

## **PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION**

### **TORONTO CHURCH CHALLENGES ONTARIO LOCKDOWN RULE WHICH PROHIBITS RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS OF MORE THAN 10 PEOPLE.**

On Tuesday, December 8, 2020, an application was filed on behalf of the Toronto International Celebration Church ([www.ticc.ca](http://www.ticc.ca)) in the Superior Court of Justice in Toronto seeking to declare the law that prohibits them from holding in-person church services unconstitutional and of no force and effect.

An affidavit, signed by the Church's Founding Pastor, Peter Youngren, argues that the Ontario law which prohibits the Church from offering in-person services for more than 10 people, violates religious freedoms and that it does not represent a tailored response to the current COVID-19 health crisis.

The current 'Grey Lockdown' rules in Toronto permit indoor gatherings of more than 10 people at box stores, professional sports training facilities, animation and film studios, and other non-essential businesses, which are entitled to operate at up to 50% capacity with social distancing measures in place.

Prior to the lockdown, the Church, which has the capacity to welcome more than 1000 congregants at one time, was operating pursuant to Ontario's Red – Control levels at 30% capacity. They did so safely and following all public health protocols and recommendations. The 10-person limit represents a 99% reduction of the churches in-person capacity, and for all practical purposes amounts to a complete ban on in-person religious services.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association intends to apply as Intervenor in the proceedings. "The limitation on this Charter right has the proportionality of a sledgehammer. This constitutional challenge is much needed to engage the judicial branch in our democracy, so we will seek to be heard by the Court," said CCLA's Executive Director Michael Bryant.

The Church's spokesperson, Pastor Nathan Thurber, commented: "We love our community, and we recognize that many are severely struggling with the effects of fear, isolation and job losses. We believe that now, more than ever, the strength which comes from fellowship together at church is required."

The Church will also be requesting a court order exempting them from compliance with the law until their full Charter challenge can be heard.

**About Toronto International Celebration Church (TICC)**

The Toronto International Celebration Church, founded in 2000 by Peter Youngren, is a Christian Evangelical Church and a registered charity, which services a faith community of more than 1500 worshipers. The Church, and its Lead Pastor, Nathan Thurber, seek to provide an encouraging, positive, and welcoming environment. The church's facility, known as the Toronto Pavilion, is located at 190 Railside Road in North York, and can host over 1000 congregants at one time in its main auditorium. Normally, two or three services are held each Sunday. The Church is multi-cultural with people from many demographics, and provides diverse religious and other supports throughout the community, including counselling services, youth ministry and charity to those in need.

### **About Peter Youngren**

In addition to being the Founding Pastor of the TICC, Peter Youngren leads an international organization, World Impact Ministries, with educational campuses in six nations. Youngren is known for his Friendship Festivals, which have attracted large attendances in more than 60 nations. Youngren also leads a daily telecast, *You Are Loved*, which is broadcast daily on five commercial television channels across Canada.

Further inquiries about this litigation can be directed to:

**TICC's spokesperson, Pastor Nathan Thurber at [nathant@ticc.ca](mailto:nathant@ticc.ca), or to:**

**Lead Counsel, Michael Lacy at [mlacy@btlegal.ca](mailto:mlacy@btlegal.ca)**

**Video statement from Peter Youngren is available at [ticc.ca](http://ticc.ca), or at [peteryoungren.org](http://peteryoungren.org)**