



CropLife Canada highlights safety of neonics amid Montreal's pesticide ban

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Montreal's recent ban on neonicotinoids is opposed by agribusiness companies that say scientific evidence shows pesticides do not play a major role in pollinator health.

While most pesticides have been left up to a borough-by-borough assessment, neonicotinoids are banned throughout all of Montreal. Montreal City Councilor Justine McIntyre introduced legislation in May which passed unanimously that banned the use of neonicotinoids, or neonics, in an effort to protect the population of honey bees and other pollinators.

However, a recent White House pollinator health task force and the Canadian Senate reports on bees found that there are more serious threats to bees than the scientifically safe neonics, said Pierre Petelle, vice-president of chemistry at CropLife Canada, a trade association representing companies that manufacture plant science solutions for agriculture and pest management.

The reports, as well as the plant science industry, focus on taking a broad, holistic approach to pollinator health.

"Neonics have been thoroughly assessed by Health Canada and the weight of scientific evidence around the world has demonstrated that they can be used without negative effects on human health or the environment," Petelle said. "In fact, if we look at bee populations in Canada over the last decade, since neonics have been introduced, Statistics Canada numbers show that bee populations have been steadily on the rise."

While neonics are considered safe, the banning of neonic seed treatments would likely cause farmers to return to less-safe practices of pesticide sprays, argued Petelle.

Because Montreal is an urban center and not an agricultural area, the ban impacts relatively few farmers, in turn, meaning a relatively small impact on neonic use in Canada, he said.

However, a number of small urban and community farms in Montreal may be greatly

impacted by the neonic restrictions.

Both McIntyre and Petelle have framed the issue as a larger one than just Montreal.

“While the ban in Montreal may have little impact on agricultural producers, restrictions on neonics like those imposed in Ontario will have a significant impact on farmers,” Petelle said.

McIntyre could not be reached for comment.