

Dear Fellowship Prairies sister churches,

Below is our brief submission¹ as response to the motion for expulsion. We are praying for you as you consider these matters and commit to accepting the decision of Equip.

1. 2025 Pre-Equip: FPLB refused a third party arbitrator mutually chosen. We argued that if binding arbitration was to take place, it needed to comply with the Arbitration Act, as explicitly required by the Prairies bylaws. We stated that an arbitrator ought not be chosen by a single party. Our numerous offers for how this might be arranged (such as the mediators selecting the arbitrator, or mutually selecting a Christian Arbitration ministry) were all refused by the FPLB.

2. Equip 2025 overruled the FPLB: A Christian Arbitration Ministry *is* permitted. At Equip 2025, we did not argue that Equip should hear all details or read all emails. Instead, we proposed that an arbitration ministry should investigate and create a report which would furnish Equip for the task of making an informed decision. The FPLB argued that Equip was prohibited by the bylaws to do this. Yet, Equip, as is its right, overruled the chair and passed the resolution.

3. Post-Equip 2025: Who has the authority to overrule Equip? The FPLB initially wrote a letter to the churches which indicated that they would comply with the resolution², but later indicated that because their legal counsel suggested that the motion was not in order, they would not comply with it. Legal counsel for the churches advised that the motion was *not* out of order, and that the FPLB was not authorized to overrule a motion made by Equip. Our legal counsel also stated that legal advice is not binding—because legal counsel acts in the interest of those by whom they are employed. Lawyers *make* arguments, they do not *settle* them. Veto authority is granted by governing documents; in this case, it is Equip.

4. Brent was selected by a single party in a dispute. Because this is prohibited by the Arbitration Act, Canadian Law prohibits us from considering this to be *binding arbitration*. That the FPLB believes they have the authority to unilaterally appoint an arbitrator to rule on charges against them - is further evidence of what we have been concerned about for some time.

5. Brent is not a neutral, unbiased third party. As defined by the Acts of Canada and by Scripture, a man of the highest integrity could be disqualified as an Arbiter given conflicts of interest and relationships with one of the parties. In 2025, six pastors formed a steering committee which sought to advance complementarianism in the National FEB. Two of those six pastors are involved in this conflict: Tim Stephens and Derek deVries. In the Fall of 2025, we expressed concern about Brent's office's actions against the complementarian churches in his region—concerns similar to those which we shared about the Regional Director and chair of FPLB³. In October, Brent Chapman wrote a letter to the national fellowship which characterized our communication as slanderous, accusatory and divisive⁴. While Brent oversaw this

¹ [Click here](#) for a more fulsome response. Submissions to Equip are invited by bylaw 3.

² [Click here](#) to find an email sent by Ben Smith on May 12, 2025.

³ [Click here](#) to view the open letter challenging the Pacific Board's actions.

⁴ [Click here](#) to view Brent's letter addressing communication from Derek, Tim et al.

arbitration, he also oversaw the expulsion of 8 churches in his Region under similar circumstances. His office explicitly stated their support of the National Complementarian Motion, publicly promoted by the steering committee, (which received 57% of the National vote) warranted their expulsion⁵. Brent cannot be considered a neutral third party.

6. Brent's investigation is informed by only one party in the dispute. Numerous essential parties declined Brent's request to participate in his arbitration because they believed that to do so would violate the authority of Equip which had already ruled on the matter. Brent's report therefore did not include input from any of the leaders of the three churches in the dispute or from several of the most important witnesses to alleged ethical violations.

7. Authority: Interpreting or violating the bylaws? Brent states that the three churches did not submit to the FPLB's authority to interpret the bylaws⁶. The FPLB does have the responsibility to interpret the bylaws between conventions. However, it is our contention that they have not been merely exercising authority **between** conventions but exercising authority **over and against** convention. There is a strong difference between interpreting bylaws and adding to or subtracting from them. An example of the latter happened after Fairview's mediation was complete and Fairview and the FPLB made written proposals for moving forward. The FPLB's proposal, to avoid arbitration, required Fairview to register through the Region for authority to solemnize marriages rather than directly with Vital Statistics. We would say that this is not an interpretation, but a violation of bylaws, requiring more than they do. This example is representative of the concerns which we have brought privately to the FPLB for some time.

8. Authority: The Churches *did* submit to Equip 2024. Brent's report falsely claims that the churches resisted arbitration prior to Equip 2025 and therefore are guilty of insubordination to the 2024 ruling of Equip. The FPLB turned down all of our proposals which included a Christian Arbitration ministry or a party selected by the Mediators. In the end, two elements of our proposals led to the refusal of the arbitration options we proposed: (1) that the arbitrator be mutually approved, and (2) the right of an arbitrator to share a report for a final Equip decision. At Equip 2025, we argued that the FPLB did not engage section 9 of the bylaws in good faith; they required board members to speak as one voice, did not action the mediator's recommendation to correct false statements made at Equip 2024, did not respond to the proposals of the three churches, and selected an arbitrator contrary to the bylaws. Given that the FPLB did not thus honour the 2024 motion, we argued that this was not merely a dispute but a refusal to operate within the boundaries of the bylaws. We needed, therefore, not dispute resolution, but to follow the sections of the bylaws which address discipline. Equip agreed. Any other organization, upon discovery of critical information, is able to rectify a previous decision. No Act prevents an organization from using new information to revisit a decision.

9. The allegations have never been investigated. These matters flow from charges of unethical behaviour and violations of the bylaws and Acts of Government. While the conflict began with concerns that the FPLB was not enforcing the doctrinal standards of the bylaws, the

⁵ [Click here](#) to view a letter from FEB Pacific.

⁶ [Click here](#) for Brent's full report. Brent lifted confidentiality for the report on March 25, 2026.

response to those concerns has led to allegations that the RD and Chair have lied to committees to get preferred outcomes, that there is a pattern extending for almost a decade of privately meeting with churches to encourage division between churches on spurious grounds (such as homeschool advocacy), and that they removed a Board member in a way which violated the bylaws and the Acts, among other serious allegations. Add now to this list the attempted discipline in 2024 which violated the bylaws, and the FPLB, in 2025, ignoring a resolution of Equip. Brent does not meaningfully deal with these accusations—whether or not they happened, and if so, whether they were violations of the bylaws and/or Acts. The report leans on the assumption that the mediation team disregarded these allegations. Yet, had Brent spoken to the mediation team, he would have known that they did no investigation, interviewed no witnesses, and met only once with the parties to discuss concerns.

10. Vision for Fellowship. While we agree with Brent that the three churches have a different vision for fellowship than that of the FPLB, we disagree with him in two ways. First, we disagree with his characterization of our view, and secondly, we believe that it is our view which corresponds both to the bylaws and to the AoF. We will include his statement in full:

One further observation that emerged especially from the interviews and the mediation reports, is that the Leadership Board and the three churches have a very different vision for what Fellowship Prairies should be. This includes differing assumptions about the meaning of autonomy, the legitimacy of regional authority, the expectations of mutual accountability, and the kind of fellowship that membership in the region is meant to require. The conflict is not rooted in isolated incidents, but in competing views of identity, unity, leadership style, and whether churches are prepared to live within a shared regional framework when they strongly disagree. In this sense, the dispute is not only about what happened, but about what Fellowship Prairies is: whether it is primarily a voluntary association of highly independent churches, or a covenantal fellowship in which membership carries meaningful obligations of trust, restraint, accountability, and shared submission.

We have never argued for “highly independent churches”. Neither have we argued against covenantal fellowship, meaningful obligations of trust, restraint, accountability, shared submission, or living in a regional framework where churches strongly disagree. We have argued repeatedly for clearly defined boundaries which are established by Equip through bylaws and executed by the FPLB who itself owes submission to Equip. The RD and FPLB are not to create expectations or boundaries but to insist on those made through the legislation of Equip.

Conclusion: Sister churches in Christ, we know that this is a difficult matter to address and we would remind you that it was not we who brought it to you; it has been the FPLB who has repeatedly done so. By the Lord’s providence, it has been placed before you and you therefore have the divine responsibility to address this in a biblical and proper manner. If you have concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Each of us would invite your elder teams to examine us (perhaps by Zoom) before you cast your ballot to discipline our churches.

In Christ, Derek deVries, Park City Gospel Church of Winnipeg
with Jason Hagen, Fellowship Baptist Church of Edmonton
and Tim Stephens, Fairview Baptist Church of Calgary