



Media Release

Contact:

Victoria MacPhail

Co-Chair and Director of Publicity and Outreach, Pollination Guelph

Tel: 519-362-2783

Email: vmacphail@gmail.com

Website: www.pollinationguelph.ca

For Immediate Release – November 25, 2014

Ontario Proposal to Enhance Pollinator Health a Step in the Right Direction Guelph, Ontario

Reducing the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on corn and soybean crops an important step but much more is needed to be done

Pollination Guelph, a charitable organization based in Guelph that protects pollinators and their habitats, welcomes today's news that the province of Ontario is developing a Pollinator Health Action Plan. "Pollinators are responsible for the reproduction of over 80% of all flowering plants, including one out of every three bites of food we eat", says Pollination Guelph Co-Chair Victoria MacPhail, "and thus it is incredibly important that we protect these animals as they are under threat from a variety of factors, including habitat loss, climate change, pests and diseases, and pesticides."

Commonly known as "neonics", neonicotinoid insecticides are a class of pesticide that is widely used across Ontario and internationally: nearly 100% of all corn and 60% of all soybean seeds planted in Ontario are currently coated with the insecticide. As the plant grows, the insecticide is incorporated into the plant tissues, protecting it from a variety of pest insects that may attack it from seedling through harvest stages. However, research is now showing the negative impact of the neonics on pollinators and our ecosystems, from neonics contaminating the pollen and nectar and affecting the pollinators that eat it, to broader impacts, such as the leaching of the neonics into the soil and water with negative impacts on many other types of animals from beetles to frogs. Other research, including a recent review by the US Environmental Protection Agency, has concluded that there is generally no greater yields by using neonic pesticides as compared to not using them.

"We are pleased that the Ontario government is taking the Canadian lead in regulating and reducing the use of these neonic pesticides" says MacPhail. "An 80% reduction in the amount of treated corn and soybeans planted will have an immediate beneficial impact on the environment, but more can be done. For example, while the scale may be smaller, there are many other crops and organizations, such as golf courses and the horticultural industry, which also use the pesticides and would not be covered the regulation as it is currently proposed".

The Pollinator Health proposal is actually much broader than just the neonic discussion and a focus on honeybees. "Having the province actually recognize that there are other pollinators

besides the non-native European honeybee is an important realization and will be the foundation for many more activities going forward”. There are thousands of pollinators in Canada, including over 800 species of bees, and many have different habitat needs than the honeybee. These wild animals are often better pollinators than the honeybee, especially in natural ecosystems where they have evolved with the native plants. “We have been advocating for native pollinators for years and are pleased to have them recognized and embraced by the province”.

“We look forward to working with the province going forward to develop the Pollinator Health Action Plan.”

--30--

About Pollination Guelph

Pollination Guelph is a completely volunteer-run federally incorporated charitable organization. They formed in August 2008 to promote a better understanding of the importance of pollinators, to conserve and develop pollinator habitat and showcase pollinator projects to serve as a model for citizens and communities across Canada and internationally. These activities are accomplished through their goals of education, research, community outreach, advocacy, and conservation. Although they are well known for their outreach and education efforts, and for the successful creation of pollinator habitat throughout the City of Guelph, the Pollinator Park has been their flagship project. For more information, visit: www.pollinationguelph.ca.