

ORCIE Offerings

August 2024, Issue #3



ORCIE is the Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology, where Catholic religious are collaboratively increasing their impact on policy change for ecological justice and reconciliation.

Global Treaty to Control Plastics Pollution: Sue Wilson's Takeaways



Sue Wilson, Executive Director of the Office for Systemic Justice (Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada) was one of the 2,500 delegates from 174 countries gathered at the fourth session of the United Nations Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution, held in Ottawa in April 2024. The committee was set up to develop an international, legally-binding treaty targeting plastics pollution by the end of 2024. The overall goal is to eliminate plastic waste by 2040. A fifth, and final session, is scheduled for November this year in South Korea.

Sue outlines some of the concerns behind the negotiations: every year, over 430 million tons of plastic are produced, much of which ends up in our waterways, forests, and even our food. Developed countries, including Canada, often ship their plastic waste overseas, contributing to this global issue. Scientists have long raised alarm about the chemicals in plastics and the risk they pose to human health and the environment.

According to Sue, the major issue of debate during the Ottawa meeting was that "[while] **civil society groups** are calling for countries to adopt a legally-binding target to slash plastic production 78 percent by 2040...[the] **fossil fuel lobbyists** are working hard to ensure the final draft of the treaty won't contain a cut in plastic production...they were focused on recycling but without committing to putting the infrastructure in place for large-scale recycling." Sue reflects that such an approach "relies on the myth of recycling," ignoring data that shows that "only 9% of plastic gets recycled... [and that] most plastic is just not recyclable". For Sue, real solutions will involve significant cuts in plastic production.



Global Mail picture: sculpture "Giant Plastic Tap" by Canadian artist Benjamin Von Wong, displayed outside the INC-4 session on plastic pollution - Ottawa on April 22. (Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press)

Sue noticed tension in meetings over fair representation of international stakeholders. A key issue was that "some civil society delegates were pushing for more representation and **participation by Indigenous Peoples**, whose communities are among those most affected by plastic pollution." She observed that civil society groups also demanded a "**human rights-based approach to negotiations**," including a "**just transition** for impacted communities and plastic waste workers."

In Canada, Sue highlighted that while environmental groups advocate for production caps on plastic, the government is focusing on measures like phasing out harmful chemicals, restricting single-use plastics, increasing recycling, and creating a **Plastic Registry** – a monitoring and reporting measure for companies on plastic production, recycling and reuse.

As nations continue to negotiate an agreement in the final session, civil society groups will work for it to be as just and ambitious as possible.



WHAT'S NEW?

Welcome, Sasquia Antúñez Pineda, ORCIE Researcher



In July, ORCIE welcomed Sasquia as a Researcher on a contract basis. Sasquia's diverse background includes social justice work, education, and theology. She has led ecological justice campaigns with the organization *Aire Puro* in Honduras, targeting lead removal from gasoline. In Canada, she led the "For Our Common Home" campaign with *Development and Peace - Caritas Canada* in 2019. With over seven years of teaching experience, she holds a Master of Theology and Community Development from the Toronto School of Theology. Sasquia is also vice-chair of the *Association for a More Just Society (ASJ Canada)*, focusing on social justice issues in Honduras.

Sasquia belongs to *St. Mark the Evangelist* Parish in Gatineau, QC, which is led by an Oblate priest. Sasquia is a wife, mother of two daughters, and a proud owner of a dog and a parrot.



IN COALITION



Season of Creation: September 1- October 4

The Season of Creation is a special period for **Christians to unite** in caring for our common home. It's a time to pause and heed the call of Creation, reflecting on how we can collaboratively nurture our environment – our shared "mother nature"— to inspire hope for a better world. We are reminded that the Earth is a gift from our Creator, and we hold the responsibility to protect it.

This year's theme is **"To Hope and Act with Creation,"** symbolized by "The Firstfruits of Hope," based on Romans 8:19-25. The Bible portrays Earth as a mother in labor (Rom 8:22), a notion echoed by Saint Francis of Assisi, who referred to Earth as our sister and mother in his Canticle of Creatures. Unfortunately, we often exploit Earth as a mere resource rather than recognizing our interconnectedness with Earth as a divine gift. Our unsustainable actions contribute to the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and widespread suffering due to the increasing volume and intensity of catastrophic climate events.

Creation teaches us that hope requires **active effort** and anticipation for a better future (cf. Rom 8:20-21), as opposed to passive waiting. By working in harmony with Creation, we can turn our challenges into new opportunities for life.

We invite you to join ORCIE in **prayer** and **collective action**, responding to the cries of Creation and caring for our common home. **Show your support by signing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty's Faith Letter as a congregation here:**

<https://fossilfuel treaty.org/faith-letter#faith-letter>

To download the Celebration Guide visit :

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SW3Ua9iec1dZwVSO_TqNxDs8XgfHZZI1/view



*The firstfruits of hope
(Rom 8:20-21)*



ON THE HILL

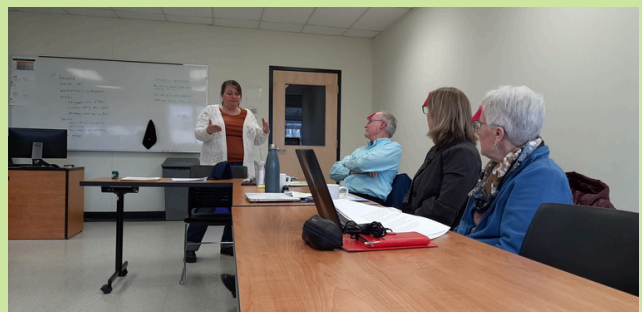
Learning and Lobbying: Embracing the energy transition

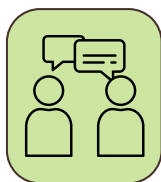
In March 2024, ORCIE organized a three-day “Learning & Lobbying” series, which culminated in in-person meetings on Parliament Hill in Ottawa with MPs and top civil servants to discuss the transition away from fossil fuels, with a particular focus on **capping emissions**. Eight participants from various congregations attended the event, with most traveling from outside Ottawa.

The L&L process prepared two small teams to meet with MPs and top civil servants on Parliament Hill. Our preparation began with an **online panel discussion on Canada's transition away from fossil fuels** with guest speaker **Alex Cool-Fergus, National Policy Manager with CAN-Rac** and led by Genevieve Gallant, Executive Director of ORCIE and Sue Wilson, CSJ, PhD - Office for Systemic Justice, Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada. This session addressed two key questions to consider in preparation for meetings with MPs and senior civil servants:

1. What are the legislative actions and moments to leverage right now in our transition to clean energy?
2. Where and how can we act to be a part of a ‘new reset’, understanding there is no room for new oil and gas production in Canada?

The second step involved an **in-person presentation** titled “**Brass tacks: Multilateralism from below,**” led by Genevieve Gallant, Executive Director of ORCIE at St. Paul University, Ottawa, followed by lunch. This session covered a review of the ORCIE’s lobby guide, report-back documents, policy briefs, and elevator speech. We also trained participants for MP meetings and ended with small group discussions to set specific meeting goals.





ON THE HILL

Learning and Lobbying: Embracing the energy transition

The final step involved participants from the different congregations holding **in-person meetings on the Hill with MP's and top civil servants** ending with a concrete 'ask'. This final step concluded with a debrief and dinner to share experiences and feedback.



Team 1 met with Francesco Sorbara, MP Vaughn-Woodbridge (ON). From left: Sabrina Chiefari, Creation Care Animator for the Sisters of St. Joseph, Toronto; Darlene O'Leary, Martha Justice Ministry Coordinator for the Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish; Joan Atkinson, CSJ; and Joe Gunn, Executive Director of Le Centre Oblat.



Team 1 met with Frank DesRosiers, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Innovation Sector, National Resources Canada.



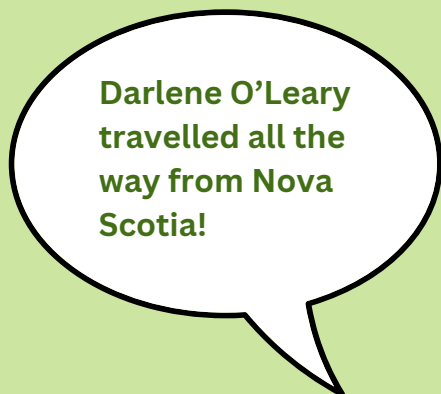
Team 2 met with Michael Zinck, Assistant Deputy Minister of Strategic Policy at Environment and Climate Change Canada (Centre). From left: Deirdre Pike, SSND Associate for the School Sisters of Notre Dame; Sue Wilson, Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph Canada (CSJ); Genevieve Gallant, Executive Director of ORCIE; Heather Rousselle, Associate of the Congregation of Notre Dame.



ON THE HILL

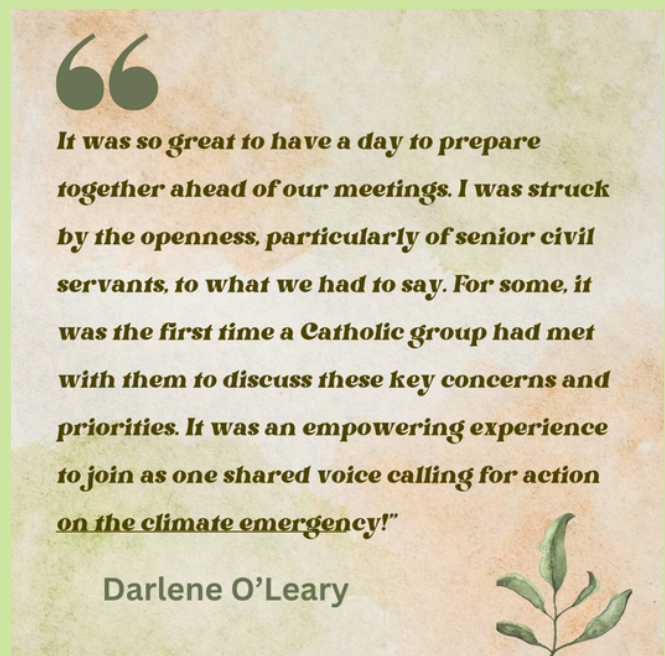
Learning and Lobbying: Embracing the energy transition

A notable aspect of this session was that ORCIE representatives met with **high-level government staff**, including senior policy advisors on the environment and climate change. They discussed a policy brief focused on ending the fossil fuel era and reducing the emissions of oil and gas companies.



Learn more from Deirdre Pike’s reflections on this article:

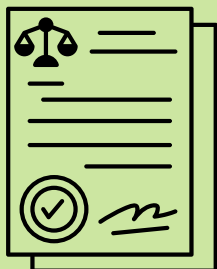
<https://atlanticmidwest.org/posts/visiting-hill-canada-orcie>





LEGISLATION

The Canadian Sustainable Jobs Acts, 2024



The Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act has been a move in the right direction, but there is still more ground to cover to bring about an equitable energy transition that is inclusive and leaves no one behind.

Bill C-50 (44-1) received Royal Assent in June 2024, becoming a law in Canada. The purpose of this act is to “facilitate and promote economic growth, the creation of sustainable jobs and support for workers and communities in Canada in the shift to a net-zero economy...”

See document here:

<https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/bill/C-50/royal-assent>

This act requires the federal government to develop additional programs and policies to bring about an equitable economy for all that upholds Indigenous rights and ecological integrity, to align with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Canada’s international climate commitments.

This act became a reality thanks to the push from labour, environmental organizations, community leaders, and Flood Parliament organizers, despite the opposition from the Conservative Party, who stalled its implementation when it was first called “The Just Transition Act”.

But there is still more ground to cover:

A weakness of the Sustainable Jobs Act is its allowance for “transition” technologies like carbon capture and storage (CCS) as opportunities for sustainable jobs, despite uncertainties about their effectiveness in decarbonization and emission reductions. This provision enables the fossil fuel industry to continue operating as usual, impeding a fair transition to sustainability.

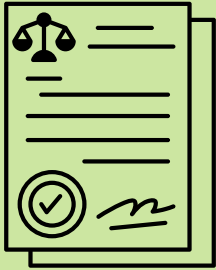
For more information, read this interesting article from The Council of Canadians:

<https://canadians.org/analysis/sustainable-jobs-act-become-law-now-what/>



LEGISLATION

The Changes to Canada's Competition Act



Bill C-59: Assented in June 2024, includes an amendment focused on **truth-in-advertising**. This amendment will mandate that companies from all sectors provide evidence to **support their environmental claims**. While not specifically targeted at the oil and gas industry, the Bill will penalize oil and gas 'greenwashing'– false, misleading, or deceptive environmental claims made for the purpose of promoting a product or a business interest.

Not surprisingly, this Bill faces opposition from fossil fuels conglomerates because its provisions will have a significant impact on how companies market and promote their efforts to reduce their environmental footprint and address global climate change causes and effects. Climate advocacy and think tank groups have long been critical of environmental claims made by the oil and gas sector on the basis that investment in fossil fuel production is inconsistent with reaching global climate goals, as well as questioning the gap between energy industries pledges and their actions:



...The six Pathways member companies (CNRL, Cenovus, ConocoPhillips, Imperial, MEG, Suncor) deleted their corporate sustainability reports from their own websites, also apparently in response to provisions in the omnibus bill about a basic expectation that companies, of all shapes and forms, should be able to back up environmental claims with real evidence.

-- MC Bouchard, Program Director Oil and Gas, Pembina Institute

What is certain is that the passing of Bill C-59 truly caused a strong response from the energy industry because now their environmental claims will need to be substantiated with proof!

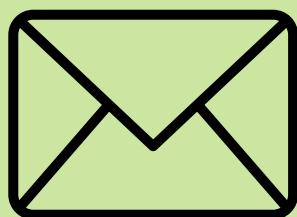
For more information, read this interesting article:

<https://www.pembina.org/blog/greenwashing-legislation-has-resulted-less-talk-pathways-about-their-emissions-reduction>



CALL TO ACTION

Write a letter to your local Bishop or Archbishop!



We invite ORCIE members to make your voice heard in your local community by writing a letter to your local Bishop or Archbishop urging them to consider **taking personal and diocesan action on divesting financial assets from fossil fuel companies.**

To facilitate your efforts, we are providing a **sample letter** and **resources** here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SUujwAnaarqa5Tbcd3DS3i7mEtBZxndL/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=114497971213817498105&rtpof=true&sd=true>

If you need further help crafting the letter, **Agnes Richard** is here for you should you need support. You can contact her at arichard@faithcommongood.org

As we welcome the beauty of fall and the changing colors of nature, let us also embrace this season as a time to lift our voices in advocacy. This is a wonderful opportunity to come together and champion the issues that hold deep significance for us all!

**Prayer for
courage to
speak truth
to power**



Xavier Jeyaraj, SJ
Member of LSM Global
Membership Council
and Board of Directors,
India/Italy

God our Father and Mother
You are the source of all power that exists on earth
All powers proceed from You
inviting us to share and participate in its play
each according to our calling - in the service of life on earth.
In each passing generation, from Old Testament to today
You have raised up leaders and prophets
and they spoke the truth boldly and clearly.
You endowed Your leaders with needed courage
to speak truth to the kings and rulers
men and women who felt in their hearts
the suffering of the poor and heard the cry of the earth
and used their voices to ease the pain of the powerless and
voiceless.

Laudato Si' Movement Prayer Book



CALL TO ACTION

Invitation to Prayer: Jubilee Year



In the Jubilee Year 2000, Canada responded to Pope John Paul's call to cancel the debts of Global South countries, collecting a record number of petition signatures. The Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative successfully convinced the Chretien government to cancel bilateral debt from several highly indebted poor nations, contributing to over \$100 billion in debt relief for 35 of the world's poorest countries. Following this, the Make Poverty History campaign, supported by celebrities like Bob Geldof and Bono, further advocated for global poverty relief.

However, debt relief alone is not enough. Without structural reforms to the global financial system, such relief will remain a temporary fix. **In 2025, we must push for governments to eliminate tax havens, levy currency transactions (Tobin Tax), and establish a UN-based multilateral debt mechanism, rather than relying solely on the IMF and World Bank.**

Pope Francis now highlights a new injustice: the **“ecological debt” between the global North and South**. This debt reflects the fact that while there is a disproportionate consumption of resources by wealthier nations, catastrophic climate events tend to hit less developed nations harder, **leaving those who contributed least to the climate crisis suffering the most.**

ORCIE will join the international faith community journey to justice through the Jubilee Year 2025!



WHO IS ORCIE?

- Congregation Notre Dame-Visitation Province
- Congregation of Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary
- Jesuits of Canada
- Les Soeurs Franciscaines Missionnaires de l'Immaculée-Conception
- Les Ursulines de l'Union Canadienne
- Presentation Sisters
- Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
- Œuvres Marie-Anne-Lavallé (Franciscan Oblates St Joseph)
- Scarboro Missions
- Sisters Faithful Companion of Jesus
- Sisters of Holy Cross
- Sisters of Mercy
- Sisters of our Lady of the Missions
- Sisters of St. Joseph Canada
- Sisters of St. Joseph Toronto
- Sisters of St. Joseph, Sault Ste. Marie
- Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish
- Sisters of St. Martha, Charlottetown
- Society of the Sacred Heart
- Soeurs de St. Joseph de St Vallier
- Sault Ste Marie Sisters of St. Joseph

JOIN US!



ORCIE invites religious congregations who are interested in joining to reach out to:

**Sasquia Antúñez Pineda,
ORCIE Researcher:
Tel. 647-782-8068
Email: sapineda@orcie.org**

