

Bzzzzz: CBC Fredericton joins national effort to save honey bees

With bees, station will get a closeup understanding of the environment's health, biologist says

By Shaun Waters, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 28, 2017 8:30 AM AT Last Updated: Oct 28, 2017 1:29 PM AT

CBC New Brunswick may be creating a lot of buzz in the next few months — literally.

The station in Fredericton has obtained a land use variance from the city to take part in the network's Urban Bee Initiative.

Two working beehives have been set up near the CBC building and will house about 80,000 domestic bees.

'It seems kind of strange that we would be diversifying into this. But really the bee population is very important when it comes to our food production in Canada and throughout the world.' -
Aoife Gillen, CBC

The Central Beekeepers Association of New Brunswick is supporting the project and helping with setup and training.

The bees and hives will provide the station and its employees with a direct window on the health of the local environment, said Dr. Andrew Byers, a biologist in Fredericton and president of the beekeepers association.

"Bees are a sentinel," Byers said. "They tell us what's going on. If you live in a healthy environment, then your bees will be healthy.

"And if your environment is unhealthy, then the bees won't do well."

Byers said he expects the bee project will inspire people to get involved.

"I think these sorts of projects raise awareness with the city. And I know Fredericton at the moment is looking at changing some of the bylaws and whether or not to make it easier for people to keep bees."

In recent years, Byers said there has been growing concern over the collapse of bee colonies and with good reason.

"We're losing our bees, and if we don't have bees, we won't have one in three or one in four mouthfuls of [the] food, that we consume.

If the bees outside the CBC building in Fredericton manage to survive the winter in good health, Byers expects the two hives to produce about 200 pounds or almost 91 kilograms of unpasteurized honey.

Honey proceeds to charity

Next fall all of the honey produced by the bees will be harvested and sold with proceeds going to charity.

Aoife (pronounced "eefa") Gillen, the CBC's senior adviser on health, safety and environment, is overseeing the Urban Bee Initiative at stations across the country, including Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver and now Fredericton.

Gillen said it's all about demonstrating good corporate care and responsibility.

"It seems kind of strange that we would be diversifying into this," Gillen said. "But really the bee population is very important when it comes to our food production in Canada and throughout the world.

'Bee champions'

"So basically, we're trying to promote the actual population here in Canada because they're in decline obviously from pesticides, construction and habitat loss and then new diseases, which have reduced their numbers. "

Gillen said most stations taking part in the project are placing their hives on building rooftops.

In Fredericton, the two hives have been placed in a fenced-off site for security. The Central Beekeepers Association has agreed to maintain the hives.

The station has also identified a number of volunteers who've been designated "bee champions" to help with the sale of honey next year.

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