



Kathleen Donohue
Co-chair, Bee Health Roundtable, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Director-General, Market Access Secretariat, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

January 23, 2019

Re: Québec and Ontario beekeepers call for representation on the *Bee Health Roundtable*

Via email: kathleen.donohue@canada.ca; aafc.roundtable-table ronde.aac@canada.ca

Dear Kathleen,

On December 6, 2018, representatives from the Fédération des Apiculteurs du Québec (FAQ) and the Ontario Beekeepers' Association (OBA) met with your team at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to voice concerns about the future of beekeeping in Ontario and Québec and to urge the Department to seat Ontario and Québec on the Bee Health Roundtable.

Heavy losses suffered by Ontario and Québec beekeepers as reported by the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists far exceed what beekeepers can sustain. Continued losses of insect pollinators in Ontario and Québec threaten Canada's ability to produce the fruits and vegetables so important to our food security.

The mission of the Bee Health Roundtable was to 'provide a national dialogue to identify actions to be taken to address risks and opportunities related to bee health.'

To fulfill this mission, Québec and Ontario's beekeepers must be full members of the Roundtable.

The composition of the Roundtable is skewed away from those who are experts in bee health. Of the current 43 members on the Bee Health Roundtable, only 7 per cent of them are actual beekeepers. Similar national roundtables have an average of 40 per cent members representing the producers.

Beekeeper associations representing beekeepers from the two provinces most affected by pesticide exposure are not represented. Most of Canada's neonic-treated soy and corn seeds are grown in Québec and Ontario. In Ontario at least 75 per cent of corn and 50 per cent of soy seeds planted in the province are treated with neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics), and the situation is similar in Québec. Not having representation by beekeepers from these two provinces removes from this forum crucial expertise and first-hand knowledge.

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Other provincial organizations are represented, yet the organizations representing beekeepers in Québec and Ontario are conspicuously absent? Grain Growers of Canada have both their counterparts from Québec and Ontario sitting on the Bee Health Roundtable.

Canadian Honey Council (CHC) is an effective lobby for national beekeeping and honey industry issues, such as labelling of honey or importation of bees or adulterated honey. CHC *does not* reflect the significant provincial impact of pesticide poisoning experienced by beekeepers in Québec and Ontario.

Seating representatives of the pesticide manufacturers and not the beekeepers who are victims of the overuse of pesticides questions the credibility of the Roundtable. Two of the members on the Roundtable represent the lobby organization for the pesticide industry whose members, Bayer and Syngenta, are currently the targets of a Class Action brought by beekeepers for negligence.

Environmental Groups should also be represented to balance the point of view of the Roundtable. NGOs, such as David Suzuki Foundation, Friends of the Earth Canada, Ontario Nature and the Wilderness Committee, and others have been at the forefront supporting research that uncovered the damage of pesticide exposure to honey bees and all insect pollinators that is threatening our food supply. If pesticide manufacturers are allowed to advocate for crop protection, then the Roundtable should hear from those who would advocate for greater environmental protection.

To date we are not aware of any actions taken by the Roundtable to mitigate the high mortality rate reducing the numbers of insect pollinators in Canada. The acute decline in population of honey bees and wild bees in Ontario and Québec, prompts us to call for action. Hopefully better representation on the Roundtable will result in a more effective Roundtable and actions that will reverse the current decline of vital insect pollinators.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,



Stéphane Leclerc
Président, Fédération des Apiculteurs du Québec



André Flys
President, Ontario Beekeepers' Association

cc: Nathalie Durand, Director, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Julie Fontaine, Joël Laberge, Fédération des Apiculteurs du Québec
Jim Coneybeare, Paul Lacelle, Ontario Beekeepers' Association