

Court approves Ontario's 1st doctor-assisted death

March 17 2016

A Canadian judge on Thursday agreed that doctors may help a terminally ill man die, the first case in Ontario and the third in the country where someone has pursued an exemption to the law on assisted suicide under a recent Supreme Court ruling.

Neither the federal nor provincial government opposed the 81-year-old man's request. The man, who is identified only by his initials in the ruling, was diagnosed in 2012 with lymphoma.

Under Canadian law, doctor-assisted suicide is still a crime. However, the Supreme Court last year struck down laws that bar doctors from helping someone die, but put the ruling on hold for one year. Quebec has its own legislative regime on the issue.

In February, the court granted the government a four-month extension but said the terminally ill could ask courts for an exemption to the ban during that period.

The judge said the married grandfather's condition and circumstances meet all the criteria for the exemption, which included him being mentally competent, in extreme pain, and freely making the assisted-death request without coercion or manipulation.

The judge also noted the man's family and doctors support his request.

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