



Media Highlight

Beekeepers Need Immediate Action on Pesticides

Op-Ed published in [The Hill Times](#), December 13, 2018

By Stéphane Leclerc and André Flys

Stéphane Leclerc is the président of the Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec.

André Flys is President of the Ontario Beekeepers' Association.

We can no longer ignore the harmful effects of pesticide exposure on pollinator health.

Last year, beekeepers in Ontario and Québec suffered record overwinter colony losses: 45.7 per cent in Ontario and 30.3 per cent in Québec. These colony losses far surpass the 20 per cent threshold beekeepers considered sustainable.

Beekeepers in Ontario and Québec agree that pesticide exposure continues to be the major contributor to overwinter mortality, queen losses, low honey yields and colony collapse in the fall. In the face of these losses beekeepers struggle to stay in business when confronting the additional costs of replacing dead or weakened colonies and failing queens.

In particular, the overuse of neonicotinoid insecticides on corn, soy and winter wheat is taking a major toll. Most of Canada's neonic-treated soy and corn seeds are grown in Ontario and Québec. In Ontario at least 75 per cent of corn and 50 per cent of soy seeds planted in the province are treated with neonics, and the situation is similar in Québec.

So why aren't beekeepers cheering on the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency's (PMRA) proposals to phase-out the major uses of neonics in Canada?

Because while a ban on neonics will help beekeepers recover, PMRA proposes a three to five-year phase-out period, allowing the use of harmful neonics to continue until at least 2022-2023, maybe longer.

This extensive phase out period will prolong the ecological risks that PMRA itself has determined are not acceptable. Beekeepers will continue to experience colony losses and declines of the insect pollinators Canadians rely on for one of three bites of the food we eat.

The slow-motion phase-out PMRA is proposing is out of sync with the EU's decisive action earlier this year. In February 2018, an updated scientific assessment by the European Food Safety Authority confirmed that all outdoor agricultural uses of the three main neonics (clothianidin,

imidacloprid and thiamethoxam) represent a risk to bees. EU member countries then acted quickly to approve regulations ending all outdoor uses of these neonics *by the end of this year*.

The Ontario Beekeepers' Association and the Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec call for the immediate cancellation of neonics on food and feed crops in Canada. Beekeepers cannot sustain another three to five years of excessive colony losses.

Fear of crop losses may be exaggerated. Studies have questioned the benefits to farmers of the prophylactic use of neonics when replaced with integrated pest management strategies.¹ Looking beyond neonics, we must learn from past mistakes and avoid replacement chemicals, like other systemic insecticides, that may be equally harmful to bees.

It's well passed time for Canada to nix neonics and get serious about sustainable food production.

Let's remember that insect pollinators, including honey bees and wild bees are vital to Canada's locally grown food production. In economic terms, the commercial value of bees to the pollination of fruits and vegetables in Canada is estimated at more than \$2 billion annually.

Beekeepers understand this. And we aren't alone in calling for immediate action on neonics. Nearly a half million Canadians have sent letters and petitions to the federal government since 2013 in support of a ban. Now it is up to Canada's Health Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor to act... before it's too late.

[CAPA Statement on Honey Bee Wintering Losses in Canada \(2018\)](#)

Media Release: May 14, 2018 [Ontario Beekeepers Experience Overwhelming Losses](#) & [Ontario Bee Loss Media Backgrounder](#)

[EU Agrees Total Ban on Bee-harming Pesticides](#)

For more information:

[Stéphane Leclerc](#)

Président, Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec

[André Flys](#)

Pioneer Brand Honey
President, Ontario Beekeepers' Association
Mobile: 416 807-2253

[Dennis Edell](#)

D's Bees Honey
Chair, OBA Issues Management &
Stakeholder Relations Committee
Mobile: 416 918-4448

¹ <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1365-2664.12924>

