

OPINION

Bee forewarned

Scientists, environmentalists and beekeepers, to name a few, are sounding the alarm bells, and they are loud. Yet, no one appears to be taking much notice that the worldwide bee population is rapidly declining.

We have heard the stories—repeatedly. From colony collapse disorder to hive abandonment to bee die-off, the humble bumble is under constant threat. While much focus has been on the steady reduction in the number of honeybees, there is also great concern for the fate of wild bees.

Conservation Halton natural heritage ecologist Brenda Ryswyk said recently the pollinators are key to maintaining our food sources and there is cause for concern.

“If we lost the wild bees, we would lose all of our flowering plants. If we lost all of our wild pollinators, we would really have a very different landscape,” said Van Ryswyk.

There is no one simple explanation for the decline in bees. Experts point to pesticides, loss of habitat, climate change, types of crops grown, parasites and foreign species among other things.

“In previous farming practices, they (farmers) used to have a lot of hedgerows with a lot of wildflowers and shrubs that grew. That area was prime habitat for bumblebees and wild bees to nest in,” explained Van Ryswyk. “A lot of farms these days feel it’s more efficient to clear those away and have more of a factory farm.”

In Canada, the bee population has dropped by an estimated 35 per cent in the past three years, according to the Canadian Honey Council.

There is something, however, homeowners can do to assist the species. Perhaps local residents could lead the way in providing habitat for wild bees. In your garden, plant native flowers that provide nectar and pollen. Encourage nesting areas using old branches and twigs.

As well, many of us have become too sterile in our planting practices. No longer can it be about esthetics, it needs to be about survival. The bee population is key to that.

WEB POLL RESULTS (Go to www.theifp.ca)

Town budget committee has directed a tax hike of 5 per cent as a starting point for 2014 budget deliberations. Is this figure...

- Way too high (79%)
- Not enough to cover needed services (12%)
- Fair (9%)

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Letters to the editor

Exchange Hotel should be saved

(This letter was sent to Mayor Rick Bonette and Councillors Jane Fogal, Moya Johnson and Dave Kentner. A copy was made available for publication.)

Dear Mayor Bonette and Councillors Fogal, Johnson & Kentner,

As a longtime resident of Georgetown and someone who cares immensely about the preservation of Halton's precious heritage, I find myself writing out of deep concern regarding the future of the Exchange Hotel.

When I read that this structure is the last of its kind within original proximity to an original, working railroad station in Ontario, I was certain someone with ties to financial resources would step up and save the original structure (between the additions built on either side), at the very least!

In light of recent events taking place, sadly, this is turning out not to be the case.

Though the Heritage Halton Hills committee unanimously recom-

mended the structure's salvation, Town council has appeared to look the other way (toward more lucrative, "economy-stimulating" matters, no doubt), begging the question: What need is there for a heritage preservation committee after all? Additionally, hope in the form of aid from Habitat for Humanity has dissipated completely.

This situation seems to have become a tested and true waiting game: Give the building enough time to fall apart or catch fire and therefore justify the wrecker's ball. The indifferent majority of the town will doubtlessly agree it was the right thing to do.

I truly believe the means exist to save, restore and honour this community's impressive origins through the salvation of the Exchange Hotel.

Realistically, all we need is enough people to see past the crumbling façade and seriously give a damn.

For all intents and purposes, we've already lost the iconic Barber Mill to indecision and complacency. The Georgetown Memorial Arena is next.

I implore council and the residents of Georgetown not to let this happen to the Exchange Hotel, as well.

Peter Roe, Georgetown

Stop signs welcomed

Dear editor,

After years of emailing Mayor Rick Bonnette in regards to the dangerous intersection at Silver Pond Dr. and Danby Rd. we finally got our four-way stop signs.

The intersection in front of Gardiner Public School was treacherous to cross during the school year morning and afternoon rush. There were many close calls with kids almost getting hit by speeding and distracted drivers. Sometimes a Good Samaritan would stop and let my kids and I cross.

I would like to thank the mayor and Town staff for being proactive and preventing a possible tragedy from occurring.

Brian Cugali, Georgetown

Letters policy

Letters must include the author's name, address and daytime phone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 150 words and may be edited for content and/or length. Publication is not guaranteed.

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