

## Keep an Eye on the Neonics Issue in Canada



Source: [www.TurfMagazine.com](http://www.TurfMagazine.com)

How do we ignore what's happening in the second largest country in the world, which also happens to be our biggest trading partner and the country with which we share the longest international border in the world? It should be obvious I am writing about Canada.

We can't ignore Canada, of course. What happens in Canada should interest us for a lot of reasons. One of the most important reasons for keeping track of what happens in Canada is how our friendly neighbors, especially lawmakers, to the north view pesticides.

For example, it is illegal to sell or use conventional chemical pest controls on home lawns, or on commercial or public properties in much of Canada. The ban in Ontario Province, the country's most populous province, has been in effect for more than 10 years. Other provinces, cities and villages have similar laws.

Apparently, pesticide use as it relates to lawn care is no longer even much of an issue with the Canadian public. People seem to have accepted the bans. They appear to be content with more expensive and less effective methods to combat weeds and other turf pests on their lawns.

That's what the manager of one of Canada's largest landscape companies told me at a casual evening reception at GIE. That's the way things are these days, and he said he doesn't see it changing.

This brings me to the controversy surrounding the use of neonicotinoid insecticides and their alleged affects upon pollinator (bee) health. The rhetoric blaming neonicotinoids for reducing the populations of bees and other pollinators appears to be much hotter in Canada than it is in the United States (at least right now).

In fact, it's so hot in Canada that many scientists there are apparently fearful of speaking out about the benefits of using neonics for fear of having fellow academics and environmental groups attack them.

"Still, scientists and others are reluctant to speak up because if they say neonics are safe, fellow researchers and environmental groups launch a venomous assault to destroy their reputation," wrote Robert Arnason in a blog for The Western Producer. "The neonic issue has become a witch hunt, where anyone who claims pesticides are safe must be burned on a stake." (The [Western Producer](#) is a weekly farm publication in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, farming country.)

Many of us in the U.S. green industry, of course, use and trust neonics to protect turfgrass, ornamentals and trees. The stakes for the continued use of neonics in the much larger agricultural market in Canada and the United States are larger by magnitudes.

Please check out Arnason's blog ["Scientists reluctant to speak up on neonics."](#) It says a lot about how polarizing (and potentially damaging) a pesticide issue can become.