

TO: Members of Winnipeg City Council,
RE: Submission on Behalf of The Montreal Pledge Motion, Cities United in Action for Biodiversity, Council Meeting April 27, 2023,

Dear Mr. Mayor and Councillors:

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to my submit comments, strongly encouraging you to vote in favour of the Montreal Pledge Motion.

As leaders, by voting in favour of the Montreal Pledge motion you will be saying that **you understand the pivotal role that investments in biodiversity can play in keeping this city and its citizens healthy and safe. Because protecting biodiversity isn't just about protecting the 1 million animal species currently at risk of extinction. It is about protecting their habitat, which is also *OUR* habitat.**

Whether wetlands, native grasslands or intact urban forests those habitats actually work for us, helping to make our city more climate resilient by mitigating the impact of the extreme weather events associated with climate change: wetlands offset the impact of increased flooding. Our trees and intact urban forests mitigate heat island effect, absorb stormwater runoff and offset pollution.

Each of those habitats also benefits the city financially because all of them provide a high return on investment. The global value of wetlands has been estimated at S47.4 trillion –

based on the services they provide to us and to a host of other animal species. (1) While a single mature tree returns between $2 and $5 dollars for every dollar invested. (2)

The value of wetlands, for example, was something the City of Houston learned about the hard way. Houston, like Winnipeg, is a flood plain city, and after repeated and devastating floods between 2016 and 2021 the city finally realized that Indiscriminately destroying wetlands to make way for new development had had dire consequences. Their response was to turn to nature to restore what had been lost – using everything from reconstructed wetlands to abandoned golf courses turned into water-capturing nature preserves. (3)

But natural urban habitats also have an intangible value. As a home for birds, animals and insects – some of them endangered - the value of urban ecosystems is incalculable. Also invaluable are the health and mental health benefits that green and blue spaces can provide to Winnipeggers across this city, as the attached letter from Dr Ann Loewen of Canadian Physicians for the Environment indicates. (4) (See Addendum)

More importantly, as the UN has noted, the twin emergencies we're facing – biodiversity loss and climate change - are inextricably linked, and they urge that both should be tackled together. Why? – because fully half of all the greenhouse gas emissions we release into the atmosphere are absorbed by land and ocean based ecosystems. And all of the urban ecosystems the pledge aims to protect are natural carbon sinks. So protecting and expanding them offers this city a vitally important, nature-based solution to reduce emissions and fight climate change. (5)

Sadly, over the past six decades, **Winnipeg has lost a staggering amount of green space. Something that was quantified in a recent Stats Canada study which placed our greenness score at just 38% - the lowest score of any major city in Canada.** (6)

We now have a chance to turn that around, and the 15 actions of the Montreal Pledge provide a roadmap for getting it done. Each action is aimed at halting and reversing biodiversity loss - whether by integrating biodiversity into city planning, designating areas of high biodiversity as protected areas or by restoring and expanding key habitat. **And it's all laid out – not in a 300 page report – but in clear and simple language that every Winnipegger can understand and appreciate.**

More importantly, if we don't take these actions now, central banking and insurance interests warn that we'll ultimately pay far more for the damage wrought by the extreme weather events associated with climate change. (7)

That was reinforced in a letter many of you received, written by Erin Keating, a Sustainability and Climate Risk Professional in Winnipeg's insurance industry. (See Addendum) In writing about both the insurance and investment sectors she observes: "More and more, focus is turning to how we can use nature-based solutions to help prevent mass damage (due to climate change). If we get this right, we can solve for infrastructure damage, reduce carbon in our atmosphere, halt mass extinction and increase human happiness…all at once."

As you know our city is already taking some of the nature-positive steps Erin is referring to, that will help to meet the pledge's 15 goals: The Urban Forestry and Park Strategies, as well as the upcoming the Greenspace and Natural Corridor Plan and Biodiversity Policy are all key to meeting pledge objectives.

By taking pledge, you will signal to the public council's will to move quickly and decisively to implement those plans. Plus it will put Winnipeg on the map, both nationally and internationally, as a city where sustainability is a priority.

In simple terms, by approving the Montreal Pledge Motion, you will publicly declare, in clear and simple language, that you mean business when it comes to safeguarding biodiversity, thus improving this city's climate resiliency and securing the well-being of its citizens.

As a bonus - If you take that action now, in five days-time, on International Earth Day you can announce to the world that this city intends to invest in our small corner of the planet. to improve the natural environment and give our descendants a better and safer future.

In closing I would like to offer my sincere thanks to councillors Cindy Gilroy and Brian Mayes for introducing this motion. I very much hope that you vote in favour of it.

Thank you for your time. I very much appreciate being given the opportunity to submit these comments and I am more than happy to answer questions.

Sincerely,

Erna Buffie
On behalf of Trees Please Winnipeg

Footnotes:

How Natural Urban Habitats and Ecosystems Enhance Urban Climate Resiliency and Save Cities Money:

1. ***When The Big Storms Hit: The Role of Wetlands to limit urban and rural flood damage, University of Waterloo, Intact Center on Climate Adaptation.*** *https://www.intactcentreclimateadaptation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/When-the-Big-Storms-Hit.pdf*

   "Wetlands can be Infrastructure Too, The Canadian Institute for Climate Choices:" https://climateinstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Wetlands-case-study_April26_EN_Final.pdf

   "Financial incentives for large-scale wetland restoration: Beyond markets to common asset trusts," One Earth Journal of Science: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590332221003481 The value of the world's wetlands are estimated to be worth $47.4 trillion in the services they provide to the world's population.

   "The Return On Investment of Natural Infrastructure," Intact center University of Waterloo: https://www.intactcentreclimateadaptation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Wetlands-ROI-Infographic-FINAL.pdf

2. ***"Reaping the Benefits of Urban Trees," Cornell University*** https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2011/12/each-1-put-urban-trees-reaps-5-benefits

   "How Urban Trees Can Save Lives" Nature Conservancy: https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/perspectives/how-urban-trees-can-save-lives/?src=r.global.healthyair

   "Access to Greenspace Can Reduce Stress" National Institutes of Health: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4847102/

Why Protecting Urban Green and Blue Spaces Is Critical to Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change:

3. ***Flood Control Goes Green – How Houston Is using Nature to Combat Flooding*** ***https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/shows/below-the-waterlines/2022/08/16/430535/flood-control-goes-green-how-houston-is-using-nature-to-combat-flooding/***

4. ***"Biodiversity: Our Strongest Natural Defense Against Climate Change," United Nations Climate Action and Biodiversity.***
   https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/biodiversity#:~:text=When%20land%20is%20converted%20for,freshwater%20ecosystems%20around%20the%20world

Winnipeg's "Greeness Score"

Statistics Canada: "Urban Greeness Study Summary," Government of Canada:
https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210817/dq210817b-eng.htm
Urban greeness is defined as the presence of vegetation as a measure ecosystem health.

Central Banks and Insurance Industry Recognize the Financial Risks Associated with Biodiversity Loss and Climate Change:

5. ***"Climate change is transforming the Insurance Industry," Kate McCaffery, Insurance Portal:***
   https://insurance-portal.ca/article/climate-change-is-transforming-the-insurance-industry/

   Bank of Canada Announces Climate Change Commitments, Bank of Canada
   https://www.bankofcanada.ca/2021/11/bank-canada-announces-climate-change-commitments-for-cop26/

   European Central Bank Further Steps to Incorporate Climate Change Into Its Monetary Policy, EUC publication
   https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2022/html/ecb.pr220704~4f48a72462.en.html

   "Central Banks Must Add Biodiversity to Financial Stability Risks" Bloomberg Co.:
   https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-25/central-banks-must-add-biodiversity-to-financial-stability-risks#xj4y7vzkg

Addendum: A Selection of Letters of Support for the Pledge Motion

CPAWS · SNAP
CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY
SOCIÉTÉ POUR LA NATURE ET LES PARCS DU CANADA

National Office | Bureau national

600-100 rue Gloucester Street Ottawa, ON K2P 0A4 613.569.7226

cpaws.org • snapcanada.org CRA/ARC #10686 5272 RR0001

To: His Worship the Mayor, Scott Gillingham and Councillors Brian Mayes, Ross Eadie, Cindy Gilroy and Vivian Santos

RE: The Montreal Pledge Motion

Dear Sir and/or Madam,

We are writing on behalf of the Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society (CPAWS) to offer our strong support for the March 23rd Motion requesting that the City of Winnipeg become the 12th Canadian city to sign The Montreal Biodiversity Pledge.

CPAWS is Canada's only charity dedicated to the protection of public land, freshwater and ocean with a strong national and regional presence across the country. Working in a way that respects the sovereignty and leadership of Indigenous nations, we are focused on conserving nature to respond to the dual crises of accelerated biodiversity loss and climate change.

Biodiversity loss is the third most severe threat humanity will face over the next decade. There has already been a staggering 69% loss in wildlife populations worldwide and vast swaths of habitat have been destroyed.

At recent meetings at COP 15 it was acknowledged that cities are major contributors to biodiversity loss, and its City Summit took a leading role in formulating solutions to halt that loss, begin its restoration, and limit the negative impacts cities have on the environment.

As host city, Montreal challenged cities and municipalities around the world to sign the "Montreal Pledge," which contains 15 actions to protect urban biodiversity and ecosystems.

Within two months of the Montreal COP15 meeting in December 2022, 11 Canadian and 47 international cities signed the Montreal Pledge. https://montreal.ca/en/articles/montreal-pledge-call-cop15-launched-to-worlds-cities-39529

Signing the Montreal Pledge provides participating cities like ours an opportunity to learn and grow with other cities that have already signed the pledge and receive international, national, and most importantly, local public recognition for those efforts.

Signing the Pledge will also serve to highlight the positive initiatives Winnipeg is already undertaking that will help to meet the targets and goals of the pledge. For example, the development of the new Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan and Biodiversity Policy will address many of the goals in the Pledge, including the expansion of city greenspace. The City's agreement with the federal government to explore establishing a National Urban Park within Winnipeg is promising and CPAWS believes Assiniboine Forest and its potential expansion is a strong candidate for this designation. Additional City of Winnipeg initiatives, among them the Parks Strategy, the 20 Year Urban Forest Strategy, the Climate Action Plan and Indigenous consultation efforts by the C ity will also contribute to meeting Pledge goals.

CPAWS has Chapters working across Canada, and we have seen firsthand the positive impact that signing the Montreal Pledge has had in other cities. By joining these cities, the City of Winnipeg will clearly demonstrate its strong support for the primary goals of COP15 and reinforce the city's commitment to transform Winnipeg into a greener, healthier, more just and biodiverse city.

Yours Sincerely,

Ron Thiessen
Executive Director
The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Manitoba chapter

Chris Rider
National Director, Conservation
The Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society



Ann Loewen, MD, CCFP, FCFP, Diploma Population Health
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment
140 St Pierre Street, Winnipeg. MB
R3V 1J8

To: His Worship the Mayor, Scott Gillingham and Councillors Brian Mayes, Ross Eadie, Cindy Gilroy and Vivian Santos
City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street, Winnipeg, MB

RE: The Montreal Pledge Motion

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We are writing on behalf of Canadian Associations of Physicians for the Environment – Manitoba Chapter to offer our strong support for the March 23rd Motion requesting that the City of Winnipeg become the 12th Canadian city to sign The Montreal Biodiversity Pledge. As physicians committed to the health and well-being of humans, we recognize the necessity for other species and habitats to co-exist and thrive even in urban and suburban settings. As just a few examples of the health impacts of a degraded environment, infectious diseases are facilitated when natural regulators are absent. The quality of air, water and soil – the elements in which we live, work and play - decline when carbon, water and other natural cycles are disrupted. Respiratory and cardiac diseases correlate with airborne particles and unhealthy gas emissions that concentrate in urban areas.

At the same time, the many benefits of a biodiverse habitat are well supported in the scientific literature. Extreme heat events can be mitigated via more trees, grassy areas and other forms of vegetation. Habitats that allow a range of species thrive help manage population over-runs by any one of them. And there is enormous evidence supporting the physical and mental health benefit of spending time in natural surroundings.

We are already living with the health impacts of environmental degradation. And the health care system is already enormously over-burdened. Biodiversity loss is the third most severe threat humanity will face over the next decade. There has been huge loss in wildlife populations worldwide and vast swaths of habitat have been destroyed. Immediate and effective action is required to alter this path of degradation of all species' health.

We ask that in your position as City representatives, you not only endorse, but also embrace and enact the "Montreal Pledge," which contains 15 actions to protect urban biodiversity and ecosystems. COP 15 acknowledged that cities are major contributors to biodiversity loss, and its City Summit took the lead role to formulate effective solutions. Winnipeg's Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan and Biodiversity Policy can address many of the goals in the Pledge. Additional City of Winnipeg initiatives, among them the Parks Strategy, the 20 Year Urban Forest Strategy, the Climate Action Plan and Indigenous consultation efforts by the city will also contribute to meeting Pledge goals.

Thank you for your work in this important area.

Yours truly, Dr. Ann Loewen on behalf of CAPE MB Chapter

302 - 583 Ellice Avenue, Winnipeg MB R3B 1Z7 Tel: 204-947-6511 www.mbeconetwork.org

April 13, 2023
To: City of Winnipeg Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment Committee
RE: The Montreal Pledge – Cities United in Action for Biodiversity

We are writing to offer our support for the City of Winnipeg singing The Montreal Biodiversity Pledge. By signing this Pledge, the City of Winnipeg will indicate its obligation to protect urban biodiversity and implement relevant commitments from the directly related Global Biodiversity Framework.

Biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being, a healthy planet, and economic prosperity for all people, including for living well in balance and in harmony with Mother Earth, we depend on it for food, medicine, energy, clean air and water, security from natural disasters as well as recreation and cultural inspiration, and it supports all systems of life on earth.[1]

At recent meetings at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) it was acknowledged that cities are major contributors to biodiversity loss, and its City Summit took a leading role in formulating solutions to halt that loss, begin its restoration, and limit the negative impacts cities have on the environment.

As host city, Montreal challenged cities and municipalities around the world to sign the "Montreal Pledge," which contains 15 minimal actions to protect urban biodiversity and ecosystems. Although the Montreal pledge does not go as far as the Global Biodiversity Framework, it nonetheless serves as an important step forward to move municipalities towards reducing the threat to, and sharing the benefits of biodiversity with their citizens. Within two months of the Montreal COP15 meeting in December 2022, 11 Canadian and 36 international cities signed the Montreal Pledge.[2]

Signing the Pledge will serve to highlight the positive initiatives Winnipeg is already undertaking and will demonstrate the leadership and ambition required to act swiftly and influence other partners, in order to reverse the trend of biodiversity loss and protect our biodiversity. Signing the Pledge will also acknowledge the need for Winnipeg to achieve the targets and goals established by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. There are urban specific targets (e.g. targets 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22) that should be incorporated into Winnipeg's *Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan*, *Biodiversity Policy*, *Urban Forestry Strategy*, *Climate Resiliency Strategy*, *Climate Action Plan*, *Food Policy,* and *Integrated Waste*

Management Strategy. Given the dire need to act now, those plans, policies and strategies are in need of enhancement and should be addressed in the Winnipeg Council's upcoming four-year *Strategic Priorities Action Plan*.

[1] Convention on Biological Diversity CBD/COP15/L.25, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, 18 December 2022, online: https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/e6d3/cd1d/daf663719a03902a9b116c34/cop-15-l-25-en.pdf [2] City of Montreal, "Montréal Pledge: Call for COP15 launched to world's cities", online: https://montreal.ca/en/articles/montreal-pledge-call-cop15-launched-to-worlds-cities-39529

Signing the Pledge will also indicate the City of Winnipeg's commitment to recognizing the contribution and rights of Indigenous peoples, as stipulated in the Global Biodiversity Framework: *The framework acknowledges the important roles and contributions of indigenous peoples*

and local communities as custodians of biodiversity and partners in the conservation, restoration and sustainable use. Its implementation must ensure their rights, knowledge, including traditional knowledge associated with biodiversity, innovations, worldviews, values and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities are respected, documented, preserved with their free, prior and informed consent, including through their full and effective participation in decision-making, in accordance with relevant national legislation, international instruments, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and human rights law. In this regard, nothing in this framework may be construed as diminishing or extinguishing the rights that indigenous peoples currently have or may acquire in the future.[3]

MbEN believes that by signing the Montreal Pledge, the City of Winnipeg will demonstrate its support for the primary goals of the Global Biodiversity Framework and reinforce the city's commitment to transform Winnipeg into a greener, healthier, more just, and biodiverse city.

We urge you to recommend the City of Winnipeg sign the Montreal Pledge and commit to a more inclusive and sustainable future for our City.

Sincerely,

Glen Koroluk, Executive Director

Heather Fast, Policy Advocacy Director

Manitoba Eco-Network

[3] See note 1, page 5, Section C.

To: His Worship the Mayor, Scott Gillingham and Councillors Brian Mayes, Ross Eadie, Cindy Gilroy and Vivian Santos

From: Erin Keating, Certified Professional Accountant, Sustainability and Climate Risk Professional

RE: The Montreal Pledge Motion Dear Sirs and Madam,

I am on writing to offer my strong support for the March 23rd Motion requesting that the City of Winnipeg become the 12th Canadian city to sign The Montreal Biodiversity Pledge.

As a Professional Accountant working extremely hard on Sustainability and Climate Change in the Financial Industry, I am very in touch with the massive risks we are facing related to biodiversity. It is of course about mass extinction of many animals but is also very much about the future for humanity, and economics all together.

I spent almost a decade working in the Investment Industry and have now moved into the Insurance Industry and can tell you that we are in a dire emergency relating to the risks of natural disasters due to climate change. More and more the focus is turning to how we can incorporate Nature Based Solutions to help prevent mass damage. If we get this right, we can solve for infrastructure damage, reduce carbon in our atmosphere, halt mass extinction (including of the human species) and increase happiness and quality of life all at once.

At recent meetings at COP 15 it was acknowledged that cities are major contributors to biodiversity loss, and its City Summit took a leading role in formulating solutions to halt that loss, begin its restoration, and limit the negative impacts cities have on the environment.

Signing the Montreal Pledge provides participating cities like ours an opportunity to learn and grow with other cities that have already signed the pledge and receive international, national, and most importantly, local public recognition for those efforts.

I believe that by signing the Montreal Pledge, the City of Winnipeg will clearly demonstrate its strong support for the primary goals of COP15 and reinforce the city's commitment to transform Winnipeg into a greener, healthier, more just and biodiverse city.

I am happy to discuss the connections between biodiversity and economics if that is at all helpful for you to make the right decision and sign the pledge.

Sincerely,

Erin Keating at 245 Canora St, Wpg, MB, R3G 1T4 Certified Professional Accountant
Sustainability and Climate Risk Professional