



## Quebec looks to limit pesticides; save the bees



[Kelsey Johnson](#) Posted on [November 20, 2015](#)

Quebec will follow Ontario's lead in imposing restrictions on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, Premier Philippe Couillard confirmed Friday.

Asked whether his government plans to impose restrictions on the use on the popular seed treatment as Ontario has done, Couillard, a medical doctor, simply said "yes." He would not elaborate on when those restrictions would be introduced or what they would look like.

Neonicotinoid pesticides are a popular seed treatment used on corn, soybean and canola seeds. Use of the chemicals is pervasive, with 95 per cent of corn acreages in Canada treated with neonics.

The nicotine-based chemicals have been banned outright in most of Europe, with research finding they attack the central nervous systems of insects. Various studies have linked them to atypically high rates of colony collapse among bees.

The insecticides are at the heart of a heated debate within the agriculture community and beyond. The Ontario government [introduced provincial regulations](#) in June designed to reduce the use of the pesticide by 80 per cent over the next two years.

Starting in the 2015-2016 growing season, Ontario farmers will be limited in how much of their corn and soybean crops can be treated with neonicotinoids. Farmers who fail to comply risk fines of up to \$20,000.

The regulations were met with anger from many in Ontario's farm community. Grain Farmers of Ontario are currently fighting the regulations in provincial court.

Couillard's confirmation of pending restrictions also comes as Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency continues to review the insecticides. Details of that review are expected later this fall.

The PMRA found neonicotinoids have been linked to bee deaths in Ontario and Quebec during the 2012 and 2013 growing seasons. The agency mandated new best management practices for the 2014 planting season in order to mitigate the amount of dust generated when seeding.

The Harper government – under the direction of former agriculture minister Gerry Ritz – had refused to impose federal restrictions on the use of neonicotinoids.

However, members of the Liberal party have called for the insecticides to be banned. Delegates at the Liberal party's national convention in Montreal voted in 2014 in favour of a motion calling for the immediate ban of the use of neonicotinoid pesticides.

Just days after the motion passed, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, then simply party leader, told delegates at the Canadian Federation of Agriculture meeting in February 2014 he was not prepared to push for such a ban.

"Ultimately, we're a party of evidence-based policy," Trudeau said at the meeting.

"We will be looking at ways to move forward that is going to support farmers based around science and research and not necessarily implement a ban on neonics despite the very clear will (of party members), which I take as a will to make sure we're being smart about bee populations," he said.

Trudeau did not identify restricting neonicotinoid as a priority in his mandate letter to Health Minister Jane Philpott. The letter bore no mention of Canadian pesticide policies.



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A political junkie at heart, Kelsey recently graduated from Carleton University's School of Journalism with highest honours. Before launching her journalism career with iPolitics, she spent three years working as a public servant for a number of different departments both in Ottawa and back home in Alberta, including a summer spent guarding bears in Banff, Alta. While she is interested in a variety of portfolios, Kelsey credits her western roots for sparking her interest in all things related to the Canadian agriculture industry. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking, cycling and cooking. [View all posts by Kelsey Johnson](#)