

# Hopes high social justice will top new Trudeau government's agenda

Human rights and climate change are among the issues Catholic and faith-based organizations hope will feature prominently in the throne speech Dec. 5 that will indicate the priorities of the newly-elected minority Liberal government.

A minority government, but with a majority of progressive MPs sitting in the House of Commons, has raised optimism that action on climate change and human rights will be pursued vigorously, but it has also led to deep concern that other issues such as the restrictions around medically-assisted dying will be eased even further than recent court cases have required.

Justin Trudeau and the Liberals were returned to power following the Oct. 21 federal election but with a reduced number of seats from its previous majority. That means the Liberals will have to rely on support from other parties to get its mandate through.

"We are very hopeful that we will see some movement on some of the key issues we have been raising," said Elana Wright, an advocacy officer with [Development and Peace](#). "Both the NDP and the Bloc (Quebecois) support a lot of our demands. It does create a real opportunity for the Trudeau Liberals to join them and move some of these things forward."

Among the issues Development and Peace, the international development arm of the Canadian Catholic bishops, wants action on are an increase in international aid, an ombudsman with real powers to investigate as needed the activities of Canadian mining and overseas companies and that future trade discussions take human rights concerns into account.

The faith-based organization Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) said in a statement that as the "new parliament prepares to take office, CPJ looks forward to working with newly elected MPs from all parties to enhance cooperation to address the climate crisis and ensure a just transition, address systemic racism in Canada and the barriers faced by the most vulnerable refugees coming here, and reduce economic and social inequality so that Canada meets our commitment to end poverty in Canada by 2030."

For CPJ a "just transition" from fossil fuels includes taking into account how climate change policies will impact provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan where the economy is heavily reliant on the oil industry.

"Canada has long benefited from the contributions of Alberta – and Albertans – to the economy," said CPJ senior policy analyst Karri Munn-Venn. "Just as we all feel the impacts of climate change, we all feel the impacts of climate policy."

“This is why a just transition is so important. In a just transition, the burden of change is shared across society. A just transition reduces emissions, creates good jobs and supports individuals and communities vulnerable to change.”

But with the Liberals likely relying on support from the NDP and Bloc on a number of social issues, the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition fears regulations restricting assisted-dying rights in Canada will continue to erode.

A recent court decision in Quebec quashed the section of Canada’s euthanasia law requiring that a person’s natural death must be reasonably foreseeable. Both the federal and Quebec governments decided not to appeal that court ruling, which gave the governments six months to bring assisted-dying regulations in line with the ruling.

Justice Minister David Lametti is one of five Liberals who voted against the original bill allowing medical aid in dying because it did not go far enough on the issue of who qualified to give consent for an assisted death and that does not bode well for those worried about the further expansion of who can consent for the procedure.

“When they brought it in there was supposed to be a review after five years, but the courts keep changing the restrictions and the government is not challenging those decisions,” said Alex Schadenberg of the [Euthanasia Prevention Coalition](#).