

Home, Lawn & Garden

Bee hotels open in effort to save pollinators

Bees, the unsung heroes of our ecosystem, are responsible for the pollination of over 80 per cent of flowering plants, fruits and vegetables. For decades across North America, however, their numbers have steadily declined.

"Without bees and the estimated \$1 billion worth of pollination services they provide to the Canadian food production industry, these foods would quickly grow scarce and wildlife would be less varied," says Victoria MacPhail of Wildlife Preservation Canada.

When the food chain cracks, those at the top are bound to lose their balance, says Vicki Wojcik, research director of Pollinator Partnership Canada, a not-for-profit organization

dedicated to this cause. "One out of every three bites of food humans eat is the result of animal pollination," she adds.

For the last two years, Pollinator Partnership has worked with Burt's Bees Canada to raise money for pollinator research and breeding programs.

"This year," Wojcik explains, "we are looking at the bigger picture. Knowing that loss and fragmentation of habitat is a primary cause of bee decline, we decided to team up with skin care company, Burt's Bees Canada, plus accommodation giant Fairmont Hotels & Resorts – another big supporter of bees on a global scale – and with property designer, Sustainable.to Architecture + Build-

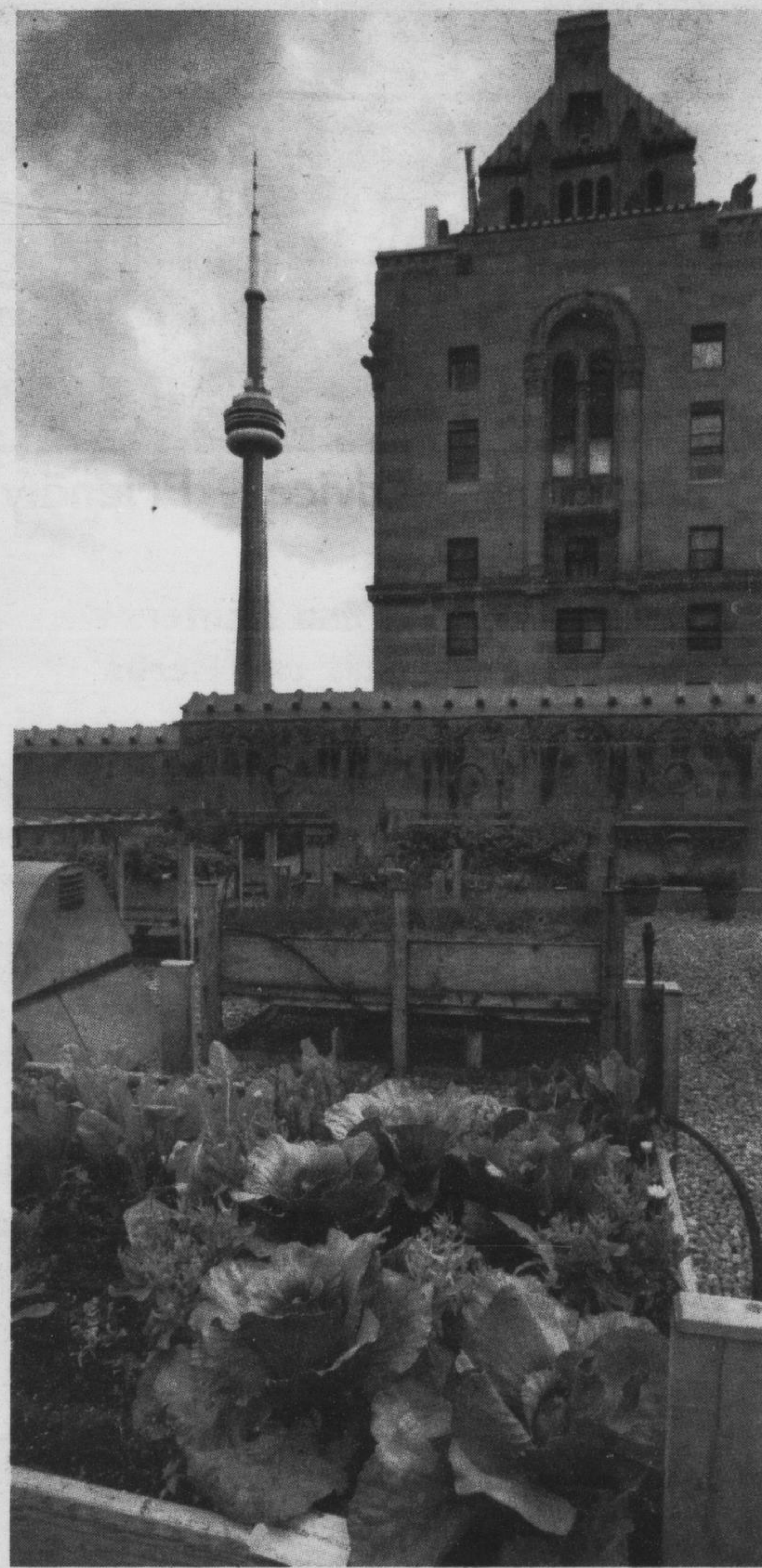
ing, to construct five sustainable 'bee hotels': four in Toronto, and one in Guelph."

The first one will open its doors in early June on the rooftop terrace of the Fairmont Royal York in downtown Toronto. This hotel-habitat, like others in construction, aims to replicate the natural nesting sites of solitary pollinator bees. The wood, soil and pith-filled holes provide the ideal environment for bees to breed, lay eggs and seek protection from predators.

"We use honey and beeswax in 95 per cent of our products," says Carolyn Hungate of Burt's Bees Canada, "so we're thrilled to be giving back to Canadian bees as the co-sponsor of this project. Our hope is to increase the number of nesting sites for solitary pollinator bees – and of course, if the bee hotels spark thought and conversation about bee health, we consider that a big win, too."

To help raise funds during the month of June, Burt's Bees says it has pledged to donate 100 per cent of the proceeds from the sale of its new Hydrating Lip Balm with Coconut and Pear to the bee hotel initiative. This product will be available online at burtsbees.ca/wildforbees (in June) and at major retailers in July. (NC)

The first bee hotel opens next month on the rooftop terrace of the Fairmont Royal York in downtown Toronto, at right. This hotel-habitat, like the others under construction, aims to replicate the natural nesting sites of solitary pollinator bees.



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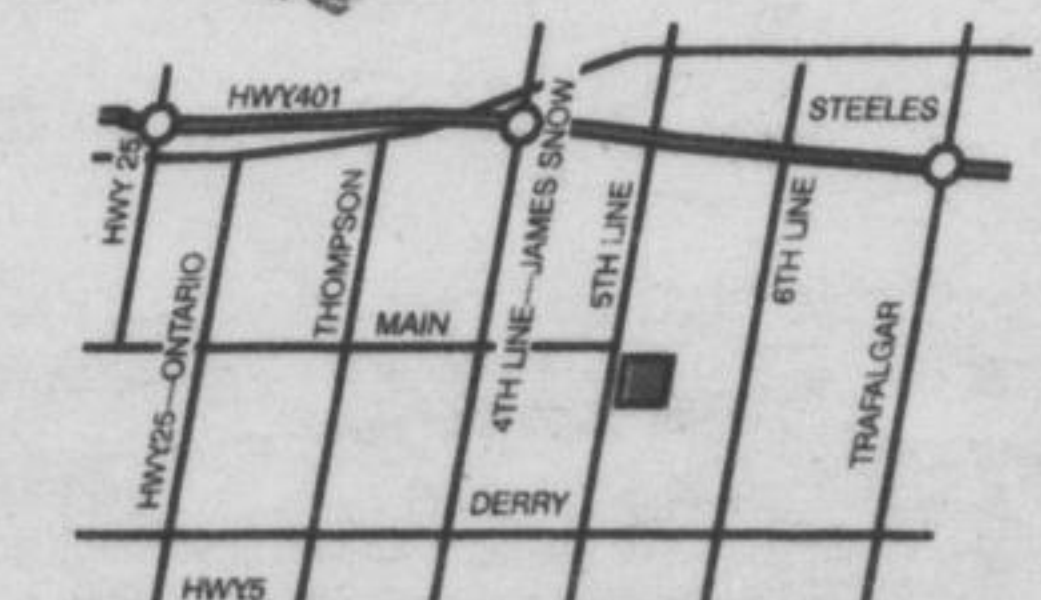
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