

## Climate change tops government's priorities but few details laid out in throne speech

The priorities of continuing to address climate, working towards further reconciliation with Canada's First Nations and working together regardless of party for the unity of the country that Gov. Gen. Julie Payette read out on behalf of the new Liberal minority government at the official opening of the Parliament has heartened some social justice and religious groups.

But it is what was not in the speech that worries others.

For those worried that with a minority government that will need the support of other parties in the House to survive going forward, the fact that some of those other parties – the Bloc Quebecois, NDP and Greens – are on the socially-progressive side of the political divide, is cause for concern on issues such as the ongoing expansion of who is legally eligible to request a medically-assisted death because of recent court decisions.

In fact, the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has already indicated that his government is willing to rework the regulations surrounding legally-sanctioned suicide to fall in line with a recent Quebec court decision that struck the reasonably foreseeable natural death requirement that was originally a key component of the assisted-dying regulations.

However, when changes will be put forward to the House has not been announced.



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And with the Quebec government setting up a panel to examine that province's euthanasia regulations in light of the Quebec court decision, the further expansion of legally-sanctioned suicide is the main worry for the [Euthanasia Prevention Coalition](#).

"Canada has sadly become the example of how euthanasia can quickly expand, once legalized," said the coalition's Alex Schadenberg.

He is concerned that the NDP, one of the parties that the Liberal government is expected to rely on for support in the House, has publically taken a more aggressive stance in support of expanding assisted-dying rights under current leader Jagmeet Singh.

"The party's former leadership was very much engaged in pushing for changes to palliative care in Canada and giving people more options for that kind care," Schadenberg said.

The actual Dec. 5 speech from the throne was short in details, as it often is, but more an exercise in laying out priorities.

The government restated its desire to continue pursuing policies to tackle climate change, ban assault-style rifles, and create a national action plan on gender-based violence.

Taking on climate change is an issue that social justice groups such as faith-based groups like [Citizens for Public Justice](#) and organizations such as [Development and Peace](#), which is associated with the Canadian Catholic Church, were hoping to be key priorities for the new government.

As well, those groups continue to call on the Canadian government to go further in reconciliation with Canada's aboriginal peoples, and the throne speech did raise the possibility of passing legislation to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. In November, [B.C. became the first jurisdiction in Canada to adopt UNDRIP](#).

While Conservative Party Leader Andrew Scheer lambasted the speech drafted by the Liberal government as being an insult to Western Canada, in a statement made after the speech Prime Minister Trudeau doubled down on the need to address climate change as being a defining feature of his government.

"Our children and grandchildren will judge us by how we confront the defining challenge of our time – climate change," Trudeau said.

"We must act now to protect the environment, while growing the economy and making life more affordable. This government will continue to lead with a price on pollution, and set an ambitious target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

"We will also support cleaner, more efficient communities and homes, and

protect more of our land and oceans. At the same time, we will work to get Canadian resources to new markets, and provide unwavering support to the hardworking Canadians in our natural resources sectors.”

And in looking back to his party’s election as majority government in 2015, he promised to continue improving relations with Canada’s First Nations.

“In 2015, we promised a new relationship with Indigenous peoples,” he said. “We will continue to move forward in partnership to deliver on the distinct priorities of Indigenous peoples.”