



August 5, 2016

Board of Directors
The Canadian Honey Council
#218, 51519 R.R.220
Sherwood Park, AB T8E 1H1

Dear Members of the Canadian Honey Council Board,

We read the letter from the Chair of the Canadian Honey Council in the August issue of HiveLights with surprise and disappointment. The board of directors of the OBA believes that Mr. Nixon's unexpected and unwarranted tirade raises serious issues as to his qualifications to lead the CHC. Further, the board believes his accusations require a response.

Mr. Nixon accuses the OBA of conniving to appear before the House Committee on Bee Health:

"Equally amazing was how the Ontario Beekeepers Association also got themselves on the agenda to testify, yet not one other provincial organization was represented outside of the CHC."

To set the record right, contrary to your assertion, the OBA was *invited* to testify to the House Committee on Bee Health, no doubt due to our expertise and experience with the impact of pesticides on Ontario's beekeeping industry.

Mr. Nixon goes on to say:

"A year and a half ago, the OBA wanted to be rid of the bee health roundtable. Now they are asking to be a part of it, yet not one other provincial organization has a representative there."

Since its inception, the OBA has questioned the relevance of a national Bee Health Roundtable that does not include Ontario and Quebec beekeepers, especially considering CHC is represented by an executive director who - at best - is ambivalent on the issue of neonicotinoid's negative impact on bee health. This same Bee Health Roundtable *does* include ample representation from the agriculture industry, pesticide manufacturers and the Grain Farmers of Ontario, an agriculture industry group with an Ontario mandate and a public record of opposition to the interests Ontario beekeepers.

This problem of underrepresentation of Ontario and Quebec beekeepers was brought to your attention early on. In fact, in response, CHC asked us to recommend a

representative, to which we suggested OBA past president Dan Davidson, a commercial beekeeper whose family also farms corn and soy. As we heard no more from CHC, despite repeated queries, we can only assume Dan was deemed unsuitable for reasons unknown to us.

Mr. Nixon, as the leader of our national organization, goes on to make several provocative statements about the OBA:

“I am not sure why the OBA continues to be a member of the CHC yet act independent of the CHC as they continue requesting action from the national government which is in conflict with what the CHC requests.”

“If a member organization does not agree with the principles and action items which are developed by the board, why would such an organization continue being a member?”

And again, Mr. Nixon questions the principles of the OBA:

“Why do we as an organization continue to allow membership to one of our member organizations who seems to operate on ideological principles and actions which contradict the CHC?”

To be clear, the OBA is guided and directed by our Mission:

“We work to ensure a thriving and sustainable beekeeping industry in Ontario.”

We believe that all Canadian beekeeping organizations, including the CHC, should be guided by the principles of bee health and a sustainable beekeeping industry. We fail to understand why Mr. Nixon believes this guiding principle would be in conflict with the CHC, particularly since CHC members approved the following resolution at their 2014 AGM: *That the Canadian Honey Council support reductions of all insecticides, especially those such as neonicotinoids that accumulate in the environment, to levels that are required for sustainable and profitable agricultural production, by the use of IPM.”*

Mr. Nixon expresses his ignorance of the neonic issue and, despite this resolution, appears to deny its huge impact on Canadian beekeeping:

“It amazed me how these folks (House of Commons) are still stuck on a single topic as a cause of bee losses, being neonics. I guess they are susceptible to be swayed by media reports and others as well.”

“We are seeing so many resources wasted on a single item when so many other important topics are being overlooked.”

The overuse of neonicotinoids is creating havoc in the two provinces where much of Canada’s corn and soy is grown, representing more than 50% of Canadian beekeepers. Quebec and Ontario beekeeping organizations are united on the need for action to reduce exposure from neonics.

But when - for whatever reason - our national organization refuses to stand up for the health of honey bees, we have no choice but to take on this issue ourselves. Neonicotinoids are not the only bee health issue the industry faces, nor the only one the OBA significantly addresses, but it is the *one* issue that directly threatens honey bees *and* that we have the power to change through reasonable regulatory policy or legislation.

Referring to neonics, Mr. Nixon does not appear to agree with scientists, or perhaps has not read the published peer-reviewed research detailing the effects of neonics on bee health. We would be happy to provide Mr. Nixon with over 800 studies representing overwhelming evidence of the negative impact on bee health from these pesticides. If he needs further convincing, as leader of the CHC he should see for himself. If he can attend the House committee in Ottawa why hasn't he accepted our invitation to inspect poisoned yards in Ontario like those of Sharon, Ont. beekeeper James Murray, who recently lost 17 hives in one morning to neonic poisoning?

Mr. Nixon's divisive letter published in HiveLights with no warning or prior discussion with OBA, publicly exposes a singular lack of knowledge, bias and prejudice that makes him unqualified to be leader of a national organization concerned with bee health and which is mandated to represent all Canadian beekeepers. We call for the CHC Board to immediately ask the chair to step aside and for the CHC to elect a new chair that will unify CHC. The challenges to beekeeping in Canada have never been greater. We need a unified organization and we need principled leadership for the CHC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tibor Szabo', written in a cursive style.

Tibor Szabo, President

cc: Jim Coneybeare, OBA Rep to CHC