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OPINION

# Ottawa must now draft an assisted-suicide law. It should look to Quebec

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On Friday, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the law banning assisted suicide violates constitutional rights. The law, aimed at protecting the vulnerable, reached too broadly by denying physician-assisted death to competent adults whose terminal medical condition inflicts intolerable suffering on them. While the ball is now in Parliament's court, many difficult questions face our elected representatives at the federal and provincial levels.

Quebec's experience on these matters is instructive. In June, Quebec adopted legislation regarding end-of-life-care. The law sets out a rigorous process by which terminally ill individuals can obtain medical aid in dying. It also recognizes a right to receive palliative care. We can draw three lessons.

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First, respectful, meaningful public deliberation on delicate moral and legal questions remains possible. Quebecers had numerous opportunities to participate in the legislative process. The bill that was finally adopted drew support across party lines.

Of course, not everyone in Quebec approves of the law. There's a general sense, however, that the path exemplified the legislative process at its best. This is reassuring at a moment when social media intensify the shrillness of public discourse and it seems that politicians often prefer to leave hard social questions to judges.

In the wake of another recent Charter judgment, the federal government turned its reform regarding sex work into a divisive, ideological exercise. Canadians should demand better from the government on this matter.

Second, Quebec's law shows the complexity of legislating in this area. It's one

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