



Environmental groups urge protection of green space

Description

Technoparc wetlands and adjacent federal lands constitute some of the most ecologically rich habitats

Montreal, Quebec
November 22, 2022

Open Letter to the Honourable Omar Alghabra, P.C., M.P., Minister of Transport; the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of the Environment and Climate Change; the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Canada; Mr. Massimo Iezzi, General Director of the Greater Montreal Metropolitan Area (CMM), and Her Worship Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montreal

Object: Protection of Lands North of Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau Airport, commonly known as the “Technoparc wetlands and adjacent federal lands”

The [UN Biodiversity Conference \(COP15\)](#), to be held in Montreal from December 7 – 19, 2022, is a momentous opportunity. This once-in-a-decade meeting will be one of our best chances to protect a host of species and their habitats. Recent [studies](#) by BirdLife International show that roughly half of the world’s bird species are in decline, and one in 8 birds is threatened with extinction, echoing Cornell University’s 2019 assessment of a decline of roughly 30%, or [3 billion birds lost](#) in North America alone since 1970. The scope of this decline is almost too vast to imagine. The solution envisioned by forward-thinking mayors in municipalities around the world? As Valérie Plante, mayor of Montreal, has aptly [said](#), “Keep the greenspaces we have.”

[Environment and Climate Change Canada](#) puts the need to protect our biodiversity equally succinctly: “There is an urgent need... to halt and reverse the alarming loss of biodiversity worldwide.”

Worldwide... and at home.



The 215 hectares of wetland and greenspace north of the Pierre-

Elliott-Trudeau Airport constitute some of the most ecologically rich habitats on the island of Montreal. These contiguous lands are owned by the federal government (155 ha), the City of Montreal (27 ha), and private developers (33 ha). Recognized for [its exceptional urban forest](#), the site is regularly celebrated as a top provincial hotspot for the observation of [over 200 species of birds](#), including 8 of the province's 10 Strigiformes as well as the threatened Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) and Short-Eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*). The site is also a propitious habitat for the Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). The Minister of Transport controls roughly 155 ha of the unceded land, which contains the highest documented concentration on the island of Montreal of both Common Milkweed and Monarch butterflies. Public attention to the value of the site [rose sharply](#) this past summer when it was discovered that Aéroports de Montréal – which leases the land from the federal government and makes no secret of their [wish to develop it](#) – mowed down 20 hectares of milkweed and flowering plants necessary for the monarch's survival during protected avian nesting season. [A formal investigation by Environment and Climate Change Canada](#) is currently underway, as such a mowing may have violated the Migratory Birds Convention Act.

A wealth of ecological data has been collected by Technoparc Oiseaux and others to support the site as an area of great ecological importance on the island of Montreal. Alongside scientists, students, and everyday field naturalists, Technoparc Oiseaux has compiled and collected [incontrovertible evidence](#) of the site's rich biodiversity. Platforms such as Monarch Watch, Mission Monarch, iNaturalist, and eBird have enabled a database to be amassed of verifiable research-grade observations that have been transmitted to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility to help advance biodiversity research worldwide. Concordia University has been instrumental in conducting ongoing studies on-site, as has Environment Canada.

[Over 35 organizations](#), including SNAP Québec, Birds Canada, Fondation Rivières, MARE, Greenpeace, the David Suzuki Foundation, Quebec Oiseaux, and Bird Protection Quebec, have called for the site's protection. The Office of the Auditor General of Canada has acknowledged the necessity for different federal ministers – notably ministers of Transport, Environment, and Science, Innovation and Economic Development Canada – to be accountable to the public about plans for the site and accepted to formally relay [our concerns](#) to ministers via the [Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development](#). A federal [petition](#) calling for the site's protection was introduced by Alexandre Boulerice, M.P. of Rosemont-Petite Patrie, into the House of Commons this



October and is slated for discussion by December 10, 2022. [Tens of thousands of citizens](#) have voiced their desire to see the 215 hectares that make up the Technoparc and adjacent federal lands protected. And the Mohawk the site's protection in [two powerful documents](#) archived by



As if this were not enough, [25 municipalities and boroughs](#)

[within Greater Montreal](#) (Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal, CMM) have voted across party lines, unanimously, to protect the site and to call for a moratorium on greenspace development in the sector. Unanimous resolutions by the Montreal Agglomeration Council, the City of Montreal, and the City of Dorval have emphasized the urgent need to protect the site for its biodiversity. The CMM, for its part, has called for the site's protection with two separate Règlements de contrôle intérimaire: one devoted to conserving the site's [wetlands](#); another calling for the protection of Golf Dorval and [Monarch Fields](#).

Such widespread support for a conservation initiative, with 25 separate municipal and regional resolutions representing over 4 million people, is unprecedented in the CMM. What more will it take to make the protection of the Technoparc wetlands and adjacent federal lands a reality? If the federal and municipal governments are unable to move forward protecting the very land they manage, who will?

If Canada is to succeed in its stated aspiration to protect 30% of oceans and land by 2030, in keeping with the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, it will need all of the tools in its arsenal. One such tool is of course the Species at Risk Act Registry, which mandates the protection of at-risk species and their habitat. Historically seen as a [dangerously slow](#) process at both the provincial and federal levels, formal registration on SARA for threatened and endangered species can often take years. The Monarch butterfly, for example, has lingered since 2003 in its status as "Of Special Concern," which the [Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada](#) urged the government to revise to "endangered" in 2016. The [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) has likewise issued a worldwide alert for the species by placing it on its Red List in 2022. Recently, there have been [hopeful signs](#) that the Canadian government will be moving forward in formally recognizing the Monarch butterfly as endangered, but we have no more time to lose.



The biodiversity of these 215 hectares of continuous green space, still unprotected, makes the site one of the last natural treasures on the island of Montreal. We call upon the interested parties and decision-makers at all levels of government to act now, urgently, with the extraordinary opportunity of COP 15, to protect the Technoparc wetlands and adjacent federal lands before it is too late.

Signed

Technoparc Oiseaux
Coalition Terrains de golf en transition
Green Coalition
Société de biologie de Montréal
Save Fairview Forest
Regroupement des citoyens de Saraguay
Bird Protection Quebec
Québec Oiseaux
Sauvons-l'Anse-à-l'Orme
Pincourt Vert
David Roy, representative for Québec, Fresque de la biodiversité
Mères au front
Charlotte Sari Kelen, Coalition de l'environnement
Patricia Clermont, Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement (AQME)
Susan Hawker, Coalition Amis de l'environnement–Friends of the Environment
Action Environnement Basse-Laurentides
Les Amis du parc Meadowbrook
For Our Kids Montreal



Union québécoise de réhabilitation des oiseaux de proie (UQROP)
Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montréal (CRE)

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Technoparc Oiseaux is a citizen-mobilization group of over 4800 members working to protect and restore the wetlands, rewilded greenspaces, and natural habitats of the Technoparc and adjacent federal lands.



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