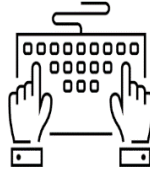


Social Justice

October 7, 2026



Communiqué #07

Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission

TO: Parish Council Presidents and Secretaries

CC: Diocesan Presidents and Secretaries
Provincial Presidents and Secretaries
National Officers (for information)
National Life Member Liaison

FROM: Jessie Parkinson, National Chairperson of Social Justice

URGENT

Canada has seen a proliferation of data centre development, driven by a global push for artificial intelligence (AI).

Data centres house and power computer servers, networking equipment and other technology needed to process and store data. When someone visits a website or watches a movie online, a physical server processes the request. However, many AI-focused data centres Canadians are learning about are considerably larger and more energy-intensive than conventional facilities. They use more powerful computer chips—graphics processing units (GPUs)—which drives up energy consumption and requires more intensive cooling systems to manage the resulting heat. A 2026 study by York University’s Schulich School of Business highlights how unprecedented this boom is: Canada currently operates five hyperscale data centres, with estimates from 96 to potentially more than 150 more proposed or under construction across the country.

The federal government is actively supporting this growth to secure “sovereign AI” infrastructure. In spring 2026, Ottawa announced approximately \$2.3 billion in new AI initiatives. This is in addition to \$700 million announced in 2024 to support investment in new or expanded data centre builds (*CBC News*, August 23, 2026).

The volume of these proposed developments has triggered significant public and political pushback throughout 2026. Opponents and local communities are increasingly raising concerns about the strain on provincial power grids, the vast amount of water required for cooling and the carbon footprint of facilities that rely on on-site fossil-fuel generators (*CTV News*, July 26, 2026).

An Angus Reid Institute poll of 1,803 Canadian adults, conducted May 7–11, 2026, found that more than 60% of respondents would oppose a large AI data centre within a few blocks of their home. Some experts have also warned that rushing to fund AI could be a bubble that may burst, potentially leaving these data centres as stranded assets.

The effect on electrical grids is also worrisome. During a heat wave or snowstorm, grids may struggle to handle the additional load from a data centre, increasing the risk of brownouts, according to Anne Pasek, Canada Research Chair in Media, Culture and the Environment at Trent University. Additional strain could also increase consumers' electricity bills. Computing equipment generates substantial heat and requires cooling systems. Some hyperscale operations can draw more than one million litres of water per day.

Petition e-7553, initiated by Jillian Szabo-Hammond of Haneytown, New Brunswick, states that, "No federal regulatory framework exists to evaluate the cumulative environmental, energy, or social impacts of hyperscale data centre development, and consultations on the federal AI strategy have excluded affected municipalities and communities."

Please share this information with members and encourage them to review the facts surrounding data centre development and express their concerns to government representatives.

Your sister in the League,



Jessie Parkinson
National Chairperson of Social Justice