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## Media Release

### Environmental groups demand Health Minister Rona Ambrose take action on bee-killing pesticide

*Evidence links pesticide to massive bee deaths in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec*

Sep 24 2013

TORONTO — Environmental groups want federal Health Minister Rona Ambrose to reconsider Health Canada’s decision to reapprove a pesticide — severely restricted in Europe — for use on fruits, potatoes and turf, and linked to massive bee die-offs in Canada.

Lawyers from the Canadian Environmental Law Association and Ecojustice have filed a [Notice of Objection](http://www.cela.ca/publications/notice-of-objection-clothianidin-pesticides) (<http://www.cela.ca/publications/notice-of-objection-clothianidin-pesticides>) with the health minister on behalf of Sierra Club Canada, Wilderness Committee, David Suzuki Foundation and Équiterre. The objection concerns Health Canada’s recent decision to renew the registration for clothianidin, a neonicotinoid pesticide toxic to bees, which the groups say should be banned in Canada.

Over the past two years, massive bee die-offs reported in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec were linked to the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. In addition, a growing body of scientific literature documents the adverse effects of neonicotinoids on the foraging and homing behaviour of bees, as well as metabolic, immune and reproductive functions.

Earlier this year, the European Union severely restricted the use of four neonicotinoid pesticides, including clothianidin, because of the risk to bees’ health. On Sept. 13, acknowledging that these pesticides cause harm to bees, Health Canada asked for public comments on proposed measures to mitigate impacts related to the use of neonicotinoid treated corn and soybean seed. But environmental groups say this is not enough, and that a full ban on all agricultural uses of clothianidin is needed.

“A review panel is necessary to ensure that we have an objective, scientific assessment of whether Canada should continue to approve the use of this pesticide,” said Elaine MacDonald, a senior staff scientist with Ecojustice. “To protect bee populations, the health minister must reconsider the available evidence, which suggests that it’s time for a full ban.”

According to the *Pest Control Products Act*, the health minister may establish a panel to review the decision in response to an objection. The panel would then recommend whether to reverse the decision. If the panel is established, environmental groups have the right to explain why they are bringing this objection. If the minister rejects the objection, she must provide a written explanation.

“The leisurely, decade-long, pace the government has taken to demand full information from industry on whether clothianidin produces long-term toxic effects on bees, would make one think the government wants to turn bees into endangered species,” said Joseph F. Castrilli, counsel at the Canadian Environmental Law Association. “Canadians are entitled to better protections under federal pesticide law.”

Approximately 90 per cent of all flowering plants require pollinators to survive. Honeybees are perhaps the best known pollinators but wild, native pollinators play an essential role in plant reproduction and food production. The decline of wild pollinators may be an even more alarming threat to crop yields than the loss of the honeybee.

John Bennett, executive director of Sierra Club Canada, said that this is about more than bees. “About 35 per cent of the food that reaches our tables relies on pollination by honey bees and other insects and that’s why Health Canada should be acting.”

Joe Foy, a national campaign director with Wilderness Committee, says that “in recent years, native bumble bee populations have suffered massive declines, with some species disappearing from Canada all together. It is a frightening unravelling of our nation’s biodiversity.”

**Notice of Objection – Clothianidin Insecticides (September 19, 2013)**

<http://www.cela.ca/publications/notice-of-objection-clothianidin-pesticides>

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