

December 18, 2013

Mr. Fletcher (chair) and members of the Agricultural Advisory Committee

At the AAC meeting of September 18/13, Tracey Baute, entomologist with OMAFRA, described the immediate and cumulative - deadly - effects of neonicotinoid¹ pesticides on honeybees. She said that neonicotinoids are overused and that OMAFRA was starting an education campaign to encourage fungicide-only treated seed.

Following discussion, AAC voted against recommending that Planning and Environment Committee address the need to bar neonicotinoid pesticide use inside London's boundaries. AAC suggested P&EC comment should wait until the Ontario Bee Health Working Group report was published.

The Ontario Bee Health Working Group report probably won't be out until the spring. Neonicotinoids will be used during the 2014 planting season and will continue to kill honeybees and pollinators inside and outside London's boundaries. London needs to comment - and act - now.

The (Federal) Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency interim report of Sept. 13/13,² *Evaluation of Canadian Bee Mortalities in 2012 related to neonicotinoid pesticides*³ made this key statement:

→ *"... current agricultural practices related to the use of neonicotinoid treated corn and soybean seed are not sustainable."⁴*

The PMRA 90 day period for public input on the report ended on December 12/13; a final report will be prepared. The Ontario Bee Health Working Group made no comment on the PMRA interim report.

The Ontario Beekeepers Association,⁵ however, - whose members observe bee death and whose livelihoods are directly affected by bee deaths - made recommendations augmenting the PMRA report and stated:

"without clear evidence that neonicotinoid pesticides are safe over the long-term for non-target species, the use of neonicotinoids should be removed from use on field crops."⁶

In other words, neonicotinoid pesticide use must stop.

In our daily lives we make common sense health decisions based on information available, instead of waiting for one definitive study. In science and policy circles, the term "precautionary principle" refers to this sensible way of caring for ourselves and the environment.

I urge London's Agricultural Advisory Committee to work with precautionary principle and:

- recommend Planning and Environment Committee find ways to protect London bees and pollinating insects from deadly neonicotinoid pesticide sprays, seed coatings and run-off into water and soil.
- communicate with farmers in London's Agriculture-zoned areas to find out what sprays they are using and to encourage and/or regulate the use of neonicotinoid pesticides
- figure out how our municipality can work with farmers outside the London boundary to create a buffer zone to protect London's bees and pollinating insects from neonicotinoids sprayed on farms
- encourage in every way possible farmers inside and outside London's boundaries to plant biodiverse, successive bloom areas that encourage all sorts of bees and pollinating insects

The Agricultural Advisory Committee has an opportunity now to act for the future health of our bees, our environment and London's food future.

Sincerely,

Margo Does

Maureen Temme