



Physician Assisted Death

The Supreme Court of Canada's decision to strike down the ban on physician-assisted death was unanimous and unambiguous: the current Criminal Code prohibition infringes on the Charter right to life, liberty and security of person for adults who are mentally competent but suffering "grievous and irremediable medical conditions". Once the court made its ruling, it became up to legislator to act.

Death, and all the ways it affects our lives, is not an easy topic to discuss. But it is parliamentarians' responsibility to create new legislation, even though the process may be difficult and may make people uncomfortable. Parliamentarians must speak for their constituents, have the difficult debate, and make the difficult decisions.

In response to the ruling, our Leader Justin Trudeau stated he believed the Supreme Court made the right decisions and that Canada's laws must be consistent with the Court's ruling because it is the right thing to do. This is his personal opinion, however, so he stepped into the void of Conservative inaction and introduced a motion calling on Parliament to take immediate action and appoint a special committee to consider the ruling of the Supreme Court, consult with experts and Canadians, and make recommendations for a legislative framework that respects the Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the priorities of Canadians.

The Conservative majority voted down our motion, shying away from having the difficult debate and making the difficult decision. A Liberal government will not. We will take our jobs seriously, act quickly but thoughtfully. A Liberal government will follow through on our defeated motion and appoint a special committee to consider the ruling of the Supreme Court, consult with experts and Canadians, and make recommendations for a legislative framework that respects the Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the priorities of Canadians.

Quebec's experience shows us, reassuringly, that respectful and responsible deliberation is possible. It reminds us that when political parties set aside their differences in service of the public good, cooperation can follow. Consensus can be found. Even on an issue as complex and sensitive as end-of-life care.

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