OURS-Winnipeg Submission to City Council Meeting
Thursday April 27, 2023
Agenda Item 2 – Montreal Pledge

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OURS-Winnipeg supports the motion for the City of Winnipeg to become a signatory to the Montreal Pledge: Cities United in Action for Biodiversity. This would make Winnipeg the 12th Canadian city to sign this pledge.

The urgency to address environmental issues is becoming more apparent with each passing year.

All living things have a connection and the disappearance of one species affects another. We don't know where the threshold for the loss of a species is and where the environment becomes no longer healthy or sustainable.

The UNEP Executive Director Inger Anderson[i] said 'Nature and biodiversity is dying the death of a billion cuts. And humanity is paying the price for betraying its closest friend.

We are currently in the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem restoration. The previous decade was the Decade for Biodiversity. Biodiversity continues to be lost and we find ourselves now in the position of needing to do more costly restoration to protect biodiversity.

Last year, at COP15, a landmark, global Biodiversity agreement was approved by almost every country in the world. The "Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework"[ii] (GBF) contains goals and targets and a time-line for halting the loss of biodiversity and beginning restoration. The global agreement provides a strong message to take urgent action.

At COP15 it was acknowledged that cities are major contributors to biodiversity loss both locally and beyond their cities and they need to take a leading role to halt those losses, begin its restoration, and limit impacts to the environment.

As the host city for COP15, Montreal challenged cities and regions around the world to sign the Montreal Pledge which contains 15 local practical actions to help protect urban biodiversity and ecosystems.

The carefully crafted actions in the Pledge are easy for citizens to understand and relatable to almost everyone. It is a convenient tool for cities to use to advance biodiversity awareness and public engagement.

The awareness to protect biodiversity has existed for decades. It is urgent now.

Other Canadian cities have been working on biodiversity plans for years.

The Global City Biodiversity Index, was launched at COP8 Convention on Biological Diversity in 2008. It has been used for planning and monitoring by dozens of cities, development organizations and academic networks. An updated version was released last year in 2022.

Montreal, Calgary, and Edmonton signed the *Durban Commitment, Local Governments for Biodiversity* in 2016 to protect biodiversity.

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.

The City of Winnipeg's commitment to creating a Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan and Biodiversity Policy is a very positive initiate. It is comparatively late to the table but extremely welcome and anticipated. In 2020, 7 out of 10 of Canada's largest cities had Biodiversity Strategies. Unfortunately Winnipeg has not been among the leaders when it comes to greenspace and biodiversity planning.

We have all the evidence needed that we must halt the destruction of biodiversity and begin its restoration. Signing the Montreal Pledge will commit Winnipeg to take action for biodiversity with 15 carefully worded and understandable actions. Ideas and resource are shared among the global and local cities that have signed the Pledge. The Pledge is consistent with the vision, goals and objectives of the

Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan[iii] which is expected come to fruition within a couple of years.

In consideration of the consensus of almost every country in the world that biodiversity loss is harming the existence of life on earth and action is urgently required, we ask this committee to demonstrate a commitment to bold action by supporting the Montreal Pledge for Biodiversity.

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[i] UNEP V. UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) (unep.org)

[ii] UN Convention on Biological Diversity, COP15 Goals and Targets: https://www.cbd.int/article/cop15-cbd-press-release-final-19dec2022

[iii] Link to full wording of Planning Documents Greenspace amendments - June 24, 2021 Council Meeting

- OurWinnipeg 2045 clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewDoc.asp?DocId=21053&SectionId=609806&InitUrl= (starting on page 3 and ending on page 8)
- Complete Communities 2.0 clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewDoc.asp?DocId=21053&SectionId=609812&InitUrl=(starting on page 6 and ending on page 16)