

## #005

### **- EcoJustice Committee - Report to General Synod , May 1998**

#### ***Mandate:***

From its creation at General Synod in 1995, the EcoJustice Committee has undertaken to articulate for itself and the church, a working understanding of the name "*EcoJustice*" and its working *terms of reference*. The Strategic Plan set out its mandate particularly in Priority D as:

*Advocate social justice and prophetic mission within Canada, especially in indigenous people's concerns and social, economic and environmental justice issues.*

From the beginning, the EcoJustice Committee described itself as a standing committee of the Anglican Church of Canada which is engaged with a broad range of justice issues in a wholistic or *ecological* framework, and with a broad range of ecumenical and social partners in Canada, working primarily in the areas of environment, economics, social inclusion and peacebuilding.

The committee developed the following statement to interpret its mission and starting point for the multi-faceted justice work in which it chose to engage:

*The primary mandate of the EcoJustice Committee is to pursue vigorously the church's commitment to the integrity of God's creation, being accountable for the legacy created and the implications for the future. This requires us to challenge attitudes and structures that cause injustice, primarily in Canada, but also within an increasingly interconnected global context in which we all live and move and have our being, recognizing that conditions in Canada influence and are influenced by conditions in other parts of the world.*

In its first report to COGS it proclaimed: "Justice is at the *heart*, not the *fringe* of the church".

From there it developed a set of hallmarks and criteria for assessing all potential projects and work initiatives. With particular attention to theological reflection as a foundation for everything, they considered each item, for example, according to its:

clear vision of justice-making  
creativity and innovation

integration of various perspectives: social, economic, environmental, peace  
making connections between local, regional, national, global

collaboration with ecumenical and social partners

leadership development for transformation of communities in church and society

### ***The Committee and Staff:***

The 14 members all demonstrated a passion for living out justice in their lives and were all active in various issues in their own communities and networks. They were supported by the work of staff, initially by the creation of one executive coordinator for EcoJustice and 1/2 support staff under the shared director of the Partnerships department, then gradually another 1/2 time executive coordinator for Mission and Justice Education, increased support staff and eventually partial executive participation from Indigenous Justice and Faith, Worship & Ministry. They met 5 times in the triennium, supplemented by the Chair's Advisory Committee conference calls.

The committee spent a good deal of time exploring the values which undergird its priorities, and describing a more wholistic vision of what the gospel is calling the church to proclaim today. It struggled with the meaning of 'community' for our church and its people in an increasingly global society. In its own 3-year life cycle, it experienced many of the marks of authentic community as its members experienced and shared normal as well as dramatic changes in their lives.

It witnessed 3 weddings, one separation and divorce, 2 births, grandchildren born, one 25th anniversary; changes in names, status, jobs, houses, parishes, countries, incomes; serious family and health crises and finally one untimely death. On February 12, 1998, it said farewell to one of its members, Garfield Warren from Mount Pearl, Nfld. after a brief illness. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Garfield's challenge to "risk it" became a watchword to the members.

### ***Ways of Working:***

Consistent with the Strategic Plan directive to develop and facilitate networks in partnership with dioceses and parishes, for education, advocacy and action, the committee met in different locations across Canada and dedicated one day of each agenda to meeting with local justice-seekers. This was a rich experience, always ranking high on meeting evaluations. It helped to build relationships, a data base, and direction for program and policy development.

The committee also took seriously the directives of General Synod to concentrate on new ways of working collaboratively with other standing committees and has brought forward throughout its term joint resolutions to the Council of General Synod (COGS) on, for instance:

the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report (RCAP), with the Anglican Council for Indigenous Peoples (ACIP);  
recognition of status for the Labrador Métis, with ACIP and Council of the North;

Jubilee Initiative, with the Primate's Fund (PWRDF) and Partners in Mission (PIM); Socially Responsible Investment, with Financial Management & Development (FMD) and Pensions.

It has consulted with Faith Worship & Ministry (FWM) on the Human Rights Principles, referred to it last General Synod, for which it is bringing forward a resolution to this Synod.

It has been ably represented on the Mission Coordination Group (MCG) by Sharon Lee, of Kingston.

The EcoJustice Committee is committed to exploring new ways of working and spreading the work of justice-making across Canada.

***Coalitions:***

One of the functions in the terms of reference was to *"engage in social, economic and environmental justice and peace issues by initiating and responding in partnership with ecumenical and other social groups"*. The committee has held as a high priority its relationship with and funding support for a number of the Ecumenical Social Justice Coalitions as extensions of our church's ministry of justice and peace-making. This is an intentional adherence to the *Lund principle to "act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel us to act separately"*.

The committee has ensured Anglican participation in research, advocacy and education through staff and volunteer representation on the following coalitions and councils:

ARC (Aboriginal Rights Coalition)

CCJC (the Churches' Council on Justice and Corrections)

CPAC (Coalitions Priorities and Administration Committee)

CNPHA (Canadian Non-Profit Housing Association - renamed "Raising the Roof")

ECEJ (Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice)

ECDEC (Ecumenical Decade in Solidarity with Women Coordinating Committee)

ICCE (InterChurch Committee on Ecology)

ICWGVSA (InterChurch Working Group on Violence and Sexual Abuse)

PLURA (InterChurch Association to Promote Social Justice in Canada)

PP ( Project Ploughshares)

TCCR (Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility)

UCSN (Urban Core Support Network)

WICC (Women's Inter Church Council of Canada)

It has also supported the project work of some smaller and more regional coalitions, usually in partnership with dioceses.

Over the course of its tenure, the committee invited resource people from at least five of these coalitions, in addition to one from CAWG (Canada Asia Working

Group), to meet with them to help build our connection with these bodies, to share information, perspectives and concerns relating to common projects. It has also hosted meetings for our Anglican ecumenical representatives to gather and share common questions and ideas.

A top priority for the EcoJustice Committee was its major financial support for and participation in the ecumenical Faith and Justice Training project, *Building a Moral Economy*. The project was designed to increase fluency among people of faith in analysing economic realities and globalization, and in theological reflection. It has been offered in 20 communities across Canada to help build, facilitate and animate networks around economic and social justice. The enthusiastic response has been encouraging, especially as church and social partners have begun to collaborate on strategies and action to promote a *just and moral economy for sustainable communities*.

In addition to annual grants to coalitions and this special training project, EcoJustice sponsored individual projects undertaken by different coalitions. For example, the Committee funded two major initiatives of Project Ploughshares: a Roundtable Series on Abolishing Nuclear Weapons, and the 20th Century Anniversary Conference on Demilitarization and Peacebuilding. A grant was approved for the Aboriginal Rights Coalition to develop an ecumenical awareness raising program on the work of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). The Coalition produced *As Long as the Sun Rises and the River Flows*, an education and resource kit on Land Rights and Treaty Rights and developed a leadership development program to introduce it to communities across Canada.

All of the ecumenical coalitions are required by their sponsoring denominations to regularly re-examine their priorities and directions in consultation with their partners and constituencies. This “remandating” process has begun for four coalitions to which EcoJustice relates: the Ecumenical Coalition on Economic Justice (ECEJ), the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR), the InterChurch Association to Promote Social Justice in Canada (PLURA), and the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC). Through staff and volunteer appointments to these coalitions, the Anglican Church of Canada has a voice in shaping their future work, consistent with our own emerging priorities and needs.

After more than twenty years of providing annual development grants to PLURA for anti-poverty work in Canada, the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund decided to find another home for this body. The EcoJustice Committee received approval to enlarge its budget in order to take on this role. Effective in 1998, the Anglican Church of Canada will contribute to and participate in the work of PLURA through the EcoJustice Committee.

***Networking and Justice Education:***

In response to expressed concerns about the rapidly expanding expectations of churches to respond to economic and social needs by providing shelters, clothing, health and social services and food, the EcoJustice Committee explored ways to extend the discourse on justice vs. charity. The *Magnificat* network, a grassroots network of Anglicans involved in local social justice initiatives, was regarded as a major vehicle for pursuing this exploration.

EcoJustice and *Magnificat* co-sponsored an event on the theme of “*Ancient Roots - New Routes*” for networking and analysis. This event gathered 60 people in Winnipeg for four days in January 1998. Participants’ evaluations indicated that the goals of building supportive relationships among people involved in social change efforts and learning about one another’s local and national efforts were very well met. The goals of deepening analysis, identifying needed changes in the socio-political context, and developing follow-up proposals for policy and action were less successfully met. There was general agreement at the end of our time together that a great deal of healing and understanding needs to grow between non-indigenous and indigenous Anglicans if we are to undertake meaningful justice work in Canada.

The Committee identified the need for an initiative with people involved at the parish level in *foodbanks* to learn more about food security issues and the underlying causes of poverty and hunger in Canada, and to provide resources to help congregations make the connection between the rise of foodbanks and larger economic trends. EcoJustice has recommended that over the next triennium this question be highlighted in the context of the theme of Jubilee, and that a special consultation of food bank activists be organized.

The EcoJustice Committee treated as a top priority the direction in the Strategic Plan regarding networking. To this end, in addition to the above activities, they have started to *build a database* from diocesan contacts, local gatherings and special events, as a networking tool for information sharing, for cooperation in advocacy and learning, and for urgent action.

A highlight of their meeting in February, 1997 was a joint session with members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada Commission on Social Concerns and Public Policy. Members explored mutual concerns and agreed this should be the first of many joint sessions as our two churches build their relationship in the years ahead.

### ***Advocacy Campaigns:***

The work of *stimulating theological and ethical reflection in the wider church* has been done often through *developing advocacy strategies and undertaking appropriate actions*. In the case of the World Council of Churches Climate Change Petition, reflection on our place in God's creation and our responsibility to our partners in

most vulnerable areas of the world led to an active participation, in cooperation with TCCR/ICCE, in circulating the petition and participating in follow-up strategies, including presentation to the Prime Minister. The committee is supporting ongoing work re; greenhouse gas reduction post-Kyoto, and the signed Convention on Climate Change.

The introduction of the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) in the '96 Federal Budget involved the committee in examining the impact of major cuts on Canadian social institutions, and on the most vulnerable in society. With the gospel imperative that there is a better vision for a just society and that there are always alternatives, a Solidarity Fast was enjoined on April 1, 1996. This was proclaimed in many parts of the country as church people joined others in their communities in public witness.

Concurrently, the EcoJustice Committee participated with many social partners in the preparation and launch of the Alternative Federal Budget, as it has each year since. It signed a joint letter from the churches to the Prime Minister and Finance Minister entitled, "*What does our God Require of Us?*". The '97 letter was entitled, "*Restless for the Reign of God.*" Education Kits for church communities were created by ECEJ.

It also registered its critique of the Child Benefit Tax with the Finance Minister, asking him to respond to the broader causes of poverty in families.

In the fall of '97, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Vancouver was an occasion to participate in reflection on the impact of emerging trade policy on our international partners and on our country. Working with CAWG, the committee participated in disseminating a Primer on "*APEC: Why should Christians Care?*"; in encouraging local Anglicans in BC to participate in the People's Summit on APEC; in engaging in an international ecumenical roundtable on globalization. They issued a Press Statement to all media, saying "APEC forum fails Christian criteria for a just and moral economy."

A recent campaign being undertaken is ethical reflections on the MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment), working with ECEJ to stimulate local response and action through an educational resource, and with other social partners to advocate for a more democratic process when major changes in government fiscal and trade policy are being made. There is a resolution being brought to this Synod to that effect.

One campaign they have participated in the planning of, to be launched this year as part of the broader Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative (more about that below), is the *International Debt Petition*, which is part of a global Jubilee 2000 petition campaign to the leaders of the G8 countries and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. It calls for the cancellation of the outstanding debt of the poorest countries in the world. Again, educational resources to examine the theological, ethical and practical dynamics of the situation of unpayable debts

are being developed. This campaign will go until April, '99 in collaboration with many international and ecumenical partners.

***Policy Development:***

In keeping with its responsibility to *propose policy recommendations and priorities to the Church*, the committee as noted above, has successfully brought forward resolutions on our church's position on Climate Change, which were forwarded to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). It collaborated on developing our church policy stands re: the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), status for the Labrador Métis, Socially Responsible Investment and Jubilee.

It has responded to various issues referred to it by last General Synod such as: the decline of fisheries on both East and West coast, by encouraging communication between related dioceses, and supporting community development in Newfoundland;

supporting land claims settlements, by contributing to the Gitksan/Delgamuukw leaders travelling to the Supreme Court; participating in the Sacred Assembly; monitoring the developments at Voisey's Bay, Labrador and consulting with local church partners; and by actively promoting and supporting the work of ARC;

opposition to and reduction of nuclear weapons, by supporting the World Court Project; opposing French Nuclear testing; promoting the Ploughshares Roundtables on Nuclear Abolition; and affirming related statements to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) on behalf of the international Anglican Peace and Justice Network (APJN);

call for reform of Bretton Woods Institutions, IFI's (International Financial Institutions), such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund through its participation in roundtables on international finance and globalization with the APJN; lobbying at the UN and the World Bank in Washington; participation in the Fifty Years is Enough campaign; and supporting the research and development of a possible Tobin Tax campaign as part of a Jubilee Initiative;

peace dividend and base closures, was only narrowly addressed through continued communications with the diocese of Eastern Newfoundland re: Happy Valley/Goose Bay; and ongoing support for the conflict resolution work of Project Ploughshares; as well as the promotion of peace-making and a redefinition of "security" through the APJN;

working towards the elimination of prostitution as an economic justice issue, by coordinating the participation of a delegation of 14 Anglican women to the Beijing NGO Forum in '95 and the policy formation and lobbying there; raising the feminization of poverty through the Ecumenical Decade and the Women and Economic Justice (WEJ) working group; and by promoting participation of

Anglican women in the Women's Caravan and March Against Poverty, June '96, called "Bread and Roses; Jobs and Justice."

The challenging work of revisiting the Human Rights Principles as they were referred back for comment and recommendation, given their long and difficult history, was the dedicated work of a small group, supported by the rest of the committee, in consultation with members of the FWM as well as many others, including the metropolitans. The resolution that is coming forward to this synod for a "*Covenant of Protection*", after many drafts, is the result of that significant work.

The equally challenging attempt to address a wholistic policy framework to support the various strands of justice incorporated in "*ecojustice*" has, so far been best integrated in a document prepared for the churches by ICCE (the InterChurch Committee on Ecology) in preparation for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD V) and Earth Summit II, entitled "*Toward Sustainable Community: Five Years Since the Earth Summit*". It brings together issues of an economic, environmental and social nature as they intersect in communities and make them either sustainable or unsustainable. It lays out a multi-faceted policy framework, wherein each of the many parts can be supported individually or together. The committee commends this to the church, as it has been commended to several departments of the Federal Government, and by the WCC to all national Missions to the United Nations, with favourable response. An enabling resolution is being brought forward to this Synod to encourage its study and use.

#### ***Other Projects:***

The committee actively seeks and welcomes partners to work on priority issues. Several of the projects it has funded have already been mentioned. Sometimes it has granted seed money for the early stages of a longer program; sometimes it has contributed a small amount to increase the base of community support and involvement for a worthy project; sometimes it has started or joined the ecumenical pool of resources for a shared need; always it has used an evaluation tool of established criteria to further the ends of its vision and responsibilities.

Some other project grants have included:

Abbotsford Arts/Peace Festival, Abbotsford, British Columbia

Fire & the Rose: Churches Exploring Abuse and Healing, Calgary, Alberta

Genesis Land Conservancy, Regina, Saskatchewan

Bridging Class & Ethnic Barriers in Urban Community, Toronto, Ontario

Women in Crisis Project, Ottawa, Ontario

Shibogama Tribal Council government presentation, Kingfisher & Wunnumin Lake, Ontario

Raising the Roof: long term solutions to homelessness, Toronto, Ontario

Developing Sustainable Communities, Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador



One of the largest ecumenical projects the committee has supported is the preparation for the End of the Decade in Solidarity with Women in Church and Society celebration and conference; "*Daring Hope/ Oser l'espoir*", which is scheduled for Guelph, Ontario, August 25 - 30, 1998, and is expecting to attract over 800 women and men.

The themes of the Decade have been priority issues for the committee as they have included, among others: violence against women, poverty, racism and exclusion of women from full and equal participation at all levels. One of the most important and difficult tasks is to explore and demonstrate what it means to be *in solidarity*. A particularly sensitive issue has been how the church is in solidarity with indigenous women in Canada.

### ***Emerging Trends and Work for the Future:***

Probably the most far-reaching program anticipated to emerge from the churches in Canada is the *Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative*. Initial research and planning among various coalitions and denominations has produced a Vision Statement and a Draft Declaration or Call to Jubilee to stretch across the millennium date until 2001. With the theme: "*A New Beginning/ Un re-nouveau*", it will focus on the biblical imperatives of Jubilee which include the release of the captives, the renewal of the earth and the redistribution of wealth.

There many different suggestions of how our church might engage in celebrating this idea and this time and might take advantage of the opportunity for deepening theological reflection, spiritual growth, teaching and learning, doing analysis and taking action for transformation of society. Committees are now working to identify possible advocacy campaigns, (such as the Debt Petition), explore theological themes for study, prepare educational and promotional materials, and develop communications strategies so that the maximum exchange from local, to regional, to national, to international, to local... can be fostered.

The EcoJustice Committee encourages the whole church to find appropriate ways for Anglicans to get involved in Jubilee and to make a difference. It is committing resources and time to the undertaking and calls on dioceses and parishes to do likewise.

Much has been indicated about work undertaken on economic justice. The increasing reality and impact of economic *globalization*, especially of trade and investment, is having such dramatic and long term effects on civil society that much of our research and analysis must be dedicated to understanding those forces. There is much to suggest that the negative effects far outweigh the positive as national and international economic policies are radically restructured

to suit strong corporate interests, without the balance on behalf of human society and communities or the global environment being considered.

The effects of deregulation, structural adjustment, and the growth of speculative capital in what is becoming known as the "global financial casino" are being felt in all kinds of ways in Canada and around the world. Erosion of environmental protections, clearcutting of forests, demise of the fisheries, loss of agricultural lands, rural disparity, increase in greenhouse gas emissions, cuts to social programs, continued high levels of unemployment, and currency crises, to name a few, are regular items in the news. People in our parishes and communities experience them.

Related work that the EcoJustice Committee is committed to in the next triennium includes:

further work on the impact of globalization;  
education and advocacy around the MAI;  
policy work on the phenomenon of growth in gambling;  
furthering the use of Socially Responsible Investment policies in our church;  
supporting local efforts at alternative investment and community development;  
supporting the TCCR program on "*Principles for Global Corporate Responsibility; Benchmarks for Measuring Business Performance*";  
supporting the ECEJ work on economic alternatives towards "*An Economy of Hope*".

Other priorities must be:

pursuing opportunities to implement the *Covenant* with Anglican Indigenous Peoples and working together for justice;  
pursuing local and diocesan relationships to develop programs for ecological justice;  
working together at all levels '*toward sustainable community*';  
finding ways to participate in world networks where we have no national work priorities; e.g. Anglican Women's Network, Anglican Youth Network;  
in the words of its COGS liaison, Arthur Anderson, "*sometimes dancing backwards*"

***Budgets:***

Over the triennium the EcoJustice Committee has allocated cumulatively;

\$ 471,000 on Coalition Participation & Support  
\$ 54,000 on Support to Networks  
\$ 6,000 on Indigenous Networks Support  
\$ 157,000 on Projects and Priorities  
\$ 90,000 on its own Committee Meetings and Work

\$ 778,000 TOTAL

\* \* \* \* \*

This Report is respectfully submitted by Margaret Marquardt, New Westminster, Chair

**on behalf of:**

Arthur Anderson, Qu'Appelle	Barry Jenks, British Columbia
Tony Barlow, Toronto & New York	Sharon Lee, Ontario
Nina Chiba, Calgary	Chris Lind, Saskatoon
Diane Guilford, Rupert's Land	Randy Lockyer, Western Nfld.
Heather Hamlin-Gravells, Nova Scotia	Lydia Mamakwa, Keewatin
Cynthia Patterson, Quebec	Gordon Yarde, Saskatchewan

**and staff:** Ellie Johnson, Joy Kennedy, Maylanne Maybee  
Marjorie Ganzon, Susana Gonzalez  
Catherine Morrison, Eric Beresford

*In memory of Garfield Warren, Mount Pearl, Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador*

Resolution Number: **A-132**

Subject: "Toward Sustainable Community: Five Years since the Earth Summit"

Moved By: the Rt. Rev. Barry Jenks from the Diocese of British Columbia

Seconded By: the Rev. Arthur Anderson from the Diocese of Qu'Appelle

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Anglican Church of Canada endorse the Canadian Ecumenical Report, "Toward Sustainable Community: Five Years Since the Earth Summit" (\*attached), which was commissioned and endorsed by the Commission on Justice and Peace of the Canadian Council of Churches, and prepared by the Inter-Church Committee on Ecology, a unit of the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility; that it review its own policies in light of the recommendations included therein; and that it commend it to the dioceses and parishes for study and action.

## EXPLANATORY NOTE /BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June of 1992, the nations of the world and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) including churches gathered at the Rio Earth Summit, or UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) to help the global community develop plans to deal with the problems of ecological destruction and global poverty. Canada is a signator of the agreement that was signed there called "Agenda 21", and thereby agreed to analyze and evaluate its own work on the issues involved. Churches have responded through program, policy and advocacy work.

"Sustainable development" has become the key concept in the follow-up process after Rio. It has become the main agenda for the ongoing work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and for the Rio Review + 5, or Earth Summit II in June of '97. As Canadian Churches we are beginning to question the term as it is increasingly misused to legitimize current economic approaches which are premised on unlimited growth and expansion which are unsustainable. We are proposing therefore to advocate for "sustainable communities" which balance many competing factors, economic, social and environmental.

Terms like sufficiency, justice, peace and integrity of creation, and a just and moral economy are the premises on which we base our critique and integrate it under the theme of "ecojustice".

The work of building sustainable communities must be undertaken at all levels, local to global.

Source: EcoJustice Committee  
Submitted by: the Rev. Margaret Marquardt, chair

Resolution Number: **A-131**

Subject: M.A.I. (the Multilateral Agreement on Investment)

Moved By: the Rt. Rev. Barry Jenks from the Diocese of: British Columbia  
Seconded By: the Rev. Arthur Anderson from the Diocese of: Qu'Appelle

BE IT RESOLVED:

That, whereas the Government of Canada has been involved in negotiating, through the OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) in Paris, an international treaty called the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, or MAI;

whereas the negotiations have been conducted behind closed doors, with little information about it or its implications being made public to politicians, professionals, and ordinary citizens alike;

whereas the far-reaching impact of the MAI on many important areas of Canadian life, including environmental protection, employment, wage levels, social programs, and culture, has the potential to undermine many areas of civil society, including all sub-national government policies and programs, such as those of municipal, regional, provincial and First Nations that have achieved self-government, the voluntary and small business sectors, and even the public policy and programs of our churches;

this General Synod strongly urge the Government of Canada to undertake full, fair and public hearings, consulting broadly, especially those most affected by proposed changes to our national

economic and trade and investment policy;

that it ensure that any new agreements do not undermine or jeopardize already existing international agreements to which Canada is a signator, such as Conventions on Civil, Political, Economic, Cultural and Social Rights, or subsequent treaties and platforms for action;

and that it ensure that any negative impacts are clearly outlined, discussed and agreed to by the people of Canada, before signing this or any similar agreement.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTE / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment has far-reaching implications for Canadians in every aspect of their life. Specifically, the MAI has the potential to undermine our capacity to care for the most vulnerable members of society - by extending to foreign investors the power to establish for-profit enterprises in social services and health care and to challenge government support of non-profit social services; the ability of governments to promote the common good - by requiring public enterprises to "act solely in accordance with commercial considerations" (Article 1502:3(b)); and by weakening government requirements on foreign investors to achieve a given level of local, or even Canadian, production, purchasing, employment, or benefits to disadvantaged groups or regions; protections for the environment and stewardship of natural resources - by allowing governments' control of the use and disposition of crown lands to become vulnerable to legal challenge by transnational corporations (TNC's); by giving TNC's the right to own saleable resources and by removing their obligation to sustain these resources for future generations; thus removing environmental considerations and preventing First Nations land claims settlements; citizen participation in decision making - by giving power to foreign investors to sue governments for disadvantaging their potential profits while leaving governments and their citizens no similar recourse to launch complaints against corporations.

Even the provision for so-called "exclusions" registered by nations to protect certain items, are subject to time-dated "roll backs". The MAI once signed is binding for at least 20 years.

Public pressure has resulted in the Government of Canada declaring its intention to delay signing beyond the deadline of May when other members of the OECD will likely sign the agreement.

The Church at all levels should become informed about and actively engaged in this issue. A resource on the Ethical Implications of the MAI has been produced by the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, at the behest of the Anglican Church of Canada and is available for study and action.

Source: EcoJustice Committee

Submitted By: the Rev, Margaret Marquardt, chair