

Honey bees get support in Niagara Falls by-election polling

Friends of the Earth Bee Cause finds overwhelming voter support for action to save bees in closely fought by-election between NDP and PC front-runners in the Niagara Falls Riding

(Ottawa, ON, Feb. 6, 2014) A poll commissioned by Friends of the Earth Canada (FOE) to research voter expectations related to protecting honey bees in Canada's fruit basket – the riding of Niagara Falls – indicates significant public support and concern about the issue. The FOE research was tied to the level of voter concern about Neonicotinoids (neonics) pesticides and their impact on the steadily declining bee populations.

According to Beatrice Olivastri, CEO, Friends of the Earth Canada, the population of honey bees so important for pollinating agricultural crops have dropped by 37.9 percent in Ontario in the last year. FOE is very concerned about the economic and environmental impacts of the bee die-off. The polling results clearly show voters of Niagara Falls share FOE's concerns.

Bees can be exposed to neonics (a deadly pesticide) via several routes: contact with contaminated dust, consuming pollen or nectar from the treated crop, adjacent flowers, and fields or consuming water (puddles, surface water and fluid from plants). See also: <http://foecanada.org/en/the-bee-cause-2/>.

The poll demonstrated that:

- Eight out of ten respondents (80%) are concerned about the future health of honey bees in Ontario.
- More than nine out of ten (91%) feel government must act to protect pollinators such as honey bees in Ontario because of the importance of bees to fruit and vegetables grown in Niagara Falls.
- Almost eight out of ten (79%) are concerned with pesticides like neonics contaminating soil and ground water sources in Ontario.
- More than six out of ten respondents (64%) want Premier Kathleen Wynne to suspend the use of neonic pesticides.
- More than eight out of ten Niagara Falls respondents (83%) believe farmers should have the option to purchase neonic pesticide free seeds. NDP support was tallied at 40%, Conservatives at 36%, Liberals at 21% and the Green Party at 3%.

“Clearly, voters in Niagara Falls are very concerned about the continuing bee die-off. They have indicated they will want their new representative to work hard to stop the honey bee carnage,” observed Olivastri. She went on to say, “Whoever Niagara Falls voters choose on February 13th, he or she will have to act fast. Time is short to help farmers get neonic-free seeds for use this year.”

"We're not surprised that Niagara Falls citizens strongly support a ban on Neonicotinoid pesticides on corn and soy plantings. Niagara farmers need healthy bees for their fruit production." said Dan Davidson, President of the Ontario Beekeepers' Association.

The Oracle Research survey was commissioned by Friends of the Earth and conducted between January 28 and February 4, 2014. A total of 400 people in the Niagara Falls riding were surveyed with a margin of error of +/- 4.9% 19/20 times.

(more)

For further information or to arrange an interview, contact:

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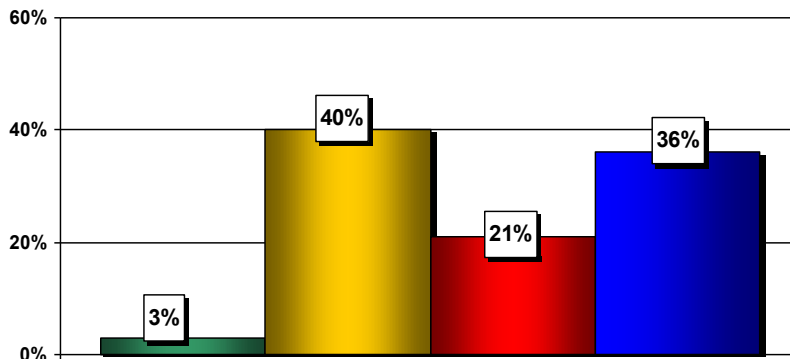
Neonics are synthetic versions of nicotine, and are neurotoxins that kill insects by breaking down their nervous system. The class includes clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam and associated products registered in Canada.

- In Quebec, farmers have the option of choosing seed without neonic coating.
- In Ontario, 100% of seed corn used in 2013 was coated with neonics.

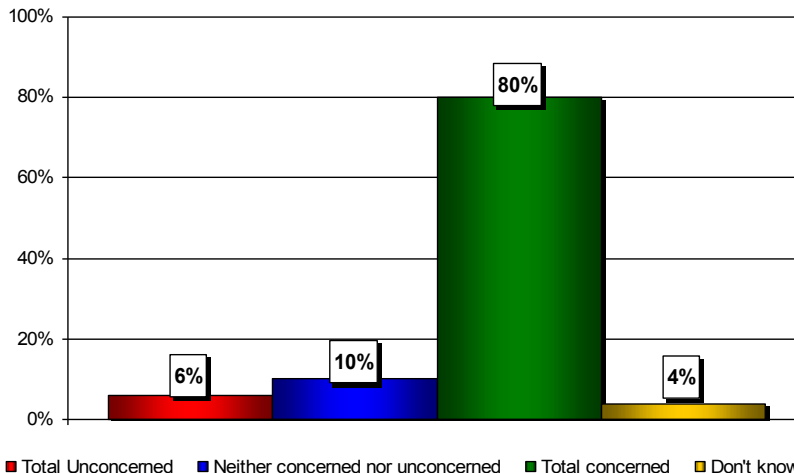
For more details, visit FOE's website www.foecanada.org.

Friends of the Earth is the Canadian member of Friends of the Earth International, the world's largest grassroots environmental network campaigning on today's most urgent environmental and social issues.

“Which Party’s candidate would you be most likely to be leaning towards or considering voting for at this time?”



“How concerned are you about the future health of honey bee populations in Ontario? Please use a scale from one not at all concerned to five very concerned.”



Eight in ten voters in Niagara or 80% are concerned about the future health of the honey bee population in Ontario, compared to only 6% that are unconcerned, while 10% had a neutral opinion (neither concerned nor unconcerned) and 4% did not know. Concern was highest among Liberal (88%), followed by NDP (83%) and then PC voters (78%).