

Response to the Draft Policy respecting the protection and enhancement of the natural environment

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### **The Macdonald Campus of McGill University**

The 1600 acre Macdonald Campus of McGill University is located on the western tip of Montreal Island and is the largest private land holding in the region. The Campus is home to McGill's Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and John Abbott College. The Faculty's overarching priority areas are biosciences, environment, agricultural production systems, nutrition, food, as well as both animal and human health.

The Campus benefits from world-class environmental infrastructures used primarily for teaching and research. These include the Morgan Arboretum, McGill's 245 hectare forested reserve, Stonecroft Wildlife Area which is located adjacent to the Arboretum, St-Lawrence Valley Natural History Society Ecomuseum, Macdonald Farm, Lods Agronomy Research Station, horticultural field station and lakeshore properties.

The Molson Nature Reserve located on Ile Perrot was donated to McGill University as a nature conservation centre for use in study and research. The 51-hectare parcel of land consists of forest, woodland marshes, swamps and wetland, and provides habitat for wildlife and plant species, some of which are unique to the area.

The Macdonald Campus has been designated a Collaborating Centre in Environmental Impact Assessment by the UN Environment Program. We perform cutting edge ecosystem, biodiversity and conservation research and are home to Canada's Sustainable Forest Management Network.

We are committed to enhance activities of biosciences in support of life improvement, and have created a vision to be the academic and intellectual heart of the western Greater Montreal region. The Campus' tremendous physical and intellectual assets make it a key component of the Greater Montreal Life Sciences Cluster.

The long-term vision is to position McGill and the Macdonald Campus as the hub of an international cluster in biosciences, offering education, research and knowledge transfer activities and contributing to the economic growth of the region. The Macdonald Campus plans to grow its educational and research programs and improve facilities related to this vision.

One of the greatest engines of development and economic growth of regions are the universities and colleges. The Greater Montreal Area is rapidly discovering this reality, as indicated by the « Montreal, City of Learning and City of Knowledge » project. McGill University is well positioned to assume a leadership role in the creation of a world-class cluster of talents and value creation initiatives on the Macdonald Campus. This represents a unique and strategic growth opportunity for Quebec.

## **Response to the draft Policy respecting the protection & enhancement of the natural environment**

McGill has developed unique and extensive scientific expertise in biodiversity conservation, landscape and forest ecology and environmental education. We welcome a policy which will integrate the conservation areas managed by McGill into a larger framework of ecological significance and would be pleased to work with the Ecoterritory Technical Committee.

In order to protect all of our teaching and research facilities including the Morgan Arboretum, Stoneycroft Wildlife Area, Ecomuseum and Lods Agronomy Research Station, McGill University has exercised controls that limit the use of and access to these areas.

The concept of 'ecological connectivity' outlined in the report is excellent and is supported. It should be noted that the possibility exists to use all of the areas along the western edge of the island as core areas, buffer zones (zone de tampon) or corridors that would give a very large area of primary and secondary habitats for many species.

Bois de la Roche has a mosaic of habitats that link the Arboretum with Riviere a' l'Orme and hence Cap St Jacques. The Bois de la Roche property and adjacent areas must be viewed as an important part of the ecological plan and be managed as such. Even though agricultural fields are not prime habitat for woodland species they retain wooded hedgerows.

Although not part of the mandate of the Commission, the wooded areas across the Lac de Deux Montagnes from the Senneville forest, including the Molson Reserve on Ile Perrot, Ile Claude and the adjacent small islands including Ile Hiam, Ile Avelle (provincial ecological reserves) and Ile aux Tourtres are all tied ecologically into the concept of core, buffer and corridor zones that are the basis of the plan and warrant consideration. The Commission is encouraged to develop its plans in tandem with these off island municipalities and the Provincial Government.

Reference is made in the documentation to the extension of Highway 440. The plan must address the ecological implications of the north extension to Highway 440 to the protection and enhancement of the Ecoterritories.

One stated objective in this project is to reconnect humans with nature in an urban setting. Public education is of the utmost importance and again McGill, through its involvement in the Morgan Arboretum, the Ecomuseum and Urban Nature Service etc. can lend some expertise in this area.

In conclusion, the conservation policy presented in this document is welcomed and we would be most pleased to participate in the development of this project.

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