


DEAR POLLINATORS,




I've always been your number one fan. I can't help it. I want to make sure you know that, especially because of how we've been treating you lately. I'm afraid you might think your fan base is diminishing.

But I appreciate you for the pumpkins we carve in October, the plump cherries that grow in the Okanagan Valley, and the strawberries we pick to bake pies with. And that goes for all of you. While some may lurch away from the not-so-cute members of your bunch, I'm happy to say that I don't. I respect your hard work and dedication, even if you aren't fuzzy like a bumblebee, or don't carry works of art on your wings like a butterfly.

Do people realize you come in all shapes, sizes, temperaments, and working styles? We can't only gush about tending to the most popular pollinators. You're diverse, and our support for you must follow suit: Canada alone has over 800 species of pollinators, and butterflies have different needs than hummingbirds, moths, or beetles.

You're irreplaceable in our world, and the more people understand that, the better. Close to 75 percent of the world's crops that produce fruits or seeds that we eat depend on you, at least in part. While some plants self-pollinate or receive pollination from the power of wind, it's you who contributes the most work. Pollen rubs onto you and travels with you to other flowers, where it sticks to the stigma to fertilize it. That fertilized flower will go on to produce fruits and seeds we eat. One in three bites of food we eat depends on you. Without you, we can say hello to major food shortages.



It hurts to see you struggling as you're displaced and slowly eliminated from the world. Your habitats are being ripped up in favour of highways and condos. Intense wildfires have been ripping through your homes, leaving you nothing to eat and disrupting your routines. Where do you go after that? How are you managing? Sometimes when you find food to feast on, you discover too late that it's been covered with neonicotinoids pesticides designed to protect crops from pesky insects. What a trick.

But we aren't helpless in the fight to protect you. We can ask our councillors to stop urban sprawl and help keep your homes your own. Our elected leaders should hear our outrage that your needs aren't being addressed. I have my councillor's e-mail, and I'm not afraid to use it.

Another thing we can do is grow your favourite plants to transform our gardens into welcoming places for you. I know you love sunflowers, marigolds, and aster. One of my Grandma's favourite flowers, zinnias, is one of your favourites too. I remember my Grandma walking me through her garden and showing me each plant that would make a pollinator happy, and it made me want a backyard just like hers, a haven for you to have a rest, grab a bite to eat, and feel safe in.

I can imagine you might feel forgotten. We draw pictures of you on cards and read about you in stories, but that kind of support doesn't highlight your struggles. When those feelings creep up on you, please remember you're not a fleeting trend. I'll continue to speak up about your needs in the dead of winter when you've migrated somewhere warmer or began hibernating in your nests. When people question your worth, I'll remind them of your power. I'll always use my voice for you. I'll plant flowers to welcome you and make you feel at home.

If you're going to take away one thing from my love letter, I hope it's that I won't give up on you.

Much love,
CLAIRE BRADBURY