



FÉDÉRATION DES APICULTEURS
DU QUÉBEC



January 12, 2015

The Honourable Philippe Couillard, MNA
Premier of Québec

The Honorable Kathleen Wynne, MPP
Premier of Ontario

Dear Premiers :

The Ontario Beekeepers' Association and the Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec, representing the beekeepers of our respective provinces, are asking you to include joint actions to protect pollinator health on the agenda for your meetings together in 2015.

Ontario and Quebec beekeepers recognize that our two provinces are more similar than any other Canadian provinces with regard to climate, agriculture and beekeeping challenges. Over the past years, our organizations have developed a close working relationship and are aligned on important bee health issues such as threats from pests, diseases, climate change and systemic pesticides.

Our locally grown fruits and vegetables rely on a healthy pollinator population. Yet both Quebec and Ontario have suffered serious losses to their honey bee and wild bee populations due to the widespread overuse of neonicotinoid treated seeds on corn, soy, and winter wheat. As beekeepers, we have had to take costly measures to restore our colony numbers and we have experienced reduced honey production and diminished effects on queen vitality and pollination viability. These impacts threaten the livelihood of many beekeepers in both provinces.

The Government of Canada has been slow in its review of the conditional registration of these pesticides, even after proclaiming that the 'continued agricultural use of these pesticides on corn and soy is unsustainable'. They have indicated that the review will not be completed until 2016 at the earliest.

Last year, nearly all corn and most soy seed was sold with neonicotinoid seed treatment despite the fact that provincial crop specialists have indicated that less than 5-20% of corn acreage actually needs these toxic pesticides. As well, the EPA has recently released studies showing that neonicotinoids provide almost no benefit to soy crops. Ontario has announced a plan to reduce the use of neonicotinoids by 80% by 2017 and to limit over-winter bee colony losses to 15% by 2020.

Here is what we are asking you to do together:

1. Issue a joint statement calling attention to the growing body of research confirming the need to take action now to reverse the trend of excessive losses of honey bees and wild pollinators, and citing the important role the Precautionary Principle plays in assessing potential harm.
2. Jointly support actions to significantly reduce the amount of systemic insecticides applied to field crops by the 2017 planting season and to reduce excessive overwinter losses to 15% by 2020. This would include restrictions on the sale and use of systemic insecticides treated seed in both Quebec and Ontario.
3. Encourage PMRA to escalate the current registration review. Insist on independent research in place of a reliance on research provided by the registrants; and request transparency in data collection and access to all field data.
4. Insist that PMRA discontinue the use of conditional registrations and delay approval to any new systemic pesticide until this review is complete and they can guarantee the safety of bees.
5. Sanction a joint Ontario-Québec pollinator advisory group that will involve both the OBA and the Fédération, scientists working in this field, Provincial Apiarists and representatives of both governments, to recommend policy and to stimulate knowledge transfer and research to protect pollinators.

Through this cooperative effort we will see progress in restoring the health of our pollinator population, the viability of the beekeeping industry and a safe, secure supply of fresh, locally produced food crops.

Sincerely,



Léo Buteau
Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec
555 Boulevard Roland-Therrien #225
Longueuil, QC J4H 3Y9



Tibor Szabo
Ontario Beekeepers' Association
8560 Tremaine Road, Box 476
Milton, Ontario L9T 4Z1

cc : Hon. Glen Murray, MPP, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Hon. Jeff Leal, MPP, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs