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RE: Montreal Pledge: Cities United in Action for Biodiversity

Submission to the Winnipeg City Council Meeting
April 27, 2023

I am writing this submission requesting that the City of Winnipeg become a signatory to the 'Montreal Pledge: Cities United in Action for Biodiversity'[1] pursuant to the motion in Minute No. 338 presented to City Council on March 23, 2023, and subsequently approved to be moved forward by the Water and Waste Committee on April 17, 2023 and the Executive Policy Committee on April 18, 2023.

It is no secret that our planet is facing a changing climate that has been predicted to cause unwanted and more frequent, costly destructive weather events. The United Nations noted that a healthy sustainable nature is necessary to meeting sustainable development goals and in helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. A key step to secure our own health and for a healthy environment is a bold global biodiversity framework that addresses the key drivers of nature loss.[2] Numerous scientific reports have verified that more nature is good, not only for human mental and physical health and well-being, but cost-effective in terms of attracting investment and coping with issues such as air quality, rainfall absorption, and temperature moderation.

Urgency on addressing environmental issues is becoming more apparent with each passing year as we see updated timelines on past predictions for an undesirable climate change becoming uncomfortably shorter and shorter. All living things have a connection and the disappearance of one species affects another. Our problem is not knowing where the threshold is for the numbers or types of species losses before our environments are no longer healthy or sustainable.

Montreal was the most recent host city for United Nations COP15 Conference held in December 2022 (the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity). Almost every country in the world signed the "**Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework" (GBF)** that contained 4 goals and 23 targets for halting the loss of biodiversity and beginning its restoration by 2030.[3] For the first time, the biodiversity framework contained a specific draft target that included increasing size and access to nature in urban areas.

At the 'City Summits' of this conference it was acknowledged that cities are major contributors to biodiversity loss and they need to take a leading role to halt those losses,

begin its restorations, and limit impacts to the environment. Over half of the world's population now live in urban areas compared to the 1950s. In some continents such as Latin America and the Caribbean, urban inhabitants have increased from 41% to 81%, while in North America it has increased from 64% to 84% over the last 60 years.[4]

As the host city, Montreal challenged cities and local districts around the world to sign the Montreal Pledge which contained 15 basic, very understandable actions to help protect urban biodiversity and ecosystems. The global commitment to Biodiversity has been increasing with release of other high profile international reports that include:

- the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021 – 2030[5] (aims to prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of ecosystems);
- the World Economic Forum Global Risks 2022 Report[6] (ranked Biodiversity loss as the third most severe threat humanity will face in the next 10 years and that human activity is destroying biodiversity faster than ever before); and
- the World Wildlife Fund Living Planet Report 2022[7] (Wildlife Populations Plummet by 69%, urgent action is required to protect nature loss).

The awareness and commitment for some jurisdiction to protect biodiversity has existed for decades. For some communities, the conservation of urban biodiversity is a component of local strategies for sustainable development. The City Biodiversity Index was launched at COP8 Convention on Biological Diversity in 2008, and an updated version was released in 2022. Montreal produced a biodiversity plan in 2004 and Edmonton in 2010. They contained goals and actions that integrated biodiversity management into other municipal activities like infrastructure development, water usage, waste management, and cultural heritage. Montreal, Calgary, and Edmonton also signed the *Durban Commitment, Local Governments for Biodiversity* in 2016 to protect biodiversity.

It is time all governments work towards a common goal of keeping our environment healthy and sustainable for future generations.

[1] vdm_montreal-pledge_2022.pdf
[2] UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) (unep.org)
[3] https://www.cbd.int/article/cop15-cbd-press-release-final-19dec2022
[4] How has the world's urban population changed? | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)
[5] UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) – Geneva Environment Network
[6] Global Risks Report 2022 | World Economic Forum | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)
[7] Living Planet Report 2022 | Pages | WWF (worldwildlife.org)