounded by vibrant red tulips in the foreground under a blue sky with light clouds.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WATCH in CANADA



Steve Jones
Fellowship President

Views on Death, Gender Rights, and Abortion Are Evolving in Canada

by Steven Jones

An *Angus Reid* poll published findings on Canadian's current feelings about social issues

such as doctor-assisted dying, gender equity, and abortion and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), published their initial findings from their recent church and faith trends polling in Canada.

I will be commenting on the EFC's poll in my June 29, 2020, weekly blog, "A Word from Steve". The EFC's recent survey discovered that evangelical affiliation has dropped to 6% of the Canadian population. An all-time low in our nation's history.

In this article, let's look at some of the findings in the *Angus Reid* poll and what this might mean for ministry opportunities for our local churches.

The *Angus Reid Institute* indicates social values are changing among Canadians concerning doctor-assisted dying and the acceptance of LGBTQ rights, but there is far less unified opinion on abortion access in Canada.

Opinion on End of Life Decisions

Four in five (80%) of Canadians indicate they want fewer regulations associated with their end of life decisions. In 2016, only 73% of Canadians wanted fewer regulations associated with doctor-assisted dying/suicide.



After public consultation ended on January 24, 2020, the federal government has promised to relook and modify the current MAID law making doctor-assisted dying more accessible to people, striking the need for the sufferer to be anticipating death in the "reasonably foreseeable" future. Quebec judge, Christine Baudouin's 197-page judgement (in a September 2019 ruling) stated this barrier deprives Canadians of their autonomy. Prime Minister Trudeau stated that within six months of his re-election, he would make it easier for Canadians to die. It would seem the current law will be amended and 80% of Canadians want this to happen. Our Fellowship of churches signed a multi-faith statement (early June) authored by

the EFC and others, opposing Bill C-7, asking the Federal government to seek further public ascent prior to the new Bill amending and expanding access to the current MAiD law.

In an August 28, 2018 interview with quadriplegic, Joni Eareckson Tada, she stated:

“When people start viewing rights as willful determinations and they disengage rights from their moral basis in the Word of God, then the exercise of rights becomes nothing but a national competition between who is more victimized ... becoming a haranguing group of individuals who have radicalized rights ... and now no one does anything for the common good of the country; all moral consensus has unraveled.”



And a culture of death continues to squeeze out any voice espousing life's precious, intrinsic value.

Canadian Opinion on LGBTQ Rights

Public perception on accepting lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans, and queer rights appear to be progressing towards greater acceptance in Canada. Seven in ten (70%) Canadians say society should work towards greater acceptance of LGBTQ Canadians. The same question asked of Canadians in 2016 got a 64% approval rating.

When Canadians were asked whether there should be a greater recognition on the importance of the “traditional family where a man is married to a woman”, only 30% of Canadians agreed with this statement.

The poll asked Canadians about their views on gay pride parades. Most Canadians (69%) agreed pride parades help society become more accepting of the LGBTQ2 community while 31% took the opposite opinion, saying the values and attitudes surrounding pride parades was personally offensive

Canadian Opinion on Abortion Access

There is far less unified opinion on abortion access in Canada. Canada is one of only a few nations with no specific legal restrictions on abortion access. After the 1988 Morgentaler Supreme Court case, abortion has been treated as a medical procedure with no specific law regulating its access.

The Angus Reid Institute asked Canadians to respond on one of the more controversial aspects of Canada's medical abortion policy; that being third-trimester abortion procedures. In 2017, there were 22,087 abortions recorded in Canada. Only 3% were performed after 21 weeks of gestation, although nearly 20% of all abortions in Canada were classified as “unknown”.

Many Canadians still claim the unborn have rights. For Canadians, late-term abortion (24 weeks is considered the gestational age of viability), is particularly controversial with 49% of Canadians saying the country should have a law restricting abortion in the third trimester unless the mother is at risk (third trimester begins at 28 weeks of pregnancy).

Even though Liberal and NDP parties are officially “pro-choice” political parties, the Angus Reid poll discovered at least one-third of their voting base support legislation restricting late-term abortion procedures. The country is split down the middle when it comes to legal abortion access in the third trimester.

I encourage you to read more for yourself at angusreid.org/social-values-canada and discover how Canadian's “social values” are changing on these issues and others. Including social views on where faith fits in public life in Canada. Three in five Canadians (60%) desire keeping religion out of public life, while seven in ten (71%) Canadians say, “There is no place for any prayer at a public meeting”.

The great Canadian experiment since the 1980s; from “Christian-values” to “Charter-values” (Charter signed April 17, 1982) continues ...

—Steven Jones is President of Fellowship National.

From Magna Carta to COVID-19

by Sheldon Wood

On June 15, 1215, King John signed the Magna Carta, making even himself subject to the rule of law and commencing the long history of developing rights and freedoms in the English-speaking world. First drafted by a religious leader, the Archbishop of Canterbury, it promised the protection of church rights, protection from illegal imprisonment, access to swift justice, and limitations on payments to the Crown. It influenced American colonists in the formation of the American Constitution in 1787, which became the supreme law of the land in the new republic of the United States. Being the foundation of the common law, Magna Carta still forms an important symbol of liberty today and is held in great respect by British and American legal communities, being described as, "the greatest constitutional document of all times – the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot." The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms contains clauses with precedents arising from Magna Carta. While the ideas within Magna Carta continue to shape the Canadian legal system the actual text is not formally part of the Constitution of Canada, which itself serves to guide other federal and provincial legislation. In turn, all legislation, including the Constitution, is subject to interpretation by courts. It is the interpretation of the

Constitution "by way of incremental changes to common law rules where required to reflect societal change" (R. v. Mann, [2004] 3 S.C.R. 59) that creates a potential for hard-fought and long-cherished freedoms to be eroded; especially if such erosion is perceived and accepted to be in the 'public interest'. The rise of serious health concerns presented by the COVID-19 (coronavirus) has caused the federal and provincial governments to consider limiting individual freedoms by using existing 'emergency powers' legislation and by enacting new legislation to amend previous government Acts. The federal minority government, we must assume with the best of intentions, had even initially sought to suspend for 20 months the right of Parliament to approve the taxation of citizens. Fortunately, this unprecedented overreach was recognized and withdrawn from proposed legislation; however, this serves as an object lesson to citizens of their responsibility to be vigilant of government actions and, in doing so, to actively and peacefully oppose actions which unreasonably limit the rights and freedoms of citizens, no matter how necessary such limitations may appear to be.

—Sheldon Wood is a charities lawyer in London, ON who attends West Park Baptist Church and serves as Vice-Chair of the Fellowship's National Council.

Courage and the Canadian Church



by Paul Dirks

I am far more comfortable reaching out to my LGBT neighbours than I am opposing sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) policies. Over the last few years however, the Lord has given me opportunities to publicly oppose the dangerous SOGI123 public school program, speak to the Canadian Senate on Bill C-16, and lead training workshops for pastors, teachers, and doctors. While it hasn't been without cost personally or for our church (which has been protested), I am compelled by the justice of Christ, especially for women and children, and groups that are particularly targeted by current SOGI activism.

Here in British Columbia we've gained significant ground over the last few years. The 2018 One Accord, a statement on traditional biblical sexuality, has now been signed by almost 500 Canadian pastors. This has resulted in churches and pastors supporting one another when facing protests or media backlash for promoting Christian truth, especially during the last federal election. We have also won important skirmishes and

one of our churches received a formal apology from a university SOGI club for their attack on Christian freedoms.

We have also rallied around the court case involving a father here in BC whose female daughter is permitted against his consent to take cross-sex hormones, and who, along with Christian media personality Laura-Lynn Tyler Thompson, is at current risk of imprisonment.

Widespread training sessions called *Project Dovetail* have equipped more than a thousand people, many whom have been highly influential politically. One Mexican pastor took the information and peer-reviewed medical research and rallied others in Mexico to defeat their nation's version of Bill C-16!

While there are significant victories, there are looming dangers on the horizon, and particularly because of cowardice in the Canadian church. Not every Christian is called to be an advocate; every Christian is called to be a prophet.

Public schools are highly dangerous as they indoctrinate kindergartners into gender identity theory and will not tell parents if their children are pretending to be the opposite gender at school. Bill

C-8 and municipal conversion therapy bans threaten to criminalize anyone who doesn't affirm another's sexual orientation or gender identity. We are a very short step away from governments removing children who want to transition from their homes if their parents refuse, or from pastors, like myself, being arrested for hate-speech.

Can we turn the tide? Absolutely, if God is with us. Firstly, find ways to help your church be politically involved. We need church religious freedom mailing lists and committees. Secondly, prepare the

saints to lose their jobs, especially within the public sector, for their witness for Christ. And when they do, point them to legal help, such as the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms. Thirdly, network and provide training with other churches—we have to stand together. If you want help, let me know.

– Paul Dirks is lead pastor at New West Community Baptist Church.

Trainer on Sexuality & Gender

WOMAN Means Something: <http://womanmeanssomething.com/>

Parents United Canada: <http://www.parentsunitedcanada.com/>

Articles at The Public Discourse: <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/author/paul-dirks/>

One Accord: <https://oneaccord.one/>



Paul Dirks speaking to the Canadian Senate on Bill C-16



Citizen Journalist Facing Jail Time?

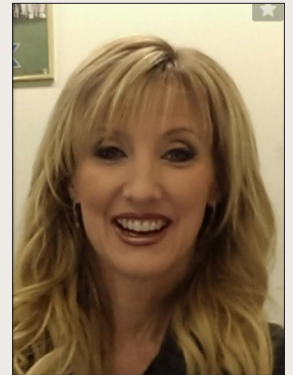


by Jack Taylor

Citizen journalist, former *700 Club Canada* host, and aspiring political candidate, Laura-Lynn Tyler Thompson may face up to 40 days in prison for criminal contempt after exposing the case of a father who was prohibited from interfering in the sexual transition of his daughter into becoming a boy. Thompson says she was “left with no choice” about staying silent as “activist teachers, doctors, lawyers, and judges are transitioning and sterilizing a [15] year old girl without parental consent.” Thompson has repeatedly been in court and has had her situation referred to the

Attorney General for consideration regarding charges. COVID-19 has delayed processing of the case.

Thompson has grown to prominence as a vocal advocate for parents in the fight to protect children from the onslaught of information designed to reorient thinking on their identity as boys or girls. The girl in question started her inquiry about transitioning after seeing a video in her sixth-grade class saying that she could be either a boy or a girl. The girl cut her hair, changed her name, found support from a school counselor, and at the children’s hospital was okayed for testosterone treatments. A psychologist explained away the crushes on her male teacher as the evidence of her being gay.



Laura-Lynn Tyler Thompson

The anti-conversion therapy law (Bill C8, introduced in early March) is under consideration federally to pull together the mosaic of legislation now in place by cities and provinces. The law is aimed at prohibiting professionals from: causing someone under the age of 18 to undergo conversion therapy; removing a person under the age of 18 from Canada to undergo conversion therapy; facilitating anyone of any age to undergo conversion therapy against their will; profiting from the provision of conversion therapy, or advertising to promote or provide conversion therapy. Advertisements would be seized by authorities.

– *Pastor Jack Taylor is lead pastor of Faith Baptist, Vancouver, BC, and is a journalist and novelist.*

Trinity Western Decision Trickles to the Streets and Public Spaces of Toronto

by Mike Theissen

In 2019 there were a series of events where Toronto officials penalized or criticized public civil conversation for the sake of appeasing the hostility of an angry crowd.

First, church planter David Lynn, of Christ Forgiveness Ministries (CFM), was arrested on June 4, 2019 for preaching the Gospel publicly in Toronto. The mission of CFM is to set up Gospel booths and evangelists on every major street corner and plant CFM-trained churches. The entire event was live-streamed and the video makes clear that pastor Lynn's message was focused on God's love and forgiveness for all who turn to him. However, the police arrested and charged Mr. Lynn with "causing a disturbance" because he was "causing alarm."¹



[In May 2020, charges against Pastor David Lynn were dropped.]

Second, several hundred protesters gathered outside a Toronto library on October 29, 2019 while feminist Meghan Murphy spoke inside about her views on gender identity. Murphy

does not recognize transgender people. "If you're born male, you remain male for life," she said.²

That particular Toronto Public Library came under intense criticism for the librarian's decision to hold the event. Toronto Mayor John Tory said he was "disappointed" in Toronto Public Library's decision to allow the October 29th speech. Tory made it clear that officials should use the "highest of standards" to ensure "offensive commentary" not be hosted in public buildings. He also said deciding free-speech issues is extremely difficult but he draws the line at "offensive commentary that is going to cause harm and cause hurt to others in the community."³



Here's the simple connection: in the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in the Western University law school case ("TWU 2018"), the Court's judgment rejected the law school on the basis that it would "harm LGBTQ individuals." So now, this highly flexible concept of 'harm,' which is very much in the eye of the beholder,⁴ is being used by officials in Toronto to reach in and remove anyone who is seen to be "offensive," or "causing harm," or "causing alarm." This leaves Geoffrey Trotter, a civil litigator, to note that the "reach in" could spread further, "into religious grade schools, para-church organizations, even churches" and potentially "also within families."⁵

— Mike Theissen is teaching pastor of Grace Baptist, Alliston, ON who also serves with FEB Central Church Planting and the Ezra Institute.

1. <https://arpacanada.ca/news/2019/07/12/pastor-preaches-gospel-people-react-police-arrest-pastor/>

2. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6098974/toronto-public-library-meghan-murphy-event/>

3. https://www.thestar.com/news/city_hall/2019/10/17/john-tory-disappointed-toronto-library-allowing-event-with-writer-accused-of-being-anti-transgender.html

4. <http://www.christianlegalfellowship.org/blog/2019/7/25/legal-worldview-and-the-new-coercion>

5. <http://www.christianlegalfellowship.org/blog/2019/7/25/legal-worldview-and-the-new-coercion>

Local Church Religious Freedom Strategy

1. **Awareness:** Church leadership must actively become aware of issues surrounding religious freedom.
2. **Teach:** Pastor to preach/teach on the issue with ongoing teaching through small groups, Sunday school, workshops and church library resources.
3. **Coordinator:** Appoint a Religious Freedom Coordinator in the church accountable to a church leader.
4. **Committee:** Create a working committee to support the Coordinator.
5. **Budget:** Create a religious freedom/Christian values budget item in the church budget to support National, Regional, and local efforts.
6. **Bylaw:** Modify the church's bylaws or constitution to protect church members (i.e. adopt the Fellowship's new "Marriage and Human Sexuality" policy)
7. **Communicate:** Develop an internal communication process to promptly pass information or calls to action along to members on the issue.
8. **Resources:** Inform church members of resources available in the event of a violation of their religious freedom, and encouragement to inform the church's Religious Freedom Coordinator.
9. **Plan:** Determine the specific religious freedom issues your church will address, encourage member participation and develop a plan.
10. **Reserve funds:** Allocate reserve funds to annual budget to accommodate future realities such as removal of tax exemption status, property taxes, funds for legal fees (lawsuits), and financial support for members who lose employment due to the issue.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." —Edmund Burke

COVID-19 Subsidy Program Requires ATTESTATION!

by Sheldon Wood

Under the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) program, businesses, not-for-profits and registered charities applying for an emergency interest-free loan to help them through the COVID-19 lockdown must "confirm" that they do not "discriminate" on the basis of "gender," "sexual orientation," and "religion," among other things, in order to receive financial help. Borrowers who do not wish to confirm the "non-discrimination" clause are excluded from the government-run program based on this stipulation, which appears to be unique to the CEBA. The requirement by the federal government is troubling, according to Marty Moore, a lawyer with the Calgary-based Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (JCCF). "Remember the

Canada Summer Jobs program that discriminated against religious institutions? Is the same biased approach in play with the Wuhan virus emergency funding program — CEBA. Is the government once again an enemy of the Charter?" This expression of concern that should a religious organization apply for the CEBA it might unintentionally compromise religious beliefs, needs thoughtful consideration. If a church qualifies for the CEBA, through having revenue from goods or services such as rental income, and they share the concern of possibly compromising religious beliefs, they should take time to seek additional information and possibly professional counsel first.

—Sheldon Wood is a charities lawyer in London, ON and serves as Vice-Chair of the Fellowship's National Council.