

February 2015

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Dr. John Boer
907-1250 Bute
Vancouver BC V6E 1Z9

2015 THE YEAR



where
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
is made **STRONGER,**
not weaker.

Dear Dr. Boer,

Did you have one of those awkward conversations during the holiday season? The turkey platter has been carried away into the kitchen. People are leaning back in their chairs. Someone yawns.

And then your cousin Harris – not being able to help himself – makes a dismissive comment about Christians and how they whine about the reason for the season. You try to let it pass. But now he's saying that people of faith should just keep their beliefs to themselves and stop forcing their thoughts and morals on everyone else.

You take the bait, ignoring your spouse's warning kick under the table. Dessert just got a whole lot more interesting.

You have probably had conversations like that more than once – and maybe more often than ever. We get it. You are not alone – even if it felt like it around the dining room table that memorable night.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is in the business of difficult conversations where the stakes are extremely high. Sitting around the table with us are MPs, lawyers, Supreme Court judges, along with partners who agree with us and many more folks who do not.

There is one common theme we see again and again in these conversations – it is a debate that we know you are facing too. It's the prevailing myth that Christianity is weighed down with bias, intolerance and hateful attitudes, while secularism is as light as a feather and as free of prejudice as the turkey on that platter. We know, and you know, that this is simply not true. We also know that secularism is a belief system as much as any other, with its own set of ideas and assumptions.

This argument, pitting faith against secularism, rears its ugly head time and time again, from dining room tables and coffee shops right into the highest courts of Canada. And it is an incredibly important discussion, because when the myth of neutrality (faith = repressive and scary, secularism = liberating and neutral) is believed, the opinions, values, insights and contributions of people of faith are first of all ridiculed, then dismissed and sooner or later banned completely. Then, everyone loses. And when religious freedoms are chipped away, make no mistake, we will lose much more as other freedoms are lost.

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>> **FAITH** = repressive and scary, **SECULARISM** = liberating and neutral

We believe that you will have even more conversations like this in 2015, where you are fighting for the right to speak as a Christian. We know the EFC will. It is essential – and a great relief – to us to know that you are beside us in spirit and in prayer, and with the financial help that makes our work possible.

The EFC has continually pressed forward the argument that the secularist viewpoint – built on a strong desire for freedom *from* religion – is a worldview as full of values and beliefs as any religious point of view. We point out, with your help, that secularism – with all its baggage – should not trump a religious position. With your faithful support we argue – successfully! – that secularism is not a value-free, bias-free, consequence-free point of view on which to build Canadian society. Secularism ignores much of the moral foundation that makes our country such a unique and safe place to live for people of faith.

The Supreme Court of Canada has agreed with us in important, landmark cases and decisions where, with you behind us, the EFC was an intervener.

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>>> **One case impacts another and our presence matters.**
That's why we cannot possibly do this essential work without you.
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■ In a case involving kindergarten curriculum and same-sex parenting, the Supreme Court agreed with the EFC's argument, and ruled that the common usage of "secular" to mean "non-religious" is **incorrect**.

■ That decision was later referenced by the Supreme Court decision in another case (*S.L. v. Commission scolaire...*) which confirmed the EFC's position that the provinces cannot teach religion from a secularist perspective and remain neutral.

■ And that decision was quoted in the EFC's factum and arguments in yet another Supreme Court case involving prayer at a public gathering (*Saguenay*).

One case impacts another. Our presence matters. That's why we cannot possibly do this essential work without you. This year we plan on many more difficult conversations. We welcome them. We seek them out and embrace them. Because that is where change happens. We hope you will continue to place your trust in the EFC and help us to speak boldly at the national level by standing beside us in partnership.

With your help, here's what we can accomplish together:

- We will meet regularly with MPs and Senators
- Participate in government consultations and committee hearings
- Provide evangelical ministry leaders with critical new research and studies that will enhance the effectiveness of their work
- Host policy briefings for MPs across all party lines; and of course,
- Intervene before the courts on issues of religious freedom, sanctity of life and protection of the vulnerable.

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In 2014 the EFC intervened in Canadian courts five times (the largest number of cases in 10 years) and to meet this unprecedented demand for our unique expertise, we dipped deeply into our reserves. There are already two provincial court religious freedom cases on our schedule and 2015 has barely begun!


Folks, things are not getting any easier in Canada. Let's make 2015 the year where religious freedom is made stronger, not weaker. A year where intelligent and compassionate conversations will be initiated at the highest levels by the EFC, because of your support.

Remember your cousin (or whoever it is that you engage in difficult conversations with)? I'm guessing that after those exchanges end, you actually have a pretty good feeling. You are happy that you were present to defend the faith – and to defend your right to hold that faith. You probably think to yourself: "Somebody had to say it. And I'm glad I did."

When the EFC speaks in Canada's highest courts, we are left with solid results, and yes, a very good feeling. Because you're absolutely right. Somebody has to say it. And we're glad that you have helped us to be there and to say it on behalf of all of us.

Please make our religious freedom a priority by making a donation to The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Annual Campaign today. No gift is too small. Each and every gift empowers us for the work ahead. We would love to hear from you as soon as possible. Let's fight for religious freedom together.

Sincerely,



Bruce Clemenger

P.S. As we begin a new year, we are truly thankful for your prayers and financial support. You can help the EFC to be in the right place, at the right time and encourage our country's leaders to respect the biblical principles upon which our religious freedom stands.

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