Ron Greidanus

Box 1581 Stettler Alberta

T0C 2L0

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau;

CC Premier Jason Kenney; Minister Dreeshen; Nate Horner, MLA; Hon. Damien Kurek MP; Hon. Andrew Scheer; Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau.

I am writing to you today regarding your announcements earlier today. I am just a small beekeeper on the prairies struggling to meet my family’s needs and support my community. The 2019 season was the worst year I have had in the 20 years that I have been beekeeping in the Stettler area. Your announcement regarding the closing of Canada’s borders to foreign nationals today has hamstrung me and my business. It is going to make it almost impossible for me to feed and cloth my family, much less support and contribute to my local community. I am at a loss for words to describe how devastating your announcement is to me, Canada’s agricultural industry, food supply and economy.

I was expecting 6 men from Mexico to arrive on my farm on March 23, 2020. These men are skilled Apiculturists. I depend on them for my business success. Without them, it is impossible for me to run my 3400 hive Apiary. Without them, I have limited options: Bankruptcy, Significant scaling down (800 hives???) or dissolving the business.

I am not alone in this. Many other beekeepers are in the same situation. We all depend on the experienced, hard working individuals that help us year after year that come from Central America and the Philippines (temporary Foreign Worker Program Ag Stream)

I understand that in making the difficult decisions regarding the pandemic Coronavirus, unintended consequences resulting from those decisions will be realized. I understand that the virus itself is not that detrimental but that the unrestrained course of the pandemic will overrun Canada’s medical care system. We simply do not have enough ICU space to care for the most severe of cases that will accompany this Pandemic if no control measures are put in place.

I want to be part of the solution. I want to work with the government to minimize the collateral damage on the other side of this crisis. Let me bring in the seasonal skilled labour that I have requested through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). I would be bringing these individuals into Canada directly from Mexico. They would arrive on my farm, where I provide housing for them. I will comply with any parameters that the government would deem necessary to ensure that these individuals would not pose a public health risk to my family, friends or community.

The consequence of not letting the 30 000 plus SAWP workers and the Temporary foreign workers (Ag Stream) that come to Canada each year is SEVERE.

Number one: It jeopardizes Canada’s food supply. Already we are far to dependant on imported foods. But not having a safe domestic food supply is an existential risk that Canada cannot afford. As a beekeeper, not getting my workers has ripple effects on the Canola industry, to which I supply hives to pollinate hybrid seed canola ($25 Billion industry); the blueberry industry – bees represent 80% of production not to mention all the fruit and orchard crops in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes.

Number Two: It jeopardizes Global stability. I bring my workers in from Mexico. Others come from other central American countries as well as the Philippines. The wages I pay them are sent back to their home communities. Those dollars go directly to their communities and help stabilize that home country. The world does not need a Corona Virus pandemic and failed states. People have legs and can move around. Allowing nations, such as can be found in Central America and south east Asia, slide into a Failed State status will only worsen the situation Canada is in right now.

Number three: Our economy is going to suffer. Agriculture is an interdependent industry. It currently generates more revenues than the Oil Industry. If one sector does poorly other sectors suffer as well. Billions of dollars will be lost throughout the supply chain due to lowered production levels. It may well be cheaper to build several ICU hospitals and deal with the huge uptick of people admitted to ICU due to Coronavirus. Beekeeping assists so many different areas. Although small, we are an essential contributor to the success of Canola growers (seed and commercial crops). Cattlemen are constantly asking for hives to promote better forage yields for their cattle. Blueberry production is directly proportional to the number of bees pollenating the blossoms. The Orchards (apples cherries, peaches, apricots raspberries, blackberries, pumpkins, melons, cucumbers…) all over Canada, depend entirely on bees to produce a crop.

Number four: the beekeeping industry will be decimated by the decision not to allow Temporary Foreign workers into this country and it will take decades for the industry to recover. Canadian beekeepers have been working hard to become an apicultural powerhouse. I understand that you have a few hives of your own at the Hamilton cottage. I hope you can appreciate how hard it is to operate a commercial Apiary. It has taken decades for beekeepers across Canada to build the industry into what it is today. We did it with the help of our friends/employees from foreign countries. This decision will render it impossible to continue to grow the industry. Apiculture and other agricultural commodities will suffer irreparable loss.

**I get it**: The decision is sick friends and neighbours or dollars. The decision isn’t either or though. It is how do we balance both. What s the risk benefit of decimating the agricultural industry? People will get sick. How do we manage that without destroying the economy, whole communities, whole families? Closing the border, was a difficult decision you made to protect public health. Unfortunately, it is going to generate dire, unintended consequences. I believe, we can work together to resolve this issue. Let me have my workers so that my farm can remain viable. Let me manage my workers, with your guidance, to not to put my family and community at risk of spreading corona virus. I want to do my part – I don’t want to be apart of the collateral damage.

Sincerely,

Ron Greidanus