Brief submitted to the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) *Projet du plan métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement révisé* (PPMADR)

Prepared for: Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM)

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Bird Protection Quebec
Protection des oiseaux du Québec

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WHO WE ARE

Bird Protection Quebec (BPQ), founded in 1917, is Canada's oldest registered bird-conservation charity. We are based in Quebec and operating mainly in the CMM region. Primarily a volunteer-run organization, BPQ has the mandate to protect birds and bird habitats in Quebec while fostering an appreciation of them through conservation, observation, research, and education. As such, we own, co-own, and manage protected areas with the goal of bird conservation, educate the public about birds through various activities including monthly lectures open to the public, organize field trips open to the public, support scientific research and education through our grants program, and support participatory science (also known as "citizen science") to monitor bird populations.

RELEVANCE OF BPQ TO CMM'S PPMADR OBJECTIVES

BPQ stresses that the CMM plays an important role in bird conservation, with positive impacts being felt across borders. The recently published report by Birds Canada in collaboration with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), entitled *The State of Canada's Birds*, highlights the role that large cities can play in bird protection. At a broad level, the report reveals that certain types of birds (long-distance migratory birds, aerial insectivores, grassland species, and shorebirds) have seen steep population declines across Canada in the last 50 years. Long-distance migrants in particular have seen a 29% decrease in the past 50 years; a large portion of those long-distance migrant species use the CMM territory as a stopover site during their spring and fall migration. Not only does the CMM territory provide key stopover habitat for bird populations experiencing severe declines across Canada, but the *people* who live within the CMM are also highly invested in birdwatching, with an estimated 2M people in Quebec, or 1 in 4 Quebecers, identifying as birdwatchers and engaging in bird-friendly behaviour, such as maintaining bird feeders, or participating in regular birdwatching activities, including Christmas Bird Counts/ *Recensements de Noël.*

In the following brief, we offer three key responses to the PPMADR objectives and criteria:

1. **We identify the ways in which BPQ's bird-conservation activities can contribute to the success of the CMM's PPMADR objectives, advancing 30x30 conservation targets included in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF);**
2. **We provide specific recommendations and responses to PPMADR, in light of the previous section's treatment of its stated objectives and criteria;**
3. **We list several actions the CMM can take to help protect against and even reverse avifauna biodiversity loss, at the municipal, agglomeration and regional policy levels.**

1. Bird Protection Quebec's Current Conservation Activities Align with 30x30 GBF Targets & PPMADR Objectives

BPQ applauds the CMM for having updated the PPMADR in light of the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (GBF) issued from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in Montreal in 2022 (PPMADR, p. 141), specifically the global commitment to designate 30% of Earth's terrestrial and aquatic areas as protected by 2030. While the PPMADR proposal to maintain the PMAD's original (3.1) target of 17% terrestrial conservation and build gradually to 30% terrestrial conservation by 2046 is notably slower than the 30% by 2030 targets advanced by the GBF (PPMADR, p. 9), BPQ recognizes the 30% target as an important commitment.

BPQ's conservation, advocacy, and educational activities are specifically aligned with the following GBF targets:

- **TARGET 1**: Plan and Manage All Areas to Reduce Biodiversity Loss
- **TARGET 3**: Conserve 30% of Land, Waters and Seas

- **TARGET 4**: Halt Species Extinction, Protect Genetic Diversity, and Manage Human-Wildlife Conflicts
- **TARGET 11**: Restore, Maintain and Enhance Nature's Contributions to People
- **TARGET 12**: Enhance Green Spaces and Urban Planning for Human Well-Being and Biodiversity
- **TARGET 14**: Integrate Biodiversity in Decision-Making at Every Level

1.1. BPQ Conservation activities within the CMM: BPQ Sanctuaries & BPQ-Supported Observatories within the CMM - GBF Targets 1 & 3 (PPMADR 3.1-3.8)

BPQ owns and manages protected areas across Quebec. Two of our sanctuaries (*milieux naturels à conservation volontaire*) fall within the CMM: the **Driscoll-Naylor Sanctuary in Hudson** and **l'Île aux Canards and Îlet Vert in the Saint-Lawrence River off Varennes** (Figure 1). The Driscoll-Naylor Sanctuary protects three hectares of wetland and forest and hosts a variety of species, including federally designated Species at Risk such as the Eastern Wood-Pewee (Special Concern) and Wood Thrush (Threatened), furthering the robustly supported idea that small patches have ecological value, particularly in the context of urban biodiversity. Île aux Canards (6 ha, IUCN Protected Area designation 1a) and Îlet Vert (19 ha, IUCN Protected Area designation 1a) in Varennes were acquired by BPQ in 1984 and provide wetland, meadow, and woodland habitat for wildlife, offering an important staging habitat for migrating waterfowl. Through regular surveying, invasive-species assessment, and land-management oversight, BPQ ensures that its sanctuaries are stewarded in such a way as to contribute to the CMM's ongoing efforts to protect biodiversity and mitigate avifauna decline, particularly in urban settings. In addition to the two formal sanctuaries which BPQ owns within the CMM, BPQ also plays a crucial role in funding and supporting the migration monitoring activities conducted at the McGill Bird Observatory (MBO), located in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue. MBO's bird banding activities have provided extremely valuable data on bird migration since 2004, in addition to offering a unique site for research activities within the CMM. MBO also contributes to Canada-wide research on avifauna through its involvement in the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN) and

the Institute for Bird Population's program for Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS).

Figure 1. Île -aux-Canards/Îlet-Vert Sanctuaries (left) © J. Delisle and Driscoll-Naylor Sanctuary (right) © H. Kohler

1.2. BPQ Advocacy: GBF Targets 1, 3, 11, 14 (PPMADR 3.1-3.8, 3.3)

BPQ is a non-partisan advocate for the conservation of green spaces within the CMM. For example, the organization has specifically supported the protection of the remaining green space in the Saint-Laurent Technoparc and adjacent federal lands (215 ha) since 2016, writing to various levels of government, including municipal, provincial, and federal governments, to call for the protection of these natural spaces that support a high level of biodiversity. BPQ has also supported the protection of Fairview Forest (50 ha) in Pointe Claire. In advocating for the conservation of these areas, BPQ supports the inclusion of such spaces in the list of CMM protected areas (Objective 3.1, cf. Criteria 3.1.1-4, 3.1.6-8). To further highlight the benefits that would redound to the CMM from protecting such areas, we underscore that the sites have not been formally registered by the CMM or Agglomeration of Montreal for their tree canopies; with each site containing thousands of mature trees, protection of the sites would thus equally contribute to PPMADR Objective 3.3 (*Accroître la canopée du Grand Montréal pour atteindre une cible de 35% d'ici 2046*) as well as to the

November 24, 2022, commitment made by the CMM to increase tree canopy to 30% by 2031(as listed in the PPMADR, p. 239, as well as *Politique métropolitaine d'habitation*, 2022). Finally, BPQ's call to protect the entirety of the Technoparc wetlands and adjacent federal lands, as well as Fairview Forest, supports the CMM's key orientation to protect and value natural lands (*« la protection et la mise en valeur des milieux naturels et bâtis ainsi que des paysages »*), supported by the CMM's conservation measures/Règlements de contrôle intérimaire (RCI no° 2022-96 *concernant les milieux naturels [milieux humides d'intérêt métropolitain]*, applicable to a portion of the wetland complexes at the Technoparc and the vernal ponds of Fairview Forest; as well as RCI nº 2022-97 *concernant les secteurs présentant un potentiel de reconversion en espace vert ou en milieu naturel*, applicable specifically to the 106.8 ha of Golf Dorval, a regular wintering site for the Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*), a threatened at-risk species). We support the CMM in its stated goal of including such spaces covered in the aforementioned RCI for conservation (PPMADR, p. 221).

1.3. BPQ Education & Outreach: GBF Targets 11, 12, 14

Through a variety of educational and outreach activities, including introductory seminars on birdwatching, public outreach kiosks, weekly field trips, and monthly expert lectures, BPQ has promoted ornithology in the CMM and beyond. Such activities not only advance the educational goals of "mainstreaming" biodiversity (GBF Target 14), but also reinforce the ecosystem services (GBF Target 11) that are offered to people who gain access to nature and are immersed in ecologically rich sites that may or may not yet be formally protected. BPQ's combined conservation and educational activities advance the primary PPMADR orientation of *« Aménagement: un PPMADR qui mise sur la création de milieux de vie complets »* where people can have regular access to nature (GBF Target 12) and, through such access, develop life-long attitudes supporting biodiversity conservation.

2. Specific Recommendations for Inclusion in the PPMADR

2.1. Include a Policy of No Net Loss to Natural Sites

BPQ's mission aims to protect not only birds but also bird habitats. It is important to conserve remaining green spaces within the CMM and avoid conversion to other land uses. For example, forests, wetlands, and fallow land are important bird habitats, and should not be lost to development. Preserving canopy coverage in urban areas is also important, both in terms of bird habitat and to reduce the heat-island effect in the warm summer months. Given that insufficient natural sites exist to reach the target of 30% by 2030/2046, BPQ recommends that the CMM ensure that no net loss of current natural sites occurs. This recommendation echoes that of Working Group #5 (*« Des milieux naturels connectés et une biodiversité en santé pour concrétiser les engagements de la CMM à la COP15 »*) in the Rapport 2023 de l'Agora métropolitaine leading up to the PPMADR, specifically *« Protéger les milieux naturels existants sans aucune perte nette, considérant que ceux-ci sont limités pour atteindre la cible de 30 % »* (p. 39). Likewise, follow the recommendation of Working Group #5 from the Agora métropolitaine and encourage municipalities to set a policy of "net-zero artificialization."

2.2. Update the Current Cartography in the PPMADR to Better Reflect Recently Registered Protected Sites; Broaden the Definition of What Constitutes a Prospective Site of "Metropolitan Interest" for Conservation (Criteria 3.1.2)

This recommendation echoes that of Working Group #5 (*« Des milieux naturels connectés et une biodiversité en santé pour concrétiser les engagements de la CMM à la COP15 »*) in the Rapport 2023 de l'Agora métropolitaine leading up to the PPMADR, specifically *« Élargir les types de milieux visés par des mesures de protection et de conservation à tout type de milieu non anthropique, comme les friches ou encore les milieux dégradés »* (p.39). It is furthermore recommended that the identification of wetlands of interest within RCI n° 2022-96 be broadened to include buffer zones of at least 30 metres, pursuant to regional

updates from municipalities (cf. Plan régional des milieux humides et hydriques de l'Agglomération de Montréal).

2.3. Include More Direct Mentions of Sustainable Procurement and Finances With Regard to Biodiversity Impacts

Both COP15 and COP16 underscored the key, if not central, role played by the financial sector in assessing biodiversity impacts along supply chains. In Montreal, the widespread support for "sustainable suppliers' codes of conduct" has proved a powerful lever in deterring businesses from developing on sites of high ecological value and has protected sites that would otherwise be subject to development, resulting in (limited) gains for biodiversity. Encourage the business sector of the CMM at the regional and municipal level to assess biodiversity impacts and life-cycle assessments, and publicly reward those businesses and institutions that take steps to set smart, transparent targets for minimizing their biodiversity impacts. The CMM could likewise encourage municipalities to include such biodiversity-impact baselines in their *Schéma d'aménagement et de développement.*

2.4. Clearly Establish that the CMM Supports Indigenous Conservation Leadership Within Tioht:iake / Greater Montreal and Ensure that the PPMADR Reflects Reconciliation as a Priority for Conservation and Land-use

A salient and concerning absence from the CMM's PPMADR is recognition of the key role that Indigenous conservation is currently playing in protecting biodiversity in and around the CMM. Prioritizing reconciliation, particularly when land-use changes are invoked as in the PPMADR, is a necessary first step, with subsequent consultation and centring, rather than marginalization, of Indigenous frameworks an essential follow-up.

2.5. Include More Direct Mentions of Public Financial Levers to Support Both Private Conservation (*Milieux Naturels à Conservation Volontaire*) & Municipal Acquisition of Lands for Conservation

BPQ recommends broadening access to funds and including more sites for the *Trame bleue et verte* across the CMM. Such access should include financial support for conservation organizations that are advancing the targets of the Plan Nature 2030 and Global Biodiversity Framework.

2.6. Provide Resources for Municipalities Creating their *Schéma d'Aménagement et Développement* (SAD) to Include Bird-friendly Practices at the Municipal and Regional Levels [See Addendum]

BPQ encourages the CMM to take into account habitat protection, light-pollution mitigation, feral/outdoor cat management, invasive species management, anti-collision window treatment for private businesses, residences, and institutions, as well as pesticide-use reduction for its revised PMAD. A strong body of scientific literature has shown that these measures can significantly and positively influence bird conservation in urban areas such as the CMM. A full slate of resources is available through Nature Canada's Bird-Friendly Cities certification, as well as ECCC's overview on how to mitigate risks to avifauna.

2.7. Encourage CMM Municipalities to Use Participatory Science to Create their Biodiversity Baselines and Promote Existing Participatory-science Activities to Help Enrich Public Biodiversity Profiles

BPQ encourages the CMM to promote broad participatory science as a means of onboarding residents to everyday acts supporting conservation. The use of different platforms such as iNaturalist and eBird can lead to the production of research-grade data and generate a stronger sense of community by bringing participants together. The

previously mentioned report *The State of Canada's Birds* is the proof that such initiatives can yield incredible results as most of the data used to produce the report was obtained through participatory science. We specifically recommend that the CMM encourage participation in eBird's two Migratory Bird Days (May, October), the Greater Montreal City Nature Challenge (late April), and the Great Backyard Bird Count (February), in addition to designated team observations for Christmas Bird Counts organized by BPQ and QuébecOiseaux (December).

3. Addendum: Call to Broadly Promote Bird-Friendly Practices at the Regional, Municipal & Local Policy Level

- **Habitat protection**: BPQ applauds the CMM for the way in which the PPMADR clearly values the protection of habitat for conservation; the challenge will be to balance this target with that of development. One way to ensure that bird-friendly habitat becomes the norm in the CMM is to encourage all residents, businesses, and institutions to engage in planting for birds and pollinators.
- **Light-pollution mitigation**: In Canada, ECCC estimates that window collisions kill 16 to 42 million birds a year. Adopt in-principle agreements at the regional level, and encourage municipalities to adopt strategies in their SAD for mitigating window collisions and light pollution, particularly during the heightened periods of fall and spring migration. **Bird-friendly glass standards** should also be adopted formally, such as the pan-Canadian standard CSA A460:19 (cf. p. 24 in particular).
- **Feral/outdoor cat management**: Outdoor cats are estimated to kill 200 million birds annually in Canada. Adopt in-principle agreements at the regional level, and encourage municipalities to adopt strategies in their SAD for managing outdoor/feral cat populations as a necessary step to reversing biodiversity loss.
- **Invasive species management**: Adopt in-principle agreements at the regional level, and encourage municipalities to adopt strategies in their SAD for eradicating invasive species at the local level. Provide additional levers for funding to permit new technologies for invasive species management. Of particular concern for avifauna are common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*), the first of which outcompetes the varied understory of urban forests and diminishes

biological diversity, the second of which is densifying in wetland habitat and causing particular concern when untended over several years for at-risk species such as the threatened Least Bittern.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The mission of Bird Protection Quebec, as Canada's oldest bird-conservation charity, is to protect birds and bird habitats while fostering an appreciation of them through conservation, observation, research, and education. The organization supports conservation through the ownership of lands, through the advocacy of protecting important habitats, and by supporting research. BPQ's mission broadly aligns with the general orientations of the *Projet du Plan d'aménagement et de développement révisé* (PPMADR) of the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM). BPQ nonetheless asks the CMM to refine certain objectives and criteria under *Orientation 3. Un Grand Montréal avec un environnement naturel, culturel, paysager et patrimonial protégé et mis en valeur,* notably to include the following objectives (and attendant criteria) under 3.1–3.8: to ensure no net loss of natural spaces; to update mapping and definitions to better reflect protected areas; to substantively integrate sustainable procurement and finances into strategy to reverse biodiversity loss; to prioritize Indigenous conservation leadership and reconciliation; to provide financial support for private conservation and municipal acquisition of lands for conservation, including support for conservation organizations that are advancing the targets of the Plan Nature 2030 and Global Biodiversity Framework; to promote and include bird-friendly practices in planning; and to encourage municipalities across the four poles of the CMM to use established participatory science activities to help enrich public biodiversity profiles.

BPQ applauds the momentous opportunity that the CMM has with the PPMADR to positively change the course of Quebec's future and advance federal commitments on the world stage. By working hand in hand to protect bird habitats, we as conservationists, ordinary citizens, and policy-drivers not only ensure a bright future for urban biodiversity, we also create healthier, more resilient communities for ourselves – because what's good for nature is good for people.