



August 6, 2014

Hon Jeff Leal, MPP
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
77 Grenville Street, 11th Fl.
Toronto, ON M7A 1B3

Dear Minister Leal,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us and for your government's impending action to limit the use of the neonicotinoid pesticides that are poisoning our bees and destroying Ontario's beekeeping industry.

Minister Leal, the science in support of your policy is conclusive. The EU reviewed over 50 research papers before making its decision to ban neonicotinoids in 2013. Since then, the vast majority of research confirms the extreme toxicity of neonicotinoid pesticides and their negative effects on bee health. Recently, the Worldwide Integrated Assessment of Systemic Pesticides Task Force concluded, "neonics pose a serious risk of harm to honey bees and other pollinators". This task force, comprised of 50 scientists from respected institutions around the world including the University of Guelph, the University of Quebec and the University of Saskatchewan, reviewed 800 independent and industry studies. The Task Force also reported on the prevalence of neonics in our soils and water and its toxic effects on birds, fish and other insect species. (You can find a compendium of research at ontariobee.com/neonics)

Last week the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists reported that Ontario beekeepers lost almost 6 of every 10 hives last winter. That's over three times that of Quebec's beekeepers who experienced a similarly long and cold winter. The cause of Ontario's excessive winter loss can only be attributed to exposure to neonicotinoids that have been applied to over 4.2 million acres of corn, soy and winter wheat.

The OBA and the NFU agree that a balanced and reasonable approach will work for beekeepers and farmers. Your own crop specialists have confirmed that these insecticides are overused by as much as 90%. That means that the vast majority of neonicotinoid treated seed being sold to farmers provide no benefit whatsoever. It is time to put the interests of the pollinator population that we depend on for Ontario's fruit and vegetables ahead of agri-chemical interests. Your government must ensure that insecticides are used only where necessary and thereby encourage the adoption of Integrated Management Practices.

Ontario must take urgent action and put a stringent permitting system in place in time for the 2015 planting season lest we needlessly expose bees to yet another planting season and another disastrous winter. We are counting on your government to take immediate action to protect our local food production and the environment of Ontario for all Ontarians.

Sincerely,

Dan Davidson, President
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cc: Karen Eatwell, President NFU-Ontario