



September 18, 2016

The Honorable Catherine McKenna
Environment and Climate Change Canada
200, boulevard Sacré-Cœur
Gatineau, Québec K1A 0H3

Dear Minister,

On behalf of Bird Protection Quebec (BPOQ), the oldest bird-related conservation charity in Canada, we are writing to you to express concern about threatened wetlands and forests located on the federal lands of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport and the adjoining lands of the Montreal Technoparc, a unique, rich, and biodiverse habitat on the Montreal Island. To lose this land and the species that make use of it would be a tragedy. Such habitat is endangered everywhere in Canada and especially so in the Montreal region.

This land is not only valuable in its own right but uniquely important in the Montreal area as it holds and supports what is perhaps the greatest avian biodiversity on the island. Its loss or degradation would be irreparable and all possible measures must be taken to ensure that the species that rely on it are not deprived of its use, even for a single season.

The marshes and ponds on this land constitute, in particular, the critical habitat of the Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) listed as Threatened under the *Species at Risk Act* (L.C.2002 Ch.29) (SARA) and protected under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*. Individuals have been identified as nesting and reproducing in the Sources Marsh located on the airport's federal lands.

Least Bittern as well as many other bird species (over 70 confirmed or probably nesting in the area, as noted in the attached report) are threatened by Technoparc Montreal's development of the EcoCampus Hubert-Reeves and, if the tunnel is not extended 500 meters north as recently announced, by the Réseau électrique métropolitain (REM) rail project.

The 2014 Recovery Strategy for the Least Bittern in Canada establishes a 500 metre radius circle inside which critical habitat, necessary to subsistence by individuals of the species, should be considered. The mosaic of wetlands and forested areas found in this critical radius is immediately being threatened by major infrastructure work conducted for Technoparc Montreal's industrial development of the EcoCampus Hubert-Reeves.

This work started last week in the Montreal Technoparc. Given the immediate threats to the critical habitat of Least Bittern covered under the Species at Risk Act as well as of other bird species covered by the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*, we respectfully request that you apply these Acts and the principles of Canadian environmental legislation and treaties, including the precautionary principle, for proper protection and study of these uniquely important wild bird habitats and ecosystems in the Montreal region. Given the need for quick action, we are urging your Department to act promptly to ensure that infrastructure work be conducted in full respect of existing laws, and, in the event that further study is required to demonstrate appliance of relevant laws, that infrastructure work is immediately stopped until appropriate evidence is obtained.

As a science-based charity, closely allied to Nature Conservancy Canada, Bird Studies Canada, and Regroupement QuébecOiseaux in our work to protect birds and their habitats, Bird Protection Quebec is in a position to mobilize a wide range of expertise to support conservation efforts. We are committed to collaborating with your Department as well as provincial and municipal governments, conservation groups, Technoparc Montreal, and developers in the area, to mitigate the damage we fear and to ensure the optimum outcome for wildlife. In that regard, we have already reached out to the Technoparc management to offer our collaboration.

We thank you for your efforts and look forward to collaborating with your Department and other actors to ensure conservation of this unique habitat and its wildlife on the Montreal Island.

Yours truly,

Barbara MacDuff
President, Bird Protection Quebec

Jane Cormack
Chair Conservation Committee,
Bird Protection Quebec

Frédéric Hareau
Director, Bird Protection Quebec