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Dear Minister Colwell,

The Nova Scotia Beekeepers Association executive is requesting that the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture stop issuing import permits for honeybee colonies coming into Nova Scotia.

The increasing presence of small hive beetle in many beekeeping regions of Canada presents a very real and significant risk to the health of Nova Scotia honeybees if hives are imported into Nova Scotia. The importation of colonies should only be permitted when the disease profiles of Nova Scotia and the import province are the same. Now with the find of small hive beetle in provinces like Ontario the disease profiles differ significantly.

At the time varroa mite first made its way into Canada, Nova Scotia chose to close its border. The introduction of the varroa mite into Nova Scotia was delayed by 10 years as a result of the border closure. This proved to be a very effective way to buy Nova Scotia Beekeepers some time to learn how to adjust their management to effectively work with this pest when it did reach Nova Scotia.

It is also important to note that imported honeybees benefit very few blueberry growers in N.S. if small hive beetle does get introduced in Nova Scotia as a result of imported honeybees the entire beekeeping industry and the remaining blueberry growers all stand to suffer a significant loss.

The Nova Scotia Beekeepers have been working hard with the Pollination expansion program to build the number of Nova Scotia colonies available to the blueberry growers. The preliminary numbers available indicate that the number of hives available is up by 25%. We believe that this shows that the Nova Scotia beekeepers are working hard to supply the demand for pollination and we strongly feel that the investment that we and the province of Nova Scotia have made in the beekeepers should not be put at risk by allowing colonies to be imported.

I look forward to your response. Should you wish to discuss our request in person please feel free to contact me.

Yours truly

Paul Kittilsen, President  
Nova Scotia Beekeepers Association