

Media Release

Naturalists support Province's plan to restrict neonic pesticides: Ontario responds to public demand for swift action to protect pollinators

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TORONTO—Ontario Nature, a charitable conservation organization, welcomes the Province's plan to achieve an 80 percent reduction in the use of neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics) by 2017. The plan responds to growing public concern about the harmful effects of these pesticides, and to the substantial body of evidence implicating neonics in pollinator decline.

Ontario is the first and only province in Canada to propose a dramatic reduction of neonics.

"The 80 percent reduction target is a bold and necessary step to address the threats that these pesticides pose to human and ecosystem health," says Dr. Anne Bell, director of conservation and education at Ontario Nature. Neonics are the most widely used pesticides in the world, and are used extensively on corn and other crops in Ontario. Some types of neonics are considered to be up to 10,000 times more toxic than DDT. This past summer, an international team of 29 independent scientists reviewed over 800 peer-reviewed scientific studies and concluded that neonics "are a key factor in the decline of bees."

Ontario Nature, along with partner organizations including the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and the David Suzuki Foundation, has been urging the Province to ban the use of neonics in Ontario.

"The public interest in seeing neonics eliminated is clear," says Bell. "Bees and other pollinators are responsible for an estimated one out of three bites of food that people eat. This is worth billions of dollars to the North American economy. Pollinators play a critical role in the web of life of which we are a part."

As far as bees are concerned, that web is unravelling quickly. Half of the bumble bee species in North America are in decline, a trend that holds true in Ontario where several bumble bee species, once common or widespread, have virtually disappeared in the last thirty years. "Both the rusty-patched bumble bee and the gypsy cuckoo bumble bee are now listed as endangered, and the American bumble bee is likely to follow soon," says Bell.

Though the causes of pollinator decline are not fully understood, habitat destruction and the use of pesticides are significant threats. Ontario Nature hopes that the Pollinator Health Action Plan, also part of today's announcement, will help Ontarians to better understand and address all of the causes of pollinator decline.

More Information:

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Ontario Nature protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. Ontario Nature is a charitable organization representing more than 30,000 members and supporters and 150 member groups across Ontario (charitable registration # 10737 8952 RR0001). For more information, visit www.ontarionature.org.



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