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Orangeville strengthens Bee City status with pollinator conservation

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Orangeville council is creating a buzz about local bee habitat.

In fact, council asked municipal staff during its March 24 meeting to develop a Pollinator Protection Plan to ensure that town policies and operations align with best practices for pollinator conservation.

Orangeville, along with Mono and other municipalities across Canada, has been named a Bee City community by Bee City Canada. It's part of a North American movement to support pollinator protection.

Bee City communities support collaboration and establish and maintain healthy pollinator habitat within the municipality or First Nation's boundaries.

Bee City Canada's mission is to recognize and support municipalities, Indigenous communities, campuses, schools, and other organizations that are taking action to protect and promote pollinators.

Bees have been in decline for several years because of habitat loss, pesticide use, large-scale agricultural operations, climate change, and the spread of pests and diseases.

Councillor Tess Prendergast, vice-chairperson of the Sustainable Orangeville committee, told council in March that the designation again demonstrates the town's commitment to fostering pollinator health and habitat.

Orangeville has been designated a Bee City since 2020.

?Pollinators play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance, supporting local agriculture, and enhancing biodiversity,? she said. ?The conservation, support, and creation of pollinator habitats contribute to urban biodiversity and provide essential ecosystem services, including natural pest control, soil erosion reduction, and improved water quality.?

Ontario's Pollinator Health Action Plan indicates that pollinators such as bees are vital to the agricultural sector, with both managed and wild pollinators contributing an estimated $992 million annually to the province's economy.

Habitat loss is a primary driver of pollinator decline and poses a significant risk to biodiversity, ecosystem resilience, and food security.

Town staff has been asked to identify suitable locations on town-owned property for the development of a municipal pollinator garden and report back to council with proposed locations, budget implications, and an implementation plan for consideration.

The protection plan will prioritize the purchase and use of native, pollinator-friendly plants and seeds that are free from systemic pesticides, including neonicotinoids, for all municipal landscaping projects.

Orangeville will incorporate specific pollinator-friendly requirements into municipal tender documents to ensure contractors and suppliers adhere to best practices.

Training materials will be developed about pollinator habitat maintenance to ensure municipal operations support pollinator survival and biodiversity.

?The Town of Orangeville will strengthen its leadership in environmental sustainability, enhance local biodiversity, and reaffirm its

commitment to protecting vital pollinator populations,? Prendergast said.