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# Edmonton bee lovers stage die-in for puny polinators

BY KEVIN MAIMANN , EDMONTON SUN

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Photos: Protesters rally in support of bees (Aug. 16, 2014)

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Protesters were buzzing about bees outside city hall Saturday.

About two dozen Edmontonians marked National Honey Bee Day by wearing yellow and black and calling for pesticide restrictions.

Co-organizer David Laing wants the city to ban pesticides for lawns in response to scientific studies linking glyphosate and neonicotinoids to the weakening of bees' immune systems – which makes the critters more vulnerable to parasites and can lead to colony collapse.

"We need our pollinators for food production. The work that bees do for us to pollinate the flowers – if every human being on earth was just pollinating, we wouldn't do as good of a job as the bees are doing right now," Laing said.

"They're extremely important. They're a vital part of our ecosystem and we need them for our food, for survival."

Occupy Edmonton, one of the organizing groups alongside Anonymous Edmonton and Pesticide Free Edmonton, is calling on residents to rip out their lawns and grow gardens instead.

Protesters gathered outside the doors of city hall with signs reading, "Bee Against Monsanto" and "If Bees Die We All Die," before marching through downtown led by a black and yellow car.

"Bees are dying at unsustainable rates," said Sheryl McCumsey with Pesticide Free Edmonton.

McCumsey said local governments have done little to address the issue – noting Canada placed last in the Centre for Global Development's 2013 ranking of 27 wealthy nations for environmental protection – and that bee deaths have accelerated in other countries like China.

"In China, they need to hand-pollinate crops. Sad, scary, but people don't think about what this means," she said.

"Mainstream media is finally waking up to how this might be important. Meanwhile, our government isn't doing much at all."

In March, McCumsey brought a petition before city council with 1,200 signatures from Albertans who want new pesticide bylaws.

**SUN+** limited the use of lawn pesticides in 2004 and completely banned cosmetic pesticides in 2009.

Local beekeeper Sally Issenman is pushing for more urban beekeeping, which is currently prohibited in Edmonton unless approved by the city manager for educational purposes.

A proposal for an urban beekeeping pilot project was brought before city council in July.

"We shouldn't be causing harm to our bees through a lack of information, a lack of practice, a lack of getting good mentoring from other experienced beekeepers," Issenman said.

kevin.maimann@sunmedia.ca

@SunKevinM

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