

Feds, Ontario government commit up to \$500,000 to province's beekeeping sector

By Daina Goldfinger Local Online Journalist Global News



The announcement of the funding commitment came on Wednesday morning in Innisfil, Ont.

Twitter/Jeff Yurek

The Ontario and federal governments are committing up to \$500,000 toward the province's beekeeping sector, according to an announcement made on Wednesday.

The investment is aimed at strengthening the health of Ontario's honeybees and helping beekeepers grow their business and better manage pests, including Varroa mites, and diseases.

"The health of bee populations is vital given the importance of pollinators to food and seed production," Marie-Claude Bibeau, federal agriculture and agri-food minister, said in a statement.

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Bibeau said the federal government is committed to providing beekeepers with what's needed to support bee health while ensuring that both the beekeeping industry and the agriculture sector have sustainable futures.

"Bees are important pollinators that are essential to maintaining healthy ecosystems and a healthy environment," Jeff Yurek, Ontario's environment, conservation and parks minister, said in a statement. "Our government is committed to ensuring pollinators are well protected while supporting our farmers and beekeepers."

While the provincial government is investing money in the beekeeping sector, Andre Flys, the president of the Ontario Beekeepers' Association and a commercial beekeeper with Pioneer Brand Honey, told Global News he'd like to see the province address the issue of pesticides.

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"We're always happy to hear that there's funding for beekeepers and that the government is paying attention," he said. "Frankly, I'm a little concerned that they came up with a long list of stressors...but the word pesticide was not uttered."

According to Flys, science shows that both native and honey bees are consistently being exposed to pesticides.

"They're bringing it in their pollen, they're bringing it in their nectar," he said. "We're not really addressing that."

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Flys said that banning pesticides outright wouldn't work but that the use of them should be reduced. "We need to do a better job about using less," he said.

Great to be in Innisfil with @erniehardeman, @Andrea_Khanjin and @douglasdowney to announce new cost-share funding to support and strengthen the health of the province's honeybees and beekeeping sector. Thanks to Brian Scott from Innisfil Creek Honey for hosting us today. pic.twitter.com/YuojLh66GI

— Jeff Yurek (@JeffYurekMPP) August 7, 2019

Over the last number of years, Ontario's bee population has experienced large losses over the winter, Ernie Hardman, Ontario's agriculture, food and rural affairs minister, told Global News.

"No one seems to be quite sure as to what the causes are," he said. "Different things are happening in

different circumstance in different places, yet everyone is having large losses.”

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Hardman said the province wants to help finance research to find out how to reduce the losses over the winter.

“Eighty per cent of our field crops have to be pollinated by pollinators, which of course, is the bee industry, so I think that’s why it’s so important,” Hardman added.

An audio player interface for 'The Morning Show'. On the left is a thumbnail image of hosts Stafford and Supriya. The main area shows a play button, the title 'Feds, Ontario government commit up to \$500,000 t', and a progress bar at 00:00 / 09:37. The 'Global News RADIO' logo is in the top left, and 'CURIOUS CAST' is at the bottom left. Information and share icons are in the top right.

The investment being made by the province and the feds is through a targeted intake under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year, \$3-billion commitment by Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial governments that supports the country’s agri-food and agri-products sectors.

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Under the intake, beekeepers can apply for funding for sampling and analysis for pests and diseases, business supports for beekeepers and equipment that prevents the introduction and spread of disease in addition to increasing bees’ survival throughout the winter.

Eligible applicants can start applying for funding on Sept. 3.

“I hope we actually get to be involved in some of these consultations going forward,” Flys said.

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